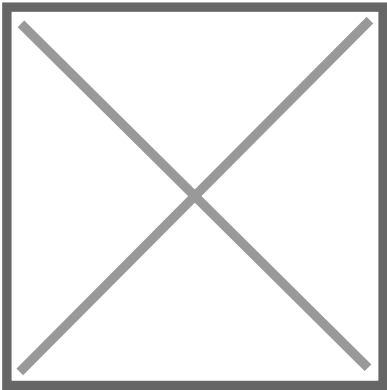




Aâ??lante Flamenco Ignites the Westminster Concert Series with Passion and Precision

Description

Written by Keolanani Kinghorn and Guest Writer Professor Sam Bryson

SALT LAKE CITY, UTâ??Westminster Performing Arts Center | April 6â??7, 2025

Presented by Westminster Performing Arts, Aâ??lante Flamencoâ??s two-night performance lights a fire on stage at the Westminster Performing Arts Center in Salt Lake City. With a seamless blend of traditional flamenco and modern innovation, the Austin-based ensemble delivered a deeply moving and electrifying experienceâ??one that transcended borders and languages to speak directly to the soul.

Founded and led by Artistic Director and choreographer **Olivia ChacÃ³n** and Music Director **IsaÃ³ ChacÃ³n**, the group is a tour de force of artistic synergy. Their shared visionâ??to cross cultural and linguistic boundaries through the visceral power of live music and danceâ??was not just realized but embodied from the first note to the final breath of the performance.

The concert opened with **â??Ni de AquÃ³, Ni de AllÃ¡â??**, a piece composed and choreographed in 2024 to honor the layered identities and immigrant stories within the company. Guest dancer **Bianca Rodriguez** launched the evening with a solo that was equal parts vulnerable and commanding. Clad in a stunning white ruffled dress, her every step spoke to the tension between rootedness and displacement. Even before the music began, the silence was electric, charged with anticipationâ??as if the other dancers and musicians were whispering unseen encouragement: â??Â¡OlÃ©!â??

Bianca Rodriguez and Olivia ChacÃ³n, Image from AÃ±lante Flamenco Facebook page

As Bianca's poised stillness gave way to movement, the ensemble joined in with haunting harmonies that set the emotional tone of the night. The rhythm began with *palmas*, *palillos*, *zapateados* interweaving with her footwork in a fiery conversation of movement and sound. Here was *duende*—that elusive, soul-baring force of flamenco—in full, unfiltered presence. Each flick of Bianca's hand and sweep of her arms echoed with purpose, while the flamenco shoes, imported from Spain and embedded with tiny nails, transformed her feet into percussive instruments.

The dancers—**Olivia ChacÃ³n**, **Bianca Rodriguez**, and **Sofia Hurtado**—formed a trio of magnetic force. Olivia, in vibrant red, danced with an intensity and groundedness that commanded the space. Sofia, dressed in elegant black, contributed fluid grace and emotional depth. Their shared rhythm was flawless, and the visual motif of red and white flowers in their hair symbolized both unity and tradition.

A dancer performing flamenco on stage, wearing a black dress with a flowing shawl, surrounded by Olivia ChacÃ³n, AÃ±lante Flamenco, Westminster Performing Arts Concert Series. Photo: Doug Carter.

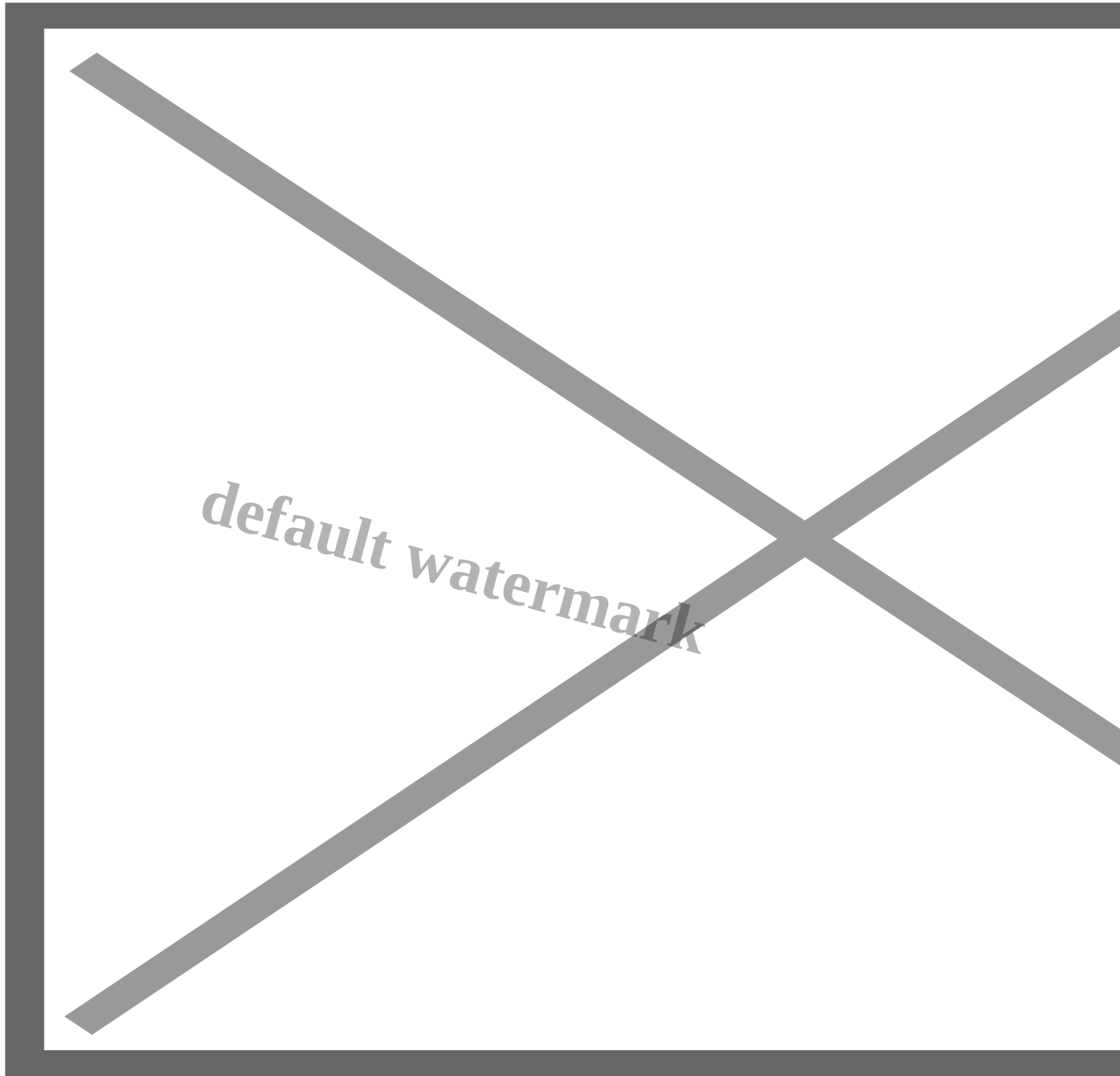
In *Limosna de Amores*, singer **Celia Corrales Sellers** delivered a performance that embodied the essence of flamenco and *duende*. Originally from CÃ³rdiz, Spain, Celia grew up immersed in flamenco culture, and her performance radiated an unfiltered authenticity. Her voice did more than carry a melody—it carried the ache of lived experience. *Casi me pareciÃ³ que estaba llorando*. It almost seemed like she was crying or mourning at times. Celia let the passion of the song override considerations of perfect intonation or tone production, choosing truth over polish. The rhythm subtly shifted as the piece progressed, sometimes feeling as though it was in 6, sometimes in 3, adding to the expressive instability of the performance. This torch song—an homage to the legendary **Lola Flores**—broke through any language barrier with raw emotional force. Afterward, Olivia reminded the audience that the show was titled *Amor Flamenco*, noting that most of the songs centered on love. Celia added, 'It was love' at some point. It didn't work out. The audience laughed, but the sting lingered—a perfect reflection of flamenco's bittersweet soul.

‘All arts are capable of duende,
but where it finds greatest range,
naturally, is in music, dance, and
spoken poetry, for these arts
require a living body to interpret
them, being forms that are born, die,
and open their contours against
an exact present.’

—*Federico Garcia Lorca, Play and Theory of the Duende*



In *Cuando Yo Me Muera (Seguiria)*, the guitars begin with a striking duet that feels more composed and structured than some of the other pieces. Isai and Jose, both masters of *la guitarra*, display their skill through intricate five-finger flourishes and rapid triplets, accentuating the rhythmic complexity while maintaining melodic and harmonic cohesion. Sofia’s dancing is powerful, fierce, and visceral—her unwavering focus pulls you in completely. The shawl becomes an extension of her body, adding elegance and tension to the performance. Meanwhile, Isai’s raspy singing voice conveys a raw passion and indifference to external judgment. It’s as if his voice declares, ‘The now is what matters. This moment.’ Describing this moment, Professor Sam Bryson shared, ‘His sound captures the essence of the *cantaor* tradition I encountered in towns across Andalusia, particularly during my time in Granada.’



Sofia Hurtado, Aâ??lante Flamenco, Westminster Performing Arts Concert Series. Photo: Doug Carter.

As the piece progresses, Sofiaâ??s focus and energy remain unrelenting, even as the tempo acceleratesâ??surpassing 270 and even 280 beats per minute. It is evident while watching Sofia how much strength and stamina dancing the flamenco requires, yet she only steps offstage long enough to set down her shawl before rejoining the group with singing, handclaps, and foot stomps. The momentum never lets up, and neither does she.

In *Spain*, the guitarists showcased their versatility, blending jazz, classical, and flamenco styles in this Chick Corea classic. JosÃ© demonstrated not only rhythmic precision but also a rich melodic and harmonic sensibility. It was thrilling to hear Isai double the melody an octave lower, adding depth and

texture. One of the highlights of the performance was when JosÃ© and Isai began trading chorusesâeach new phrase more exhilarating than the last. This piece served as a brilliant showcase of their musical dialogue and effortless chemistry.

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Image from Aálante Flamenco Facebook page

Another standout moment came with **Hacia la Mar la Vela (Cantiñas)**, performed by Olivia in a sweeping red *bata de cola*. The dress itself became an integral part of her performance, the long train fluttering behind her as she gracefully kicked the hem and sent waves of fabric rippling in time with her footwork. The flicks of her hands were like delicate punctuation to the rhythm, each movement sharp and precise, adding layers of expression to the dance. She danced one of the most popular styles of flamenco—the *Cantiñas* (or *Alegrías de Cádiz*)—with a profound mastery that blended tradition with her own expressive style. Dressed in a long red flamenco dress with a Bata de Cola, Olivia commanded the stage with elegance and power.

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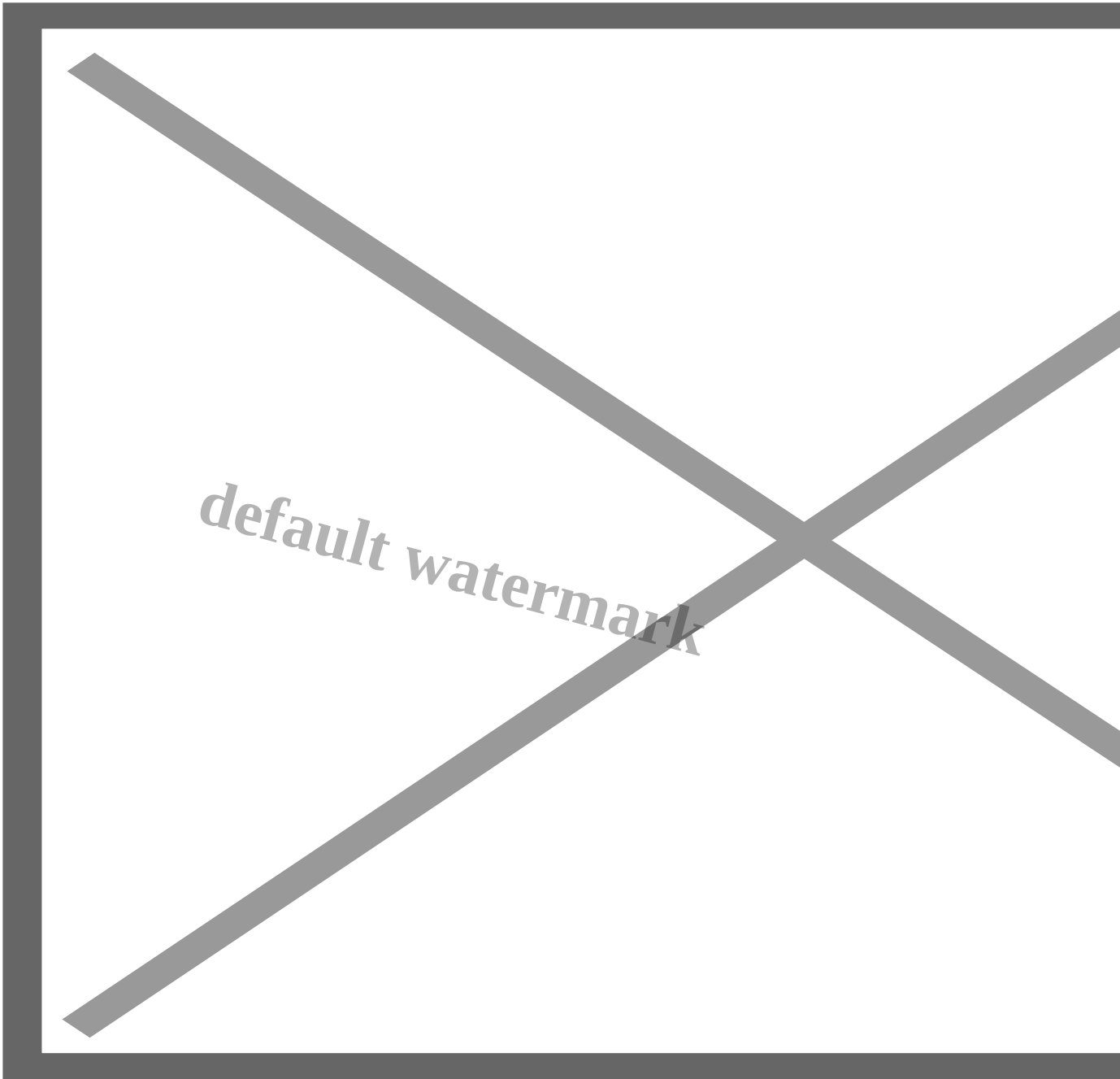
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Olivia ChacÃ³n, Image from AÃ±tante Flamenco Facebook page

The musicâtraditional, arranged by **IsaÃ± ChacÃ³n** and guitarist, **JosÃ© Manuel Tejeda**âswelled with life, and Oliviaâs choreography, rich with the soul of flamenco, filled the room with energy and passion. Her performance wasnât just a display of technique; it was a living, breathing work of art, embodying the fierce and graceful spirit of flamenco in every moment.

JosÃ©âs solos were a masterclass in expressive restraint and technical brilliance. Originally from Havana, Cuba, and trained at the prestigious Instituto Superior de Arte, JosÃ© plays with an awareness that goes beyond accompaniment. His phrasing seemed to breathe with the dancers, responding to each gesture as if in conversation. He and IsaÃ±âboth as individual musicians and as a duoâprovided the backbone of the performance with rhythmic precision and deep musicality.

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Alante Flamenco, Westminster Performing Arts Concert Series. Photo: Doug Carter.

Isa Chacn, the ensemble’s musical director and a native of Durango, Mexico, is a force in his own right. His arrangements were rich with texture and emotional nuance, effortlessly weaving jazz, Latin, and traditional flamenco influences. Whether playing guitar or singing, Isa exudes quiet authority—his voice warm and earthy, his presence centered and magnetic. His duet with Jos© was particularly striking: a moment of musical intimacy that seemed to suspend time.

Percussionist **Anthony Nocolotl• Hampton** deserves special mention for his vital role in shaping the ensemble’s rhythm. His sensitive and intuitive playing on the cajn and hand percussion anchored the dancers and enhanced the musical dialogue. With a background in ethnomusicology and global rhythms, Tony brought a sophisticated, dynamic touch that elevated the performance beyond

expectation.

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Image from Aâ??lante Flamenco Facebook page

From the playful â??Paseando por La Habana (Guajiras)â?• danced by **Bianca Rodriguez**, to Celiaâ??s soulful interpretation of Alejandro Sanzâ??s â??CÃ¡i,â?• each piece brought a new layer of the flamenco tradition to life. And yet, throughout the evening, the ensemble maintained a cohesive voiceâ??one that honored the roots of flamenco while embracing its evolution.

Presented with care and artistic integrity by the Westminster Concert Series teamâ??**Kimi Kawashima** (Director), **David Martin** (Music Production Coordinator), **Austin Ray** (Lighting Designer), and **Devin Maxwell** (Director of Music Technology and Composition)â??the technical elements of the show never overshadowed the art. Instead, lighting, sound, and staging deepened the emotional atmosphere, creating an immersive experience for the audience.

If flamenco is the voice of the soul, then **Aâ??lante Flamenco** sings it loud and clear.

Accessibility & Admission Info:

General Admission is \$20, while admission is *free* for Kâ??12 and local university students with valid IDâ??an outstanding opportunity to expose younger audiences to world-class flamenco. A post-show reception in the **Dumke Theatre Lobby** followed each performance, offering attendees the chance to meet the artists and engage more deeply with the flamenco community.

For more Accessibility Info go to:

- <https://westminsteru.edu/student-life/events-and-performances/performing-arts-events/performing-arts-visitor-information.html>

Location:

Westminster Performing Arts Center
1724 S 1300 E, Salt Lake City, UT 84105
Free parking is available adjacent to the venue in the campus parking structure.

For tickets and more information, visit: <https://westminsteru.edu/tickets>

Or contact: (801) 832-2457 | performingarts@westminsteru.eduWith support from the National Endowment for the Arts and Texas Commission on the Arts, Aâ??lante Flamenco continues to be a cultural force on the national stageâ??and this weekendâ??s performances at Westminster only confirmed their place as one of the most dynamic flamenco ensembles performing today.

Directions: Go to <https://westminsteru.edu/student-life/events-and-performances/performing-arts-events/performing-arts-visitor-information.html>

About the Authors

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Professor Sam Bryson is the Director of Percussion Studies at Weber State University and a recipient of the 2025 Presidential Teaching Excellence Award. He holds an MFA in Percussion Performance from Northern Arizona University, he has a demonstrated history of leadership in music education, conducting symphonic, marching, and pep bands as well as percussion ensembles. Bryson is known for his impactful teaching, student mentorship, and contributions to nonprofit organizations, instructional design, and music research.

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