

REPORT FOR THE LISA ULLMANN TRAVELLING SCHOLARSHIP FUND

8 April 2002
by Marina Keet (Mrs. M. Grut)

PROJECT. Preservation of the last remaining steps and some of the dances of the "Escuela Bolera" ("Bolero School", the classical style of Spanish dance) of the 19th century in Spain, codified by Marina Keet in her book "The Bolero School" published by Dance Books Ltd in London in April 2002.

AIM. To take classes in Madrid with Mr Eloy Pericet to check the exercises of the "Escuela Bolera". Eloy Pericet is one of only two teaching members of the Pericet family, which has passed on these dances and exercises from generation to generation for 200 years. The aim is to make a (non-commercial) DVD and video of this almost lost heritage.

PARTICIPANTS. (1) Marina Keet (Mrs. M. Grut), who wished to check the codified notes of the exercises and ensure that these are performed absolutely correctly. Also to collect any comments which could enhance the DVD/video. These will be included in my introduction preceding the performed steps. (2) Conchita del Campo, who will be dancing the exercises that I taught her, when we do the DVD/video. (3) My husband, Mikael Grut, who videoed all the classes, raw material only, for future reference.

IMPLEMENTATION. I left London on 30th March and returned on 6th April 2002. The classes with Eloy Pericet were on the three days 2nd, 3rd and 4th of April. Conchita del Campo and I worked hard, first checking the details of the work with each other prior to those days, and then for three days with Eloy Pericet, going over each of the steps with great care, and conferring afterwards. We took along with us a metronome, to ensure the thorough timing of each exercise. Conchita, who I had taught in London, danced the steps, I checked them in my notes and recorded his comments about these steps.

RESULTS. Some interesting revelations came to light. (1) The most important and fascinating was about one step called "Espacada" which his family for years had assumed was of Russian origin because the dancer shoots up onto the heels as in Russian folk dancing. He had taught it recently at a workshop in Spain, called it "Russian", and was confronted by a young student who said that the step could be seen performed in the finale of the Basque dance called "Reverencia", in the particular version in a small town in the Basque region. Thus, after two hundred years, this fact came to light by pure serendipity. (2) Because I am a ballet dancer by training and studied the Cecchetti method of ballet, I could identify steps danced both in that school in the 18th century and compare them to the ones in the Escuela Bolera. This has never been recognised before. I demonstrated them with dancers from London, Washington D.C. and Cape Town at three lecture/demonstrations at the Royal Academy of Dance, the Cecchetti Society and at the Royal Ballet at Covent Garden between 1998 and 2000. Gillian Hurst of the Cecchetti Society, later added a few extra examples. (3) An important point made by Eloy Pericet which I will include in my comments on the video, was that the castanet rhythms, although taught by him as though they are the only rhythms to accompany the steps, will obviously change according to the rhythm of the music used. Earlier in my studies I had collected from him the exact music which would suit each step. This is noted down in my book and will be included in the video. The family has for years taught these exercises without music. Their grandfather banged out the rhythm with a stick.

FOLLOW-UP. My task is now to find funding to prepare the DVD and video on which to preserve this endangered cultural heritage: to pay a pianist, to hire a studio and crew, to pay Conchita and other dancers to dance. It needs to be done as soon as possible while still fresh in our minds. The cost will be about £1900.