



Antonio Vargas is recognized as one of the world's leading Flamenco dancers and choreographers. Ingenious, innovative and a perfectionist, he performs and teaches internationally, with works for theatre, cinema and television. He is known as a guardian of an esoteric art form that, despite its massive recent popularity, remains elusive to most of those who flock to see it. He is a master of the complex rhythmic syncopations that characterize much of the excitement of Flamenco.

Antonio Vargas won accolades for his performance as the gypsy father, Rico in the Australian box-office hit movie *Strictly Ballroom*, directed by Baz Luhrmann and the winner of the Golden Globe Award and of the Cannes Film Festival Golden Camera Award for Young Directors. More recently he choreographed and staged a Flamenco segment for Tom Cruise's *Mission Impossible II* directed by John Woo. He also played a cameo in this film. Other acting credits include *Time Trax*.

Another important facet of his career is the work he has done in collaboration with orchestras and opera productions, such as Harvey Goldsmith's *Carmen* (Sydney, Melbourne, Zurich and Munch), *Bolero*, *Zapateado*, and *Three Spanish Dances* with the Munich Philharmoniker, *Blood Wedding* for the London Operatic Society and *La Vida Breve*, a Basil Lochart production for the BBC, and recently produced for the Sydney Festival. Antonio has always been a pioneer in the field of Flamenco Dance Theatre. Back in 1962, when he formed his first company, he had already the desire to take Flamenco out of the tight boundaries of the traditional, predictable performances that most audiences were used to; he always believed that Flamenco could lend itself to interpret great novelists and poets and that it could be put on stage side by side with the most established, mainstream art-forms, such as opera and choral works, without jeopardising its authenticity.

Antonio Vargas trained initially in Flamenco with Spain's foremost teacher, Antonio Marin. He went on to perform as a leading dancer in the Pilar Lopez Spanish Dance Company. After two years he was invited to dance in the Rafael de Cordova Dance Company as a lead dancer. Later he formed his own company, The Antonio Vargas Flamenco Dance Theatre. Having seen him perform at the 1973 Edinburgh Festival, eminent Covent Garden dance critic Peter Williams wrote: " He has opened new frontiers of the Flamenco art; he is already the greatest Spanish master of this century". His words have been reiterated with each new work that Antonio Vargas has produced. Throughout his illustrious career he has always found the inspiration to present pieces, which, although they never deviate from the roots and authenticity of Flamenco, are exceptionally contemporary.

Since 2003, Antonio has also been actively involved in introducing and developing the art of Flamenco in SE Asia, including Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, China and Taiwan by conducting workshops and developing projects involving local artists. In addition, he also conducts educational seminars and lectures on the history and art of Flamenco and Spanish Dance in various art colleges and universities throughout the world. In the last few years, Antonio has concentrated in preparing for a series of Flamenco books and DVDs covering musical structures of the Flamenco repertoire and introducing his novel notation system for the Flamenco dance vocabulary. This project will be done in collaboration with Spanish producer, Flamenco Live based in Madrid, Spain.

He now spends his time between Spain, Australia, SE Asia and North America and continues to promulgate the Spanish-Flamenco culture by exploring his collaboration with other art forms, such as classical ballet and contemporary music.