

Primeros Pasos
Ballet Hispanico's Education Program

HOW TO LOOK AT DANCE

To enjoy dance, you don't have to know about its background, or to "guess" at any facts about it. When you see Ballet Hispanico perform, here are some things you can watch (and listen) for.

POSTURES AND GESTURES:

What feelings or mood do the dancers' movements create? (Joyful, sad, angry, longing, playful?)

Are the movements fast or slow, repetitious or changing, angular or curved?

What parts of the body are used most? (arms, shoulders, back, hips, pelvis, legs?)

Do the dancers appear "weighted" on the ground, or rather weightless, rising as high as possible?

What gestures are repeated more than once? What do you think they might mean?

SPATIAL PATTERNS:

What groupings do you see? (solos, duets, larger groups?) How do the groupings change?

What "designs" do the dancers form onstage? (circles, lines, squares?) Do they move forward and back, across, on a diagonal? Are some of these patterns repeated?

MUSIC:

What instrument(s) do you hear? Is there singing? In what language?

Is the music fast or slow? Does it change during the dance? In what ways?

If you close your eyes, what mood does the music create? How might you describe the music?

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THEATRICAL EFFECTS:

Besides the performers that you see, who else might have helped create this dance for the stage?

Describe the stage set and the props. Is the setting realistic or abstract? Where do you think the setting is meant to be? (Outdoors, indoors, a formal occasion, a party, a funeral, a dream?)

Does the lighting change during the piece? In what ways? How is the lighting used to help us understand the emotion or drama?

What are the costumes? How do the costumes affect the impact of the dance?

On the whole, does the dance narrate a story or convey emotions? Does it do both? How does it achieve its effects?

Written by Lenore Gale, Ph. D. for the *Crossing Borders* Study Guide.