

JOSÉ MERCÉ.

Flamenco Singing: José Mercé.

Guitar: Manuel Moreno "Morao", Daniel de Morón

Bass: Manolo Nieto

Percussion: Cesario Moreno "Güito"

Choruses and *palmas* (hand clapping): Marcelino Fernández, Antonio de los Reyes, Rafael de los Reyes

Song

MADRID

TEATROS DEL CANAL-SALA ROJA (TEATROS DEL CANAL THEATER – RED HALL)

SATURDAY, JUNE 12TH AT 20:30

RUIDO (NOISE)

Ruido (Noise) is José Mercé's new album and one of his major works. This is the 17th album in his career. From the start, Mercé has managed to accomplish the difficult feat of turning flamenco into something for all audiences, expanding its popularity without losing its soul or its depth. Such is *Ruido* (Noise).

The album starts with *Amanecer* (Dawn) and continues with *Ruido* (Noise). The song that gives it its name is a *bulería* that confirms the spirit of the project: one or two guitars, percussion, bass and choruses are enough to sustain José Mercé's impressive voice. The album is flamenco in all its purity, with excellent songs by Isidro Muñoz, who wrote most of the songs, except for the closing theme: the emblematic *Nana de la cebolla* (Onion Lullaby).

Ruido (Noise) includes *bulerías* such as *Ruido* (Noise), *La llave* (The Key), and *Fe* (Faith); *alegrías* such as *Pan y pico* (Bread and Pick); and a *rumba* called *Todos seremos* (We Shall All Be), not to mention great flamenco singing such as the *soleá* called *Vengo de donde no estuve* (I've Come from a Place I was Never At), plus an impressive version of *Nana de la cebolla* (Onion Lullaby) with lyrics by the poet Miguel Hernández and music by Alberto Cortez, who recreates the version recorded by Joan Manuel Serrat in 1972 with special collaboration from Pasión Vega and Carlos Sanlúcar.

José Mercé. José Soto Soto, better known as José Mercé, was born in a neighborhood called Santiago, in Jerez, in 1955. He is a descendant of the legendary Paco de Luz and a nephew of Manuel Soto Sordera. As a young boy, he was part of the boys' choir at the Basilica of Our Lady of Mercy, where he sang from age six to twelve. This is where he got his stage name. He debuted at the age of twelve in his homeland, acting in the *Los Jueves Flamencos* (Flamenco Thursdays), organized by Manuel Morao. José Mercé was soon recruited to form part of the artistic lineup at La Cueva del Pájaro Azul, the *tablaó* in Cádiz where Rancapino, Pepa de Utrera and Juan Villar also worked.

At the age of thirteen, he was summoned to Madrid for a recording and settled there permanently. The poet Manuel Ríos Ruiz became his producer and paired him up with flamenco guitarists such as Manolo and Isidro Sanlúcar. Mercé performed at a Domingo Manfredi conference at Madrid's Ateneo cultural society. He joined the Torres Bermejás *tablaó* where he sang accompanying the famous Trio Madrid, made up of Mario Maya, Carmen Mora and El Güito. He also performed with them in several theaters around the city of Madrid and its province. The young Mercé became

one of the most hotly contested flamenco singers for dance. In fact, by the time he was eighteen, Antonio Gades had already taken him on tour around Europe and America with his company. He remained by the maestro's side between 1973 and 1983. In 1981, he participated in Carlos Saura's film *Bodas de Sangre* (Blood Wedding), which was the first installment of *Saura-Gades-Piedra* film trilogy. Saura counted on him once again for the 1995 film *Flamenco*.

Following a series of performances with the Spanish National Ballet, Mercé began holding recitals at cultural centers, *peñas* (flamenco folk clubs) and festivals. He participated in the International Flamenco Art Courses for the Flamenco Studies and Andalusian Folk Art Master Class. This same organization awarded him the *Copa Jerez* (Jerez Cup). In 1986, Mercé won the La Sernet and Niña de los Peines awards at the National Flamenco Art Contest in Córdoba. These prizes firmly established him as an artist and reaffirmed his presence in major flamenco events.

In 1983, he recorded *Verde junco* (Green Reed), along with Tomatito and Enrique de Melchor. The album was followed in 1987 by *Caminos reales del cante* (Flamenco Singing's Royal Roads). In 1991, he outdid himself with *Hondas raíces* (Deep Roots) and, three years later, in 1994, he launched *Desnudando el alma* (Undressing the Soul). Nevertheless, it wasn't until 1998 that his artistic career took an important turn when he recorded the album *Del amanecer* (About Dawn) along with guitarist Vicente Amigo. The record presented a renewed image of flamenco art and opened a successful new road for his "refreshed" flamenco. Whereas this project sold one hundred fifty thousand copies, Mercé's following album, *Aire* (Air), produced two years later by Isidro Muñoz, went double platinum. His next recording was *Lío* (Mess), presented in October 2002. Mercé himself defines this album as "a record made with the heart". Enrique de Melchor, among others, collaborated on the album. More recently, in 2004, Mercé presented *Confí de Fuá* (Paté Mix). In this album, he really showed off his talent as a flamenco singer combining songs with more traditional flamenco singing.

Lo que se da no se quita (Losers Weepers, Winners Keepers) was his next album. It was launched in 2006 at a sold-out Royal Theater in Madrid. This record marks a turning point where Mercé begins to develop his repertoire, emphasizing his pop side, with ballads overriding the more codified patterns of flamenco singing. Mercé amazes us with his versions of Louis Armstrong's "Mammy Blue" and "What a Wonderful World". In 2009, he previewed a selection of music from his album *Ruido* (Noise) in Jerez. He would later present this album at the Zarzuela Theater and, last March, at the Palau del la Music in Barcelona.

Now, in 2010, he has just presented his first major compilation album: *Grandes éxitos de José Mercé* (José Mercé's Greatest Hits). The record includes all the songs that have made this flamenco singer from Jerez one of the most popular figures in flamenco today. These songs have made it possible for him to sell 600,000 copies of his last few records in the past decade.

"Mercé hasn't just settled for having the gift of echo, he's also made it a point to acquire artistic wisdom. He's thought about what it means to be an artist and made sense of his life based on this major ideal. And this has benefited his intrinsic natural talent." (Manuel Ríos Ruiz)