



BWW Review: Celebrating Resilience with BALLET HISPANICO

December 7, 2017 – Caryn Cooper



Ballet Hispanico returned for their annual holiday season at the world-famous Apollo Theater for a special two-night engagement on December 1-2, 2017. The line up included three inspiring works that reflects the migration, marginalization, and resilience of the Latino culture through movement. Under the direction of Eduardo Vilaro, the company featured award-winning choreographer Ronald K. Brown, Ramon Oller, and Michelle Manzanales-in her first work for the Ballet Hispanico

company.

The program opened with Ramon Oller's *Bury Me Standing*. The piece highlights the unique culture of the Gypsy or "Roma" people and the essence of their strong communal bonds, sensuality, oppression, strength, and exuberance. Watching this piece, you can definitely feel the pain, and struggle of the people. I loved the flamenco-inspired movements throughout the choreography such as the long arms, sharp movements, claps, and stomps. I also enjoyed the beautiful duet for its seductiveness. I found the duet was very interesting in how it incorporated such stunning lifts while the guy supported the girl's weight with his legs and feet! Oller truly does a wonderful job capturing the nature of the Gypsy culture.

Next was Espiritu Vivo by Ronald K. Brown. Here, the piece explores the intersections of the African and Latino diasporas in the Caribbean and Latin America. This was a versatile piece with a stimulating fusion of Afro-Latin and contemporary dance. It shows how talented these dancers really are. Their ability to seamlessly switch from one style of dance to the other is just amazing. It was absolutely enjoyable to watch. My eyes never left the stage!

The evening concluded with Con Brazos Abiertos by Michelle Manzanales. Drawing from her childhood experiences growing up as a Mexican-American in Texas, Manzanales explores the act of balancing life caught between two cultures. It focuses in on the inner-conflicts of identity and the challenges to embrace (or reject) the symbols common to both the Mexican and American cultures. It was beautiful and lovely to watch as the dancers embodied the battle of being a Mexican-American in the United States.

Ballet Hispanico is an example of what makes our country beautiful. It is about the stories of people from various perspectives and points of view, and their life experiences. It is an art to use ballet and dance to discuss various themes and ideas. And Ballet Hispanico does a wonderful job of exploring issues that are unique to the Latino community.

Ballet Hispanico continues to perform in the New York City area throughout 2018, with performances at Ballet Hispanico at the Arnhold Center for an in-studio showing of a work-in-progress by Spanish choreographer Gustavo Ramirez Sansano, the company's annual spring season at The Joyce Theater, and a special Mamitas Day celebration performance at The United Palace in a fun-filled day of performances featuring repertory excerpts.

For more information about any of these upcoming engagements or about Ballet Hispanico, please visit their website at www.ballethispanico.org.

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