

the garden of the Hesperides



Company: Alicia Soto – Hojarasca



The performance has received recognition
for its quality and subject matter.

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Direction and Choreography: Alicia Soto

**Award “Special Jury Mention”” 6th Baghdad International Theatre Festival,
2025**



What lies behind every woman's face I have known.

What story lives behind each gaze.

No matter the place, nor the country they come from, the gardens are the same, there are similar hells, and paradise is not reserved for them, because they are women.

“The garden of the Hesperides”

Direction and choreography: **Alicia Soto**

Although there are differences of time and era, the same stigmas remain: differentiation still exists. “There is still the lesser and the greater.” There are still similar stories—struggle, violence, love, solitude, and overcoming.

Some are deep and dramatic, simply because of being a woman.

“The garden of the Hesperides” is a **Spanish–Moroccan** project involving the creation of a **dance-theatre** performance. A song to women, a journey back and forth between cultures and their particularities, developed through a research process that includes two workshops with Moroccan and Spanish women in Casablanca and Valladolid.

According to Greek mythology, the Hesperides were the Mélides, nymphs who guarded a garden of fruit trees bearing golden apples that granted immortality. This orchard, according to myth, could be located in the south of the Iberian Peninsula or in the Moroccan Atlas Mountains. Hence the title ***“the garden of the Hesperides”***.

Our *“garden of the Hesperides”* represents the inner garden of women—of all women in a universal sense: women from different cultures, religions, ages, and eras.

From a dreamlike and poetic perspective, the piece seeks to reveal everything a woman builds in order to dream, to rest, to catch her breath, to quench her thirst, and to construct an intimate world that helps her to continue, and in some cases, to survive. The garden exists only if darkness is known.

We speak of women in a universal way, taking as a starting point the powerful imagery left by the women of Morocco. Everything that Morocco represents connects us to the ancestral, to ritual, and to the tribe.

To return to woman is to return to the beginning, to the source, to the origin of life. And by starting from the Moroccan woman, we seek to dismantle walls of prejudice surrounding cultural differences.



We will recreate the garden starting from a collective female imaginary that reveals rituals and particularities:

Women in the hammam.

Women weavers: carpets and myths, women who hold an entire oral tradition, the almost forgotten Berber illiteracy, and the writing of dreams. Women who weave dreams or dream what they weave, translating them through Jungian symbols.

Women who gather seaweed by the sea, independent women, women who are still illiterate and those who are educated. The young and those who are no longer so young. Women artists.

By observing history and holding memory, certain situations repeat themselves; they feel familiar, they have already occurred in other societies, despite differences in customs and culture. It is only a matter of time and struggle—one that belongs to women, wherever they live—in order to move forward.

By describing an imaginary world through the language of the moving body and the plurality of languages—Spanish, French, and Darija—we give voice to different women in a universal and timeless way, using texts by women writers, poets, and philosophers from different eras, as well as testimonies and lived experiences of Moroccan women, to reveal our Hesperides:

The dreaming woman
The woman in love
The resilient and fighting woman
The working woman
The solitary woman
The independent woman

And to describe a garden where the presence of water, fabrics, carpets, brightly colored garments, red dust, the **BODY** and the **VOICE**, youth and maturity coexist.

Folk songs.

Rituals. Scents.

And the sharing of stories and tales among women and with the **AUDIENCE**.

Alicia Soto





*"Everything begins with a woman's body and the desire to feel life.
Only afterwards do fear and the greed to possess and dominate take hold.
Freedom and daring frighten those who have never set out on a journey, yet
deep blood patiently carves the place of the flower that will become a star."*

*"In every womb, the call of the garden echoes—primordial and eternal.
And despite danger, abandonment, and exhaustion, from grains of sand and
tears in drops, new roots and another sky are invented."*

Julio Martín da Fonseca

Multicultural artistic cast

Lorenza di Calogero, Paloma Calderón, Sanae Assif, Ester Lozano, Alicia Soto.

Artistic Collaborators:

Carmen Kostina, Julio Martín da Fonseca, Miguel Ángel Camacho, Abdellah M. Hassak, Abdellah Chakiri, Elisa Sanz y Ana Lola Cosin.

El proceso creativo, residencias artísticas y talleres de convivencia, Marruecos y España:

The project unfolds in two stages: a first phase of research and creation between January and April, culminating in a public presentation in **work in progress format**, followed by a second phase of premiere and performances starting in September.

In parallel, theatre-dance workshops entitled **Tell Your Body** are held, aimed at Moroccan and foreign women in Morocco, as well as Moroccan women living in Valladolid.

The testimonies and shared experiences gathered during these workshops directly nourish the creation of the performance and the work of the artistic ensemble.





Workshop content: Tell Your Body

An experience of encounter, creation, and collective expression. A space to build shared time where the closeness of gazes and bodies can be felt—bodies that fall silent, that speak, that dance, and that sing.

What can a body carry within? What memories, stories, and dreams?
“Behind fabrics, doors, and customs, there is always a breathing body”.

This workshop is an opportunity to share feminine wisdom, shaped by experience and intuition. A creation by women, addressed to everyone, inviting an artistic and transformative encounter between cultures.

Work periods · 2020

The project was developed with the collaboration of the Association Nouvelle Vision; the Embassy of Spain in Morocco; the Instituto Cervantes of Casablanca; Théâtre La Fol (Casablanca); the Ministry of Culture of Morocco; the Regional Directorate of Culture - Casablanca Region (Théâtre d'Ain Harrouda); and the City Council of Valladolid, through the Departments of Education, Childhood, Youth and Equality, and Social Services and Community Mediation.

The project is structured in three phases.

The **first phase** takes place in Casablanca (February 10–29), where Alicia Soto leads the ***Tell Your Body*** workshop and develops the initial creative process together with the cast and a group of Moroccan and foreign women.

The **second phase** is developed in Valladolid (March 1–29), with an artistic residency at Teatro Serrada focused on the creation of the performance.

The **third phase** combines Spain and Morocco, with an artistic residency at Teatro Calderón de Valladolid (September 18–26), workshops with Moroccan and Romani women, and the **national premiere** on September 25 and 26.

The premiere in Morocco takes place on November 27 in Rabat, as part of the program Visages, Spain Today.





Reviews

Review Summary – Baghdad International Theatre Festival

The garden of the Hesperides arrives to reconfigure aesthetic and existential concepts within a singular artistic form, embodying a profound visual and physical poetics that combines choreography—understood as the design of bodies in evocative motion—with dramaturgy, which carves questions out of silence and weaves narratives from presence.

The mastery of the work is revealed in the unity of its intellectual, aesthetic, and dramatic discourse. It is not confined to performance or dance, but expands into a philosophical and poetic experience that conceives space, time, and the body as interconnected entities.

Carefully selected as part of the activities of the sixth edition of the Baghdad International **Theatre Festival**, the piece marked a milestone in its programming, reaffirming that our theatre is capable of embracing international experiences without losing its identity, transforming them into a living dialogue between cultures. Its selection was not merely artistic, but an aesthetic vision that affirms that freedom begins in the body and that art is a language that is not translated—it is lived.

It is not merely a performance, but a meditation on existence, memory, and the body that refuses to be erased and insists on becoming the first book of freedom.

In an era in which the essence of being is reduced to image, this work restores philosophical depth to beauty and proclaims that theatre, when it dances, writes the very poetry of life: with a body that remembers its myth, and with a myth that bleeds within its body.

Review Summary — Backstage Newspaper — March 21, 2025

The performance offered a sensory and contemplative experience that captivated the audience, taking them on a journey through the labyrinths of the feminine self, where emotions intertwine between pain and joy, between restriction and liberation, and between oppression and resistance. With an innovative artistic vision, **director Alicia Soto rewrites this story, turning the “garden” into an inner space for each woman, where she preserves her dreams and disappointments while seeking her own path toward enlightenment.**

The scenographic elements that shape the work—including lighting, musical effects, and costumes—played a fundamental role in highlighting the psychological states of the characters.

Mohamed Sami
Backstage Newspaper / Al Arab, Tunis, March 2025

Review Summary — Le Quotidien — March 21, 2025

The third edition of the event «Tunis Théâtres du Monde» was inaugurated yesterday, Thursday, March 20, at the «Le 4ème Art» venue in Tunis, organized by the Tunisian National Theatre (TNT).

«The garden of the Hesperides» **reveals itself as a sensory and introspective odyssey that guides spectators through the meanders of the feminine soul. Emotions intertwine, oscillating between pain and joy, oppression and liberation, submission and resistance, thus offering a renewed reading of the female experience in today's world.**

On an artistic level, the performance stands out for its subtle fusion of visual elements and musicality.

Through a delicate blending of myth and modernity, movement and narration, oppression and hope, The Garden of the Hesperides asserts itself as a deeply committed work, carrying a message of emancipation and female solidarity. By capturing the complexity of the female experience in all its richness, the performance reveals a reality where memory, resistance, and dream intertwine to sketch the contours of a freer and more just future.

Editorial Team · Tunis · Théâtres du Monde



Analytical Reading of the Theatrical Performance *The garden of the Hesperides*

From its very title, the work engages in a “feminist” battle, both aesthetically and intellectually.

Two poetic levels intertwine: the visual aesthetics of the space—primarily grounded in the dancing body—and the poetics of spoken language—poems and personal narratives.

Beyond the body and language, other elements such as light, sound, music, props, and the use of the empty stage space contribute to the creation of a comprehensive visual rhetoric, capable of constructing an interpretative system that continuously generates meaning, refusing to become mere empty ornamentation.

By exploring all these gardens—especially the inner ones: stories, disappointments, doubts, dreams, a spirit of defiance, and the charms and scars of their bodies—the work poses an extremely harsh paradox: if the woman’s body represents paradise for man, it often becomes a hell for the woman herself. The body loses its ownership, becoming at once the source of honor and shame for others. This polarity—paradise and hell—reveals a deeper truth, often ignored: the female body is a space where radically contradictory meanings and concepts collide; reduced to a source of desire and pleasure for men, while for women it becomes a space of authority, repression, and objectification.

Resumen de la crítica — La Verdad de Murcia (3 febrero 2021)

"The choreographic work **The garden of the Hesperides** by Alicia Soto is capable of generating a true experience of **synesthesia** in the spectator. This garden becomes **the inner landscape of free women's bodies—brave, strong, independent women.**

All elements, brought together in **perfect harmony**, result in a truly compelling piece. **A style composed of so many details that it is difficult to categorize due to its striking originality.** The staging invites us to personally experience different situations. **The ending is an explosion of jubilation**, with clouds of colored powders covering the bodies of this splendid mix of women.."

Margarita Muñoz Zielinski
Dance Critic · La Verdad de Murcia, February 3, 2021

Review Summary — Teatro Calderón de Valladolid

"With which the 2020/21 theatre season opens **brilliantly**. This latest work is, for me, **another pleasant surprise and a clear step forward in her career.** A piece created with women, as it is **a reflection on women of any condition and ethnicity**, from any part of the world.

That island is, in fact, inside every woman, and she can and must evoke it in order to feel, to fully enjoy life. **The actress-dancers are excellent..**

The music by Abdellah Hassak is compelling, the lighting is original, and the theatrical direction is strong.””

Carlos Toquero Sandoval





Review Summary – Cristina de Lucas – March 2021

"The performance is **rich in dance imagery and emotionally very intense**, with **a scenic austerity that highlights the word and the movement** of the five women who make up the cast.

Initially conceived as a Spanish–Moroccan project, it ultimately **emerges as a universal reflection on female identity** and the heavy burden of hardships and impositions that still shape it today.

The subtle narrative thread that sustains the work builds a story of liberation that alternates rage and serenity, defiance and discouragement, sensuality and anguish. **The overall tone is not emphatic, plaintive, or violent, but introspective and, at times, even hopeful.**"

"The choreography created by Soto includes **powerful images and symbols**. Bodies that roll and laboriously slide across the floor **evoke feelings of humiliation and physical suffering**, but also that **unbreakable will to rise again** that structures the work. The linked group possesses the expressive power of a living, malleable sculpture and, as it advances across the stage, evokes the harshness of a difficult journey—one that can be overcome through **shared effort**.

It is the prelude to the transformation of its protagonists into new, strong, and free women."

Cristina de Lucas
Performing arts scholar and critic for the London-based magazine Bachtrack.

Artistic Team

A garden brought to life thanks to the outstanding work of a top-level artistic team, including Alicia Soto herself—creator, choreographer, dramaturg, and performer; Julio Martín da Fonseca, responsible for the stage direction; the renowned Elisa Sanz, set and costume designer, winner of eight Max Awards and recipient of an additional award in 2020, who designed all the costumes for the piece; and the distinguished designer Miguel Ángel Camacho, also the recipient of several Max Awards.

The cast also includes Paloma Calderón, nominated for Best Female Performer at the 2020 Max Awards, and Lorenza di Calogero, winner of the Best Dancer Award in 2019 at the Valencian Community Performing Arts Awards.





Creation and Choreography: **Alicia Soto**

Dramaturgy: **Alicia Soto, Julio Martín da Fonseca y Carmen Samudio Kostina**

Theatrical Direction: **Julio Martín da Fonseca**

Performers: **Lorenza Di Calogero, Paloma Calderón, Sanae Assif, Ester Lozano y Alicia Soto**

Texts: **Carmen Samudio Kostina, otras autoras**

Original Music: **Abdellah M. Hassak**

Lighting Design: **Miguel Ángel Camacho**

Technical Manager: **Paloma Cavilla**

Costume Design: **Elisa Sanz**

Cover: **Ana Lola Cosin**

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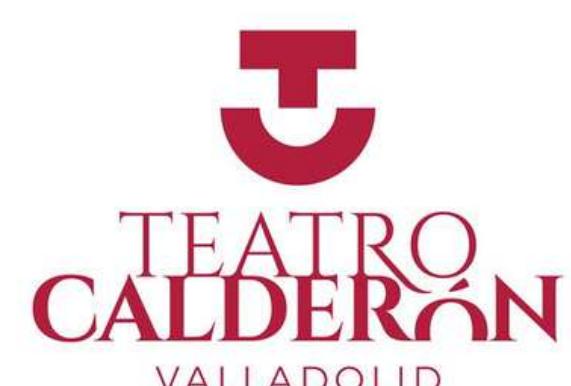


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Hojarasca

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WITH THE COLLABORATION OF:



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