

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**BALLET HISPÁNICO**  
**Announces**  
**2017 Carnaval Gala**  
**Celebrating Trailblazing Latina Leaders**

**RITA MORENO**

Legendary Actress and EGOT Winner

**With the *Toda Una Vida* Lifetime Achievement Award**

and

**NINA VACA**

Chairman and CEO, Pinnacle Group

**With the *Nuestra Inspiración* Award****The Plaza Hotel, Monday, May 15, 2017 at 6:30pm**

**New York, NY – Ballet Hispanico** announced today it will be honoring Puerto Rican legendary actress and EGOT winner **Rita Moreno** with the *Toda Una Vida* Lifetime Achievement Award and Ecuadorian-American Pinnacle Group Chairman and CEO **Nina Vaca** with the *Nuestra Inspiración* Award at its annual Carnaval Gala in The Plaza Hotel's Grand Ballroom, 768 Fifth Avenue, NYC. Cocktails begin at 6:30pm and dinner and dancing commence at 7:30pm. Proceeds, which last year totaled just over \$1.1 million, benefit the creation of new Company works, scholarships in the Ballet Hispanico School of Dance, and community arts education programs.

Ballet Hispanico was founded by a Latina leader of its own: National Medal of Arts recipient Tina Ramirez, who emboldened the organization in 1970 with her mission to provide access to arts education and give voice to the Latino artist. Her legacy has lived on since 2009 through the expansive vision of Artistic Director & CEO **Eduardo Vilario**, who has infused Ballet Hispanico with a bold and eclectic brand of contemporary dance that reflects America's changing cultural landscape, and who has established programs that have nurtured a new generation of Latino leaders, many of them female.

"Ballet Hispanico builds on founder Tina Ramirez's legacy of female leadership by celebrating the achievements of two remarkable Latina leaders who have made their mark in the performing arts and corporate America," said Eduardo Vilario, Artistic Director & CEO of Ballet Hispanico. "The evening is a celebration of Ballet Hispanico's determined and increasingly necessary commitment to fostering awareness of the gifts of diversity."



"I love what this organization does for the community; it's inspirational. It fits with my own mission to serve our youth," said Rita Moreno. "I am excited to find other ways of partnering with Ballet Hispánico to reach our community with the arts."

"I'm honored to be recognized by such an impactful organization," says Nina Vaca. "Ballet Hispánico empowers our youth to pursue their artistic dreams and reminds us all about the value of bringing communities together. Many of those touched by Ballet Hispánico go on to establish careers in the arts or found their own successful businesses. I applaud Ballet Hispánico for building and strengthening the link between art and entrepreneurship."

Carnaval, the inspiration for Ballet Hispánico's annual Gala as envisioned by Eduardo Vilaro, is a celebration of the impactful voices of the Latino world—an exciting and fitting way to showcase the resilience and unparalleled vision of one of America's cultural gems. Attended by more than 500 of New York's most influential civic leaders, philanthropists and artists, the evening is filled with live Latin music and thrilling performances by the Ballet Hispánico Company and students of the School of Dance.

The event is headed by Gala Chairs Jody Gottfried Arnhold, Richard Feldman, Kate Lear and David Pérez.

Attire for the event is festive black tie. To purchase tickets, a table, a journal advertisement, or for more information, please contact Felicia Mayo at (212) 362-6710, x 44 or [efmayo@ballethispanico.org](mailto:efmayo@ballethispanico.org).

### **ABOUT RITA MORENO**

Octogenarian **RITA MORENO** still remains one of the busiest stars in show business. She currently stars in the critically-acclaimed Latino remake of Norman Lear's classic sitcom, *One Day at a Time*, which is now streaming on Netflix. She currently lends her voice to the character, "Abuelita" in the children's animated series, *Nina's World*, which airs on NBC-TV's Sprout Network.

Ms. Moreno is an EGOT winner, having won all four of the most prestigious awards in show business: the Oscar, the Tony, two Emmys, and a Grammy. Her countless credits span more than six decades, beginning with her Broadway debut at age 13. Ms. Moreno has starred on Broadway; London's West End; appeared in more than 40 feature films, and countless television shows; has performed in numerous regional theaters including her one woman show, *Life Without Makeup* at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre; and appeared as a season regular on the TV Land series, *Happily Divorced*, playing Fran Drescher's mother.

Ms. Moreno was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2004 and the National Medal of Arts by President Obama in 2010. In December 2015, she received a Kennedy Center Honor for her lifetime contributions to American Culture. In 2013, her first book, *Rita Moreno: A Memoir*, published by Celebra Books instantly became a New York Times Bestseller. In January 2014, Ms. Moreno received the Screen Actors Guild Life Achievement Award, and she served as the Grand Marshal of the National Puerto Rican Day Parade in June 2015. That same year she released her first ever all Spanish language album, *Una Vez Más*, produced by Emilio Estefan.

### **ABOUT NINA VACA**

**Nina Vaca** is one of the country's most celebrated entrepreneurs. Over the last twenty years Vaca has grown Pinnacle Group explosively to become a global workforce solutions powerhouse, named the 2015 Fastest-Growing Women-Owned/led Business in America by the Women Presidents' Organization. Pinnacle Group provides industry-leading workforce solutions and high-end IT services to iconic global corporations. She has been named an Ernst & Young



Entrepreneur of the Year, an NBC Innovator, and a Goldman Sachs Most Intriguing Entrepreneur. For the past ten years Vaca has been named one of the 101 Most Influential Latinos in America. Vaca brings her business expertise and acumen to three Fortune 1000 boards.

Vaca is also a committed civic leader dedicated to empowering women and entrepreneurs globally. As a Presidential Ambassador for Global Entrepreneurship she has traveled across five continents to share her story and inspire the next generation of entrepreneurs. A passionate advocate for women, Vaca founded At the Table, an initiative to provide women the resources and exposure needed to achieve the next level of success in business and leadership, housed under the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Foundation which she chairs. She is also the first woman to be honored as Chairman Emeritus of the USHCC. For more information about Pinnacle Group, please visit [www.pinnacle1.com](http://www.pinnacle1.com).

### **ABOUT EDUARDO VILARO**

**EDUARDO VILARO** was the first Artistic Director to assume the reins of Ballet Hispánico from its founding director and National Medal of Arts recipient Tina Ramirez. After seven years of igniting Ballet Hispánico's vision with a contemporary perspective in dance and culture, he assumed the additional role of CEO for the organization. Mr. Vilaro was born in Havana, Cuba and raised in the Bronx. He holds a BFA from Adelphi University and an MA from Columbia College in Chicago. Upon his graduation from Columbia College, Mr. Vilaro founded Luna Negra Dance Theater in Chicago, a company which served as a springboard for Latino dance throughout the Midwest for 15 years. Mr. Vilaro's own choreography is devoted to capturing the spiritual, sensual and historical essence of the Latino cultures. He created over 25 ballets for Luna Negra and Ballet Hispánico and has received numerous commissions from dance festivals and arts organizations. In 2001 he was a recipient of a Ruth Page Award for choreography, and in 2003 he was honored for his choreographic work at Panama's II International Festival of Ballet. Mr. Vilaro was an associate professor at the Dance Center of Columbia College, has served on the board of directors of Dance/USA and is currently on the advisory board of Dance NYC. As an invited guest on panels and forums, he speaks to the growing need for cultural diversity and dance education. Mr. Vilaro is a proud 2016 inductee into the Bronx Walk of Fame.

### **ABOUT BALLET HISPÁNICO**

**America's premier Latino dance organization for more than 45 years, Ballet Hispánico brings communities together to celebrate and explore Latino cultures and the shared human experience through dance.** Founded by National Medal of Arts recipient Tina Ramirez, Ballet Hispánico has been led since 2009 by Artistic Director & CEO Eduardo Vilaro, who has infused the organization's legacy with a bold and eclectic brand of contemporary dance that reflects America's changing cultural landscape. Through performances of its internationally-acclaimed Company, innovative dance training programs, and community education activities that inspire individuals of all ages and backgrounds, Ballet Hispánico brings the joy of dance and Hispanic culture to the world.

For more information, visit [www.balleshispanico.org](http://www.balleshispanico.org). Follow Ballet Hispánico on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

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