

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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BALLET HISPÁNICO
2017 Carnaval Gala,
Celebrating Trailblazing Latina Leaders,
Raised More Than \$1 Million

Celebrating trailblazing Latina leaders, **Ballet Hispanico's Carnaval Gala** on May 15 at The Plaza Hotel raised more than \$1 million in support of the organization's artistic, educational and community outreach programs in New York City, across the United States and around the world. This includes the creation of new Company works, scholarships for students at the renown Ballet Hispanico School of Dance, and numerous community arts and educational programs.

Ballet Hispanico honored legendary actress and EGOT winner **Rita Moreno** with the *Toda Una Vida* Lifetime Achievement Award, presented by actress **Gina Rodriguez**, and Pinnacle Group Chairman and CEO **Nina Vaca** with the *Nuestra Inspiración* Award, presented by **Ralph de la Vega**, the former Vice Chairman of AT&T Inc. and CEO of Business Solutions & International.

Gina Rodriguez, the Golden Globe-nominated star of the CW comedy series *Jane the Virgin* praised Ms. Moreno's extraordinary career that has inspired generations of Latino performers and artists. "We are in the presence of greatness," Ms. Rodriguez said. "We are in the presence of a woman who not only acts, sings, dances, wins an Oscar, a Tony, an Emmy, a Grammy – but an artist who changed the world with her art."

"I want to thank Ballet Hispanico for this wonderful honor and a truly amazing evening," Ms. Moreno said after accepting the Lifetime Achievement Award. "As I watched the beautiful babies of the School of Dance perform, it made me go back a long time ago in Puerto Rico. Back then, there were no wonderful organizations like Ballet Hispanico. Can you imagine if I had had the advantage of being one of the little girls we saw tonight, being supported and encouraged in arts education? Especially, *especially* for immigrant children!"

When introducing *Nuestra Inspiración* Award winner Nina Vaca, Mr. de la Vega cited her tremendous success in the business world as well as her efforts to encourage and support other women, particularly Latinas. "Nina is only satisfied when she is reaching back to help others advance," he said.

"I started out with \$200, working out of my bedroom," Ms. Vaca said after receiving her award. "Ten years later, I was running one of the fastest-growing companies in the United States. Our country's girls and young women need to know that their American dream is possible."

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“The fact that our inspirational honorees, Nina and Rita, and presenters, Gina and Ralph, all lived a version of Ballet Hispánico’s mission in their own lives added such dimension and gravitas to this glorious Gala,” said **Kate Lear**, Ballet Hispánico Board Chair. “Their stories put a personal face of the ongoing importance of the organization’s work.”

“The mission of Ballet Hispánico is more important and exciting than ever before,” said **Eduardo Vilaro**, Ballet Hispánico Artistic Director and C.E.O. “We are a constant standard bearer for a vision of diversity and inclusion and have been so for forty-seven years. We know that art can heal and change the world. That is what we celebrated at the Gala; that is what we do every day and night.”

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

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