



LA CHANA

Synopsis

“I was born to dance. I would lay awake all night long, repeating the rhythms in my head until they became a part of me” -La Chana

She was one of the greatest stars in the flamenco world, captivating audiences worldwide with her innovative style and breathtaking use of rhythm in the 1960s and 1970s.

LA CHANA is a feature-length documentary film that brings us close to the heart and mind of La Chana, the self-taught Gypsy dancer, Antonia Santiago Amador, as she returns to the stage to give a final seated performance after a break of two decades.

Peter Sellers, with whom she features in *The Bobo* (1967), invited her to Hollywood. Instead, at the peak of her career, she suddenly disappeared from the scene. Along the way, La Chana reveals the secret behind her disappearance: for 18 years she was the victim of domestic abuse at the hands of her first husband. In this dramatic story about the process and power of creativity, about aging, perseverance and re-invention, La Chana crystallises the inevitable clashes between her life's extremes and contradictions; between the talented artist on stage and the woman behind the scenes.



Director's Note

La Chana's story highlights a number of topics that have both current relevance and universal appeal. As La Chana nears the end of her physical capability to dance, La Chana needs to re-define herself. On her journey, she brings her audience close and challenges them to reflect on specific topics: aging, the imminent loss of something that defines you and that you love, acceptance and re-invention.

Meanwhile, the story of La Chana's past highlights topics that have an important social relevance today. La Chana is giving us rare, intimate access to her Gitano world and how she lives and experiences it as a woman. Through her deeply personal story, we gain an idea of the role and treatment of Gypsy women in Spanish Gitano culture and what implications it has for a woman to suffer domestic abuse in a marginalized society.

In the film, we approach the topic of abuse very carefully, making sure that we don't point fingers, make generalizations or put our protagonist in a risky situation. Our approach is to stay very close to La Chana's individual, personal and emotional experience of domestic violence- her loneliness, helplessness, isolation and the feeling that she was stuck in a vicious circle where her own community was both her only support and her 'prison warden' that kept her locked inside a violent reality.

I believe that it's very important to tell stories of women's lives from all walks of life, and in this documentary, we have an amazing story of survival and empowerment through pure art and strength of character. For a change, it's a story about a Gypsy woman, who through her own tragedy gives hope and encouragement to young women, globally, as well as in the Gitano and Roma communities, to fight for their dreams whatever they might be. My mission is not only to tell a unique story with universal appeal, but also to make sure we bring it to the audiences who will get most out of it. After all, empowerment through stories is the power of documentaries.



Background

La Chana was born in deep poverty in Hospitalet de Llobregat (Barcelona, Spain) in 1946 and discovered her passion for flamenco at an early age stage. She started dancing as a child, despite her father's resistance to this "unwholesome" profession for a woman.

To pursue her dream and to escape from the clan's disapproval, she marries Miguel- a Gitano from Santander and flamenco guitarist. Miguel immediately turns violent and a vicious circle begins: La Chana channels her pain, isolation and loneliness into flamenco dance, mesmerizing audiences worldwide as she rises to stardom. Yet the more she overshadows her husband, the more violent he becomes. After 18 years of abuse, he manages to intimidate her to leave the stage as her career is peaking. A few years later, when Miguel thinks La Chana will no longer be able to recuperate her career, he abandons her- leaving her and their only daughter Núria with nothing.

In order to survive, La Chana starts dancing again and the stage once again becomes her battlefield to prove herself and to rise above her personal and professional fall. She drives her body to the limits, and her career takes off again when she begins touring the world with the company La Cumbre Flamenca. La Chana strives to recuperate the position that she had lost in the flamenco world. In this process, she destroys herself physically as her aging body fights to catch up with her creative mind. But her mission to rise to the top again, and with it her self-destruction, is halted by another man. When La Chana falls in love with Felix, a non-Gypsy fishmonger, she decides to retire.

Now, 25 years later, La Chana and Felix are still married and leading a tranquil life in Dosrius (Catalonia). With Felix, La Chana has found an inner peace in her personal life. But she still feels a frustration with the turn of her professional life. Due to arthritis in the knee and a back injury, she can no longer dance properly. But she still does it somehow, although she has to sit to be able to perform. This inconvenience doesn't tame the artist inside her.

As La Chana delves into her past, every atom of her body comes alive. Recounting her story, she re-lives her dreams as a child and takes us on an intimate journey through her rise and fall as a flamenco star as shows us how her emotions funnel into a vital necessity to create flamenco.



About the creative team

Lucija Stojevic Director and Producer

Lucija Stojevic was educated in The University of Edinburgh (Architectural Design) and Prague Film School (Directing and Editing). She has independently produced over 30 short format documentaries for The Guardian, The New York Times and Global Post. Her work has also been displayed in the context of video art in exhibitions in Vienna and Graz (Austria), Screens of Barcelona/LOOP (Spain) and The Edinburgh Fringe Festival (UK). In 2014, she established Noon Films S.L. a production company focusing on creative documentaries in Barcelona, Spain.

Deirdre Towers Producer and Outreach Director

Deirdre Towers ran the ***Dance on Camera Festival*** in New York, co-produced by the Film Society of Lincoln Center, for 18 years, and acquired 110 partners for its tour. She has taught in the NYC schools as a flamenco dancer for 12 years during the Flamenco Festival.

Bless Bless Productions Co-Producer, USA/Iceland

Susan Muska and Gréta Ólafsdóttir produced and directed the award winning documentaries ***The Brandon Teena Story, Edie & Thea: A Very Long Engagement, Women, The Forgotten Face of War, Through the Lens***. The latter received a jury award for best documentary at the Astra International Documentary Festival and was a part of two year campaign by Amnesty International to stop violence against women. Awards for ***The Brandon Teena Story*** include The Berlin International Film Festival's Teddy for best documentary and the Siegel Säule Audience Award.

Samuel Navarrete Director of Photography

Samuel Navarrete has worked as cinematographer on projects in Spain, France, Germany, England, Croatia, Armenia and China. He was DOP for ***Encanto***, which won the Audience Award at the Festival do Cinema da UFRJ, the Honorable Mention in the MIA (Brazil) and participated in the festivals Documenta Madrid, Camera Mundo-Rotterdam, among others. He worked as cinematographer, co-writer and director's assistant for feature documentary ***A Lucky Man*** (Armenia, 2013) and ***Tornar a la Fabrica*** (2012), for Catalanian TV3.

Domi Parra Editor

Domi Parra is an award-winning editor with over 20 years of experience working as an editor of feature documentaries, fiction films, TV reportages and series. (http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0663378/?ref_=fn_al_nm_1)

Crew and Technical Information

Format

55'/82' HD

Production Company: Noon Films S.L. (www.noon-films.com), Barcelona, Spain

In co-production with: Bless Bless Productions, Reykjavik, Iceland and New York, USA

In co-production with: RTVE

In collaboration with: TV3

With the support of: Generalitat de Catalunya- Institut de Cultura, Icelandic Film Center

Director and Producer

Lucija Stojevic

Producer, Outreach & Audience Engagement

Deirdre Towers

Co-producers

Susan Muska

Greta Olafsdottir

Associate Producer, Expert Advice & Coordination

Beatriz del Pozo

Associate Producer

Guri Scotford

Production Coordinator

Sandra Olsina

Documentalist and Assistant Director

Lucia Sances

Director of photography

Samuel Navarrete

Additional Camera

Carlos Villaoslada, Ferran Gassiot, Lucija Stojevic and Xavi Sibecas

Editor

Domi Parra

Second Editor

Irene Coll

Sound Editor

Alejandro Castillo

Sound Mix

Nicolas Liebing

Additional Sound

Nicolas Céléry

Motion Graphics and Graphic Design

Andrés Bartos

Color Correction

Konráð Gylfason

Legal Support

Carles Viñas

Fiscal Sponsor

New York Women in Film & Television

Project developed during:

ESoDoc 2013

Docu Rough Cut Boutique 2014



Screening Times @ IDFA

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|---------------|-------|-------|
| MUNT 09 | 17.11 | 15:45 |
| TUSCHINSKI 4 | 19.11 | 17:15 |
| TUSCHINSKI 6 | 20.11 | 11:00 |
| MUNT 12 | 24.11 | 16:15 |
| PODIUM MOZAIK | 26.11 | 21:30 |

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