



Ballet Hispanico Celebrates Strong Women

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When it comes to celebrating strong women through movement, no dance company has more capacity and generosity than Ballet Hispanico. Strong Latin women have always been at the core of Latin culture and are a focal point in Ballet Hispanico's repertoire. However, for their spring 2017 season at the Joyce Theater, Ballet Hispanico pulled out all the stops, dedicating whole programs to Hispanic female choreographers.

With that effort, Ballet Hispanico's female dancers have never looked more magnificent and fully realized than in works by the female choreographers in question—Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, Michelle Manzanales, and Tania Perez-Salas. In dance circles, many cultural critics contend that only a woman choreographer—with the exception of a few male choreographers—Balanchine, Robbins, Ashton, and Ailey—can bring out the full range of female dancers' abilities and craft. Most male choreographers only actualize female dancers' attributes through the lens of delicate beauty with occasional pyrotechnical displays thrown in for good measure. Not true for Ballet Hispanico's choreographic triptych. All three female choreographers in Ballet Hispanico's all-female program aptly manifested the range and depth of what Ballet Hispanico's women can bring to the stage.



“Linea Recta” images courtesy of Paula Lobo

Doesn't everyone love flamenco? Well, if that does not ring true for some dance lovers, Annabelle Lopez Ochoa's "Linea Recta" will make flamenco naysayers true believers!! And true to the theme of the night the female dances of Ballet Hispanico wore at the core of Ochoa's "Linea Recta."

Performed to original guitar music by Eric Vaarzon Morel, "Linea Rectoa" is Ochoa's modern interpretation of flamenco infused with a mélange of modern dance techniques from Graham to Horton and Cunningham. Though the women are the central characters in this brilliant work, Ochoa provides some exceptional choreography for Ballet Hispanico's men. And the dance language between the sexes is modern, explosive, deliciously sensual and above all celebratory.



“Con Brazos Abiertos” images courtesy of Paula Lobo

In “Con Brazos Abiertos,” Michelle Manzanales explores through dance language and the spoken word of Edward James Olmos, Cheech Marin, as well as the musical renderings of Julio Iglesias, Daniela Andrade, Gustavo Santolalla, and Juan Carlos Marin, assimilation and the immigrant experience in the US. Manzanales looks back to her own childhood and how the mixed messages of Mexican pride and assimilation informed her.

“Con Brazos Abiertos” is a wonderful amalgam of folkloric movement styles, and modern dance fusions used to relay the immigrant duality. Again, Ballet Hispanico's women demonstrate their

ability at interpret mood, nostalgia, humor and reflection through their mastery of modern and folkloric styles.



“Catorce Dieciseis” images courtesy of Paula Lobo

“Catorce Dieciseis” reflects the many modern dance works seen on major stages in the beginning of the 21st Century. As had happened in the early 1930s and 40s many modern choreographers in the late 1990s and early 2000s looked to Baroque composers as their musical sources. (Many of Mark Morris’ best know works found inspiration from Baroque composers in the 1990s through early the 2000s.)

Tania Perez-Salas’ “Catorce Dieciseis,” which debuted in 2002, is one such work. Like many ballets from this period that used Baroque music there is a strong emphasis of group movement or corps de ballet that dance similar or the same steps that follow the repetitive canonical-like qualities found in Baroque works. That said; “Catorce Dieciseis” is a joyful feast for the senses that celebrate the theatricality of Ballet Hispanico’s women and also demonstrate that the company is totally capable of excelling at dance works that go beyond Latin themes. Also, the circular, meandering patterns in “Catorce Dieciseis” reflects Salas’ projections of the number Pi. Every season Ballet Hispanico proves that their dancers, both women and men, can handle almost any choreographic style. The time is now ripe for Ballet Hispanico and many dance companies of its ilk to receive the global and financial recognition worthy of its brilliance.