



ROYAL
OPERA
HOUSE

THE ROYAL BALLET

Director

KEVIN O'HARE CBE

Founder

DAME NINETTE DE VALOIS OM CH DBE

Founder Choreographer

SIR FREDERICK ASHTON OM CH CBE

Founder Music Director

CONSTANT LAMBERT

Prima Ballerina Assoluta

DAME MARGOT FONTEYN DBE

LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE

Pedro: 'I swear I will love you forever.'

Mama Elena: 'You know perfectly well that being the youngest daughter means you have to take care of me until the day I die.'

A BALLET IN THREE ACTS

Inspired by the book by **LAURA ESQUIVEL**

Choreography **CHRISTOPHER WHEELDON**

Scenario **CHRISTOPHER WHEELDON** and **JOBY TALBOT**

Music **JOBY TALBOT**

© 2022 Chester Music Ltd

Orchestrations **BEN FOSKETT**

Designer **BOB CROWLEY**

Lighting Designer **NATASHA KATZ**

Video Designer **LUKE HALLS**

Music consultant **ALONDRA DE LA PARRA**

Associate set designer **JAIMIE TODD**

Associate costume designer **LYNETTE MAURO**

ACT I

Scene 1 The De la Garza Ranch

Growing up, Tita is transported by the delicious scents from the kitchen and the delight in food she shares with her beloved Nacha, the family cook. Tita's free-spirited games with Pedro, the son of a neighbouring ranchero, are quashed by her mother, the formidable widow Elena De la Garza. The childhood friendship develops into flirtatious courtship and a declaration of love. But a family tradition, unquestioned for generations, prevents their union. As the youngest daughter, Tita must remain unmarried to care for her mother in her old age. To Tita's dismay, the hand of her sister Rosaura is offered to Pedro in marriage instead by Mama Elena. Tita is inconsolable as she prepares the wedding cake with Nacha, and her tears inundate the batter. Alone, Nacha tastes the cake mixture and is overcome with intense longing and grief, engulfed by memories of her long-dead fiancé. She curls up on the table and breathes her last.

Scene 2 Rosaura and Pedro's wedding

Pedro believes his marriage will enable him to stay close to Tita, his one true love. Seeing her sadness, he gives Tita a rose from the wedding bouquet, reassuring her of his unwavering love. As the guests consume the wedding cake, they too are overwhelmed with sorrow and memories of lost loves. Their sadness manifests as violent indigestion. Nacha's body is carried in. Devastated, Tita believes that she is the cause of all the chaos.

Scene 3 Baby Roberto

A year has passed and Rosaura is exasperated by her attempts to feed her newborn baby. Mama Elena consults the family doctor, John Brown. His efforts to help are in vain and the shrill crying of the baby shreds everyone's nerves. Distraught, Rosaura leaves the baby with Tita in the kitchen. Something magical takes place and Tita is filled with wonder at the miracle of being able to nurse the baby. Witnessing this, Pedro's love for her deepens. Mama Elena becomes suspicious of them.

Scene 4 Quail in Rose Petal Sauce

Tita serves the evening meal: quail made with petals from the rose given to her by Pedro at the wedding. While Mama Elena and Rosaura recoil in disgust at the food, Tita's other sister, Gertrudis, and Pedro take sensual delight in the dish. The food has an erotic effect upon Gertrudis; Tita's physical desire for Pedro has manifested as an aphrodisiac in her cooking. Summoned by the aroma of rose petals, revolutionary soldier Juan Alejandrez appears and carries a frenzied Gertrudis away on horseback. Mama Elena is consumed with rage.

Scene 5 A Hot, Sleepless Night

Tita and Pedro meet among the sheets of hanging laundry. Their rendezvous is cut short by Mama Elena and a suspicious Rosaura, who are awake and prowling. Elena orders Pedro to leave the ranch and to take Rosaura and Roberto with him.

Scene 6 Tita's Breakdown

Tita despairs as the two people she loves most – Pedro and Roberto – have gone. The maid, Chenchu, brings devastating news that the baby has died. Tita confronts Mama Elena, blaming her for baby Roberto's death. Elena beats Tita to the ground, causing her a complete emotional collapse. Dr John is summoned to take Tita away to convalesce in Texas.

ACT II

Scene 1 Dr John's House

Away from her mother's tyrannical grasp, Tita has been nursed back to health by Dr John. His son by his first wife plays happily in the garden. Dr John loves Tita deeply and proposes marriage. Although not in love, Tita feels a sense of peace and security and accepts. News arrives from Mexico that Mama Elena has died.

Scene 2 Mama Elena's Wake

Mama Elena's body is laid out on the table. Rosaura and Pedro are among the mourners, with their new daughter, Esperanza. Tita explores a carved wooden box found hidden in Mama Elena's bedroom, containing mementos of the old matriarch's deepest secrets, including a diary. A vision of Mama Elena rises from the table, a younger version of herself. Elena is revealed to have been secretly in love with a man named José. She was forced instead by her parents into a marriage with Juan De la Garza, Tita's father. The lovers attempted to escape together but José was killed by Elena's brothers*. Aware now of the root of her mother's unhappiness, Tita forgives her mother. Pedro jealously watches Tita with Dr John while Rosaura keeps a possessive hold on her husband.

**Please note programme incorrectly refers to José's brothers.*

Scene 3 The Engagement Dinner

Dr John announces that he and Tita are engaged. Pedro catches Tita alone and once again declares his love. She is unable to resist and the two are swept up in a passionate tryst which summons a ghastly spectre: the ghost of Mama Elena. At once, soldiers arrive in the courtyard and Gertrudis, now a famous revolutionary commander, rides in with Juan Alejandrez whom she has now married. The sisters delight in their reunion.

Scene 4 Campfires

A fiesta is underway celebrating the return of Gertrudis. Tita is wracked with guilt and shudders under the accusing stare of her mother's ghost. She tells Dr John the truth: that she has always loved Pedro. She returns the engagement ring, feeling unworthy of the kind doctor's love. Sorrowful but aware of her feelings for Pedro all along, Dr John forgives Tita and leaves. Released, Tita is pulled into the joyous throng. Forgetting her troubles, she dances with Pedro but is once again confronted by the hideous vision of her mother. Tita produces the diary, and the evidence of Mama Elena's hypocrisy breaks her cruel hold over her daughter. But Tita's victorious elation is short-lived: in a final act of vengeance, the ghost of Mama Elena reveals itself to Pedro, causing his heart to fail.

ACT III

Scene 1 Three Rooms

Pedro's health is improving, but Rosaura's body is rapidly failing, her jealousy feeding her sickness. John and Tita work together to minister to the patients, their old camaraderie rekindled. John's son Alex frolics with Esperanza until Rosaura commands her daughter to her side, echoing Mama Elena's controlling behaviour. Rosaura pulls Esperanza into a suffocating embrace and slumps lifeless onto the pillow. Pedro mourns his dead wife while Tita cries on John's shoulder.

Scene 2 The Ranch

20 years later, another wedding is set up in the courtyard of the ranch. Pedro's daughter, Esperanza, and John's son, Alex, are married. The families are united in love, the tradition broken. As the celebrations recede, Tita and Pedro are left alone. Their long suffering is over and they are at last free to be together. In a final act of passion, their bodies ignite as they transcend the mortal realm.

Inspired by the book by **LAURA ESQUIVEL**

SUNG EXTRACT

SUNSTONE, OCTAVIO PAZ

los dos se desnudaron y se amaron
por defender nuestra porción eterna,
nuestra ración di tiempo y paraíso,
tocar nuestra raíz y recobrarlos,
recobrar nuestra herencia arrebatada
por ladrones de vida hace mil siglos,
los dos se desnudeces y besaron
porque las desnudeces enlazadas
saltan el tiempo y son invulnerables
nada las toca, vuelven al principio,
no hay tú ni yo, mañana, ayer ni nombres,
verdad de dos en sólo un cuerpo y alma,
oh ser total...

Text by Octavio Paz by kind permission of DIF-CDMX

© DIF-CDMX para las Obras de Octavio Paz

© DIF-CDMX for Octavio Paz works

The two took off their clothes and made love
to protect our share of all that's eternal,
to defend our ration of paradise and time,
to touch our roots, to rescue ourselves,
to rescue the inheritance stolen from us
by the thieves of centuries ago,
the two took off their clothes and kissed,
because two bodies, naked and entwined,
leap over time, they are invulnerable,
nothing can touch them, they return to the source,
there is no you, no I, no tomorrow,
no yesterday, no names, a single soul,
oh total being...