



COLECCIÓN DEL
MUSEO RUSO

A Life

Without Borders

ANNA

PAVLOVA



20/05/25 - 22/05/26

Anna Pavlova

A Life Without Borders

Anna Pavlova (1881-1931) forever transformed the world of dance, bringing the magic of ballet to the most unexpected corners of the planet. Imagine a time when ballet was an art exclusive to the grand theaters of Europe. Pavlova changed that forever.

The Beginnings of a Legend



In the cold streets of St. Petersburg, a young girl from a humble family dreamed of dancing. Despite experts saying her body was not “ideal” for ballet—her arms were too long, her feet too arched—, Anna Pavlova proved that passion and dedication could overcome any obstacle. At the prestigious Imperial Ballet School, under the guidance of the famous Marius Petipa, Pavlova developed a unique style that would change dance forever.

Anna Pavlova with a dog, Paris. 1920s.

The Creation of an Icon

Her most famous performance, "*The Dying Swan*", became more than just a dance: it was poetry in motion. For barely four minutes, Pavlova made the audience hold their breath as they watched the struggle between life and death, expressed through movements that were as delicate as they were deeply moving.



Pavlova, the immortal swan with a mortal swan.
Photograph: Lafayette, 1927. *The Sketch Magazine*, 1936.

An Artist Without Borders

In 1910, after conquering the stages of Russia, Pavlova made a revolutionary decision: to form her own company and bring ballet to places where it had never been seen before. At a time when travel was a real adventure, she embarked on an extraordinary mission that would take her to over 40 countries and perform more than 9.000 times.

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Her Legacy in Spain and the Hispanic World

In Spain, Pavlova left an indelible mark. During her tours across the Iberian Peninsula, she performed in the most emblematic theaters of Madrid and Barcelona, including the Teatro Real and the Gran Teatre del Liceu. What most fascinated the Spanish audience was her ability to incorporate passion and drama —so characteristic of Spanish performing arts— into her classical interpretations.

Pavlova had a special admiration for Spanish dance. During her visits, she studied both Spanish ballet and flamenco, becoming captivated by the expressiveness and strength of these styles. This influence was reflected in some of her later choreographies, where she fused elements of classical ballet

with movements inspired by Spanish dance, especially in pieces like *“La noche de España”* and her interpretations of *“Carmen”*.

In Latin America, crowds filled the streets to see her. Theaters were too small, and her performances often moved to bullrings where thousands of people could enjoy her art. In Mexico and Argentina, she not only performed but also learned local traditional dances, incorporating them into her shows as a gesture of respect and admiration for Hispanic cultures.



Pavlova as Kitri, the innkeeper's daughter, in the ballet *Don Quixote*. Sketch Magazine. 1924.

Beyond the Stage

In the early 20th century, life for a touring ballet company was full of challenges. Pavlova traveled with her entire company, musicians, costume staff, and tailors, who took care of the numerous garments and equipment day after day. They often performed in improvised spaces, without ideal conditions, yet her magic transformed any stage into a dreamlike palace.



Performance program in the USA. 1914.

Global Recognition

Her fame transcended borders and cultures. In Japan, poets composed haikus inspired by her "swan-like grace." In England, where she made her home, she was considered a national treasure. She even inspired the creation of one of the world's most famous desserts: *the Pavlova*, for which Australia and New Zealand still maintain a friendly dispute over its origin.

A Living Legacy in Spain

Today, as you walk through this exhibition at the Russian Museum Collection in Málaga, you are participating in the continuation of that cultural dialogue that Pavlova began more than a century ago. Spain, with its rich tradition of dance

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ranging from flamenco to contemporary ballet, is the perfect place to celebrate the legacy of an artist who dedicated her life to proving that dance is a universal language.

This exhibition, presented in Málaga —a city that has historically been a meeting point for cultures and is now one of the most dynamic cultural centers in Spain— reminds us that art remains a bridge between peoples and traditions, just as Pavlova demonstrated throughout her life.



ANNA PAVLOVA and LAURENT NOVIKOFF

Anna Pavlova and Mikhail Novikoff in the ballet *Amarilla*. 1910s. Photography: Foulsham & Banfield LTD. Rotary Photo S. C.

The Exhibition

In these rooms, you will find unique testimonies of her journeys: Performance programs from the most remote theaters, press clippings of the time, photographs, and personal objects that traveled from Australia, England, the United States, Mexico, and other countries to the Russian Museum Collection in Málaga. As you can read in an edition of *"The Times"* newspaper from 1920: "There are other great dancers. But there is only one Pavlova".

An Invitation to Discovery

We invite you to discover the story of this extraordinary woman who proved that dance, like art in general, has the power to transcend borders, cultures, and time. May your visit to this exhibition inspire you, as Pavlova did, to pursue your dreams no matter the obstacles.

Welcome to a journey through Anna Pavlova's world without borders.



Anna Pavlova in Paris in the autumn of 1930, a few months before her tragic death.

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