

# *Cuban National Ballet: 69 Years on Stage*

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Cubans are celebrating the 69th anniversary of one of the top five ballet companies: the Cuban National Ballet, an ensemble that has gained international prestige and won awards and recognition in the world throughout the years.

Alicia, Fernando and Alberto Alonso founded the Alicia Alonso Ballet with an opening show at Havana's Auditorium Theater on October 28th, 1948. The company's opening performance included a cast made up of dancers from the Cuban Pro-Arte Musical Society and dancers of the New York based American Ballet Theater. Fernando Alonso, his wife Alicia and his brother Alberto Alonso thus got involved in the historic event of setting up the Alicia Alonso Ballet, which will later be known as Cuban Ballet and currently as Cuban National Ballet Company. The Alicia Alonso Academy was created by Fernando and Alicia in 1950, planting the seed of what would later be considered one of the most outstanding results of Cuban Ballet: *the Cuban Ballet School*.

At the academy aimed at training the first generations of professional Cuban ballet dancers, the Alonso's conducted a serious research to create a unique teaching method that, with the passage of time, has led to what is known today as the internationally recognized and praised *Cuban ballet school*, whose style was discovered and singled out for the first time by renowned British dance critic and professor, Arnold Haskell, in the 1960's.

In the period between 1948 and 1956, Fernando Alonso knew how to face the apathy and misunderstandings of the Cuban governments which denied the most basic support for cultural efforts such as Cuban ballet. In those years he wrote: “ballet has begun to take roots in the people, getting the autonomous essence of different nationalities, acquiring new colors, invigorating itself with new currents and helping the average man and man in the grass-roots in his artistic and intellectual improvement. Ballet will never again be an art for kings and the powerful but a popular art for the people, such as new times demand. We have to work toward that end.”

The 1959 Cuban Revolution gave the Alonso’s endless possibilities of professional realization when the leader of the Cuban Revolution gave them full support for the creation of an internationally known ballet ensemble: the Cuban National Ballet Company, with a history full of success until current times.

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