

# DANCE *st.* NEWS

3547 OLIVE ST.

ST. LOUIS, MO 63103

T: 314.534.5000

F: 314.534.5001

DANCESTLOUIS.ORG

Press contacts: Barbara MacRobie, 314.435.7052 or [bmacrobie@dancestlouis.org](mailto:bmacrobie@dancestlouis.org)  
Julie Kruempel, 314.289.4106 or [jkruempel@dancestlouis.org](mailto:jkruempel@dancestlouis.org)

## DANCE ST. LOUIS AND WELLS FARGO ADVISORS PRESENT ENSEMBLE ESPAÑOL SPANISH DANCE THEATER AT TOUHILL PERFORMING ARTS CENTER, JANUARY 27 & 28, 2012

ST. LOUIS, January 6, 2012....With passion, power and spectacle, the dancers, singers, musicians, and guest artists of Chicago's celebrated Ensemble Español Spanish Dance Theater bring a dazzling mosaic of Hispanic dance styles to the Touhill Performing Arts Center at 8 p.m. on Friday, January 27, and at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. on Saturday, January 28, presented by Wells Fargo Advisors and Dance St. Louis.

The program of classical, folkloric, and flamenco dances ranges from 19th-century court dances to the company's smoldering flamenco rendition of Ravel's *Bolero*. Tickets range from \$35 to \$50 for Friday and Saturday evening. All seats are \$30 for the Saturday matinee. Tickets are available at the Dance St. Louis box office at 3547 Olive St. in the Centene Center for Arts and Education in Grand Center, by calling 314-534-6622, or by visiting [dancestlouis.org](http://dancestlouis.org).

Dance St. Louis Artistic & Executive Director Michael Uthoff will host a free program, *Speaking of Dance*, in the Touhill's Terrace Lobby at 7:15 p.m. prior to the 8 p.m. performances and at 1:15 p.m. prior to the Saturday 2 p.m. performance.

Under the artistic leadership of its founder, Chicago native Dame Libby Komaiko, Ensemble Español Spanish Dance Theater is internationally recognized as the premier center for Spanish dance, music and culture in the United States. In residence at Northeastern Illinois University, the company and its educational programs are chartered to share the rich traditions of the dance, music, and literature of Spain and to encourage new artistic creativity within the framework of the Hispanic experience.

Ever since its beginnings in 1976, Ensemble Español has featured live music as well as performances by guest artists who return to the company year after year. Two former members of the National Ballet of Spain, Paloma Gómez and Christian Lozano, partner in *Zorongo Gitano* and *El Albaicin*, "steamy, gorgeously evocative duets in which flamenco blended with elements of contemporary movement...danced with temperature-raising ardor and great technical prowess by this handsome guest couple" (*Chicago Sun-Times*).

Paintings by Pablo Picasso are the backdrop for the spectacular finale, *Bolero*. Matching the inexorable build-up of Maurice Ravel's music, *Bolero* "accelerates explosively," said the *Chicago Tribune*. "Beginning with slow, graceful solo moves, the dance moves to a grand rush of spectacle by the full troupe, complete with swirling capes and flourished fans." A signature work for the company, *Bolero* was hailed on the company's recent tour of Poland as "beautiful...full of expression and magic" (*Teatr Polski*) and this past November by *Dance Magazine* as "a visual feast" with "savvy stagecraft" and "sensuous choreography."

*Ecos de España (Echoes of Spain)* for the full company is inspired by paintings of Francisco de Goya and Latin-inflected orchestral music by Russian composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. *El Baile de Luis*

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*Alonso (The Dance of Luis Alonso)* is drawn from *zarzuela*—Spanish operetta—and reflects the style and elegance of the castled courts of Spain during the 19th century. Among the many other dances are works set to the searing *cante jondo*—deep song—style of flamenco and to folk songs collected by poet Federico Garcia Lorca.

Ensemble Español appears in a broad range of television, opera, chamber ensembles, festivals, conventions and symphonic formats while touring throughout the United States and around the world. Classical Spanish dances, folkloric suites, and flamenco dramas from a repertory of more than 125 choreographies are presented annually with revivals of international 20th-century masterpieces. With their diverse performances, Ensemble Español “proves that the language of art is universal” (*La Raza*).

Along with its international tours, Ensemble Español is “Chicago’s multifaceted dance jewel” (PBS TV). “This world-class company never ceases to bedazzle its audiences with the variety of precision, beauty and heat of its performances,” said the *Chicago Sun-Times*. “Even if you were a dance aficionado living in Spain today, you would be hard-pressed to find the breadth and range and sheer brilliance of dance—from folkloric to flamenco to balletic riffs on both those forms.” The performances exude “undeniable sensuality...I thought my heart would fly out of my chest.” said the *Chicago Reader*.

Ensemble Español performed at Dance St. Louis’ annual *SPRING TO DANCE®* festivals in 2008 and 2010 and was a huge success. This is the first time the company will perform an entire show in St. Louis.

Komaiko was born and grew up in Evanston, Illinois, a northern suburb of Chicago. She was pursuing a Broadway career when, at age 18, she was discovered by legendary flamenco dancer José Greco and invited to join his company. She studied and performed with many other flamenco greats, and in 1975 founded her Ensemble Español Spanish Dance Theater. An internationally recognized master teacher and choreographer, Komaiko is a professor of dance at Northeastern Illinois University where the company is in residence. Komaiko became “Dame” Libby in 1983, when she was the first American artist in history to be decorated with Spain’s highest honor, the “Lazo de Dama de Isabel la Católica” by Juan Carlos I, King of Spain, for her superlative work in spreading the cultural and artistic values of Spain throughout the United States.

Founded in 1966, Dance St. Louis is dedicated to the enrichment of the cultural landscape and artistic reputation of St. Louis by presenting great dance companies and educational opportunities that make dance accessible to everyone. Dance St. Louis is supported by the Arts and Education Council, Missouri Arts Council, Regional Arts Commission, Mid-America Arts Alliance, National Endowment for the Arts, and other sources. Ameren is the 2011-2012 season sponsor. American Airlines is the official airline.