



BWW Review: Ballet Hispanico Fuses Latin and Contemporary Dance with a Flare

Friday, April 21, 2017 – by Rose Marija



Led by Artistic Director & CEO, Eduardo Vilaro since 2009, Ballet Hispanico, a New York City based company, continues to grow in both scope and quality. Vilaro presents three works by three female choreographers at the Joyce Theater. The company is comprised of good looking dancers who work together as a well-coordinated unit.

On April 19, 2017, at the Joyce Theater, New York City, the curtain opened on a beautiful woman, center

stage, back to the audience, making a striking impression wearing a form-fitting, red flamenco dress with a floor length ruffled skirt. Costumes for this ballet, *Linea Recta* (2016), choreographed by Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, were beautifully designed by Danielle Truss. Original flamenco guitar composed by Eric Vaarzon Morel help to set the atmosphere along with the lighting design by Michael Mazzola. When Melissa Fernandez (I believe) began to move, turning towards the audience, we could see that her skirt became short in the front, exposing her lovely legs. Joined by four men wearing high-waisted red gacho pants, the flamenco-inspired

contemporary dance continued with elements of both flamenco and contemporary dance. When other girls emerged wearing the same red flamenco inspired dresses, but with shorter skirts, one exquisite girl, Eila Valls (I believe) performed a solo followed by a pas de deux, demonstrating flow and freedom of movement. The partnering showed off inventive choreography.

The second choreographer on this program, Michelle Manzanales, gave us *Con Brazos Abiertos* (World Premiere, April 18, 2017), set to music that ranges from Julio Iglesias to rock en español. "Manzanales explores with humility, nostalgia, and humor the iconic Mexican symbols that she was reluctant to embrace as a Mexican-American child growing up in Texas. This piece is a fun and frank look at life caught between two cultures." I can't say that I understand why the piece opened with the women in white bras and panties and the men in white boxer shorts, but as the costumes changed throughout the work, each change brought a beautiful visual experience, including gaucho pants, colorful skirts, and huge, white skirts which were manipulated looking like flowers, as part of the choreography. The marvelous costumes were designed by Diana Ruettiger. The lighting design, by Joshua Preston went from dim to streams of light, to bright, to spots, and back again. The company's unity was impressive, demonstrating musicality and connection with each other.

Catorce Dieciseis (2002), choreographed by Tania Perez-Salas to music by Marin Marias, Girolamo Frescobaldi, A. Vivaldi, Francois Couperini, and Giovanni Batista Pergolesi was the most strictly contemporary of the three pieces. It was rhythmic and well-rounded. The costumes in white, black, or red, costume design by Amanda Gladu, were again an important addition to the ambiance. Lighting design was by Bob Franklin. Again, the ensemble work was more impressive than any of the individuals. "Perez-Salas draws inspiration from the number Pi to reflect on the circularity of our movement through life."

Ballet Hispanico will perform this program at the Joyce Theater through April 23, 2017.

Photo Credit: Paula Lobo