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Ballet Hispánico Is Cultivating Professional Development in New ChoreoLaB Workshop for Dancers

Michelle Manzanales teaching Ballet Hispánico. Photo by Alona Cohen

This week Ballet Hispánico launched its first ChoreoLaB workshop, a summer intensive intended to better prepare aspiring professional dancers—with more than just excellent technique. Artistic director Eduardo Vilaro wanted to create a program that bridges the school and the company, to help dancers transitioning into the professional world and better hone their skills.

"Today, the demand for professional dancers to be versed in different styles is huge," says Ballet Hispánico's school director Michelle Manzanales. "Many companies today not only want the best technical dancers, but also dancers who can contribute to the creative process."



Ballet Hispánico, photo by Paulo Lobo, courtesy of BH

In addition to technique classes from ballet to jazz and BH's Latin-fusion contemporary, the curriculum will include classes in choreographic process with guest choreographers. Hubbard Street's Mario Zambrano will be teaching Gaga technique. Juilliard faculty member Taryn Kaschock Russell and Giordano Jazz Dance Chicago's Eddy Ocampo will also be teaching and setting work. Ballet Hispánico repertory will also be taught.



Michelle Manzañales teaching at BH. Photo by Joshua Preston, courtesy of BH

The dancers, accepted by audition, number around 40, ranging in age from 19 to 26. Some are college students, while others have had some professional experience. The workshop concludes with an informal showing and an open company audition.

Manzañales emphasizes the program's intention to help dancers increase professional development, but also to build their community. She says, "It's so hard to be a dancer, and most want a support network and a home."

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