

# Picture this Post

## Joyce Theater Hosts **BALLET HISPANICO** Review – Passion, Prowess and World Class Dance

April 11, 2018 – Allison Plamondon



“Gorgeous!!”

This is the first word we hear when the curtain rises on the opening piece of Ballet Hispánico at the Joyce Theater. It’s coming from the audience, from the man sitting behind us at full volume and with a full New York accent. There is no question that this spontaneous utterance is what everyone else in the audience is thinking too - just gorgeous! At center stage, there is a single female dancer in a

spotlight, striking a powerful pose. She is facing away from us, dressed in a bright red, lace leotard with a long ruffled train. Her stylized movements are strong and sensual. Like a siren, she simultaneously beckons us closer and warns us to keep our distance. Our hearts race...and they don’t slow down for an entire evening filled with spectacular dance.

Founded in 1970 by Tina Ramirez, the New York City based Ballet Hispánico has been helmed by Eduardo Vilaro since 2009. Cuban born Vilaro, who was previously Artistic Director of Chicago’s Luna Negra Dance Theater, truly “has infused Ballet Hispánico’s legacy with a bold and eclectic brand of contemporary dance that reflects America’s changing landscape” (as stated in his bio).

Joyce Theater hosts an evening that blows us away  
Featuring two world premieres and two audience favorites, the pieces fuse the tradition of Latin culture with contemporary energy and perspective.



The previously mentioned opening number, entitled *Línea Recta* with choreography by Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, is heavily influenced by flamenco yet pushes the boundaries of the genre by incorporating intricate partnerwork, not usually seen in this traditional dance form.

The finale, Michelle Manzanales' *Con Brazos Abiertos*, digs into the Mexican stereotypes the choreographer grew up with in Texas and transcends them with innovative use of folk dance and props. In one section, the image of the sombrero is joyfully exploited and then in another it is used with reverence. We follow one dancer's journey throughout the piece and we are struck by the timely conflict of being influenced by two cultures.

Interestingly, the two world premieres are both inspired by poet, playwright and theatre director Federico Garcia Lorca. *Waiting for Pepe*, created by Carlos Pons Guerra, is a profound expression of sexuality thriving, even through repression. Dark yet full of humor, the large ensemble of dancers flip between doing things out of boredom or duty and dealing with the unstoppable passion that keeps bubbling to the surface. Gustavo Ramirez Sansano's *Espíritus Gemelos* also examines sexual freedom, though on a more intimate scale. A poetic duet between the characters of Lorca and Salvador Dali, this quiet piece is a beautiful slow burn where we feel the same yearning and trepidation as the characters do, as they navigate their forbidden love

#### Outstanding Choreography

Unique, specific and compelling theatrical worlds are created and we are swept away in the storytelling. That's not to say the dancing isn't spectacular. It is, and the movement vocabulary

(the actual steps they do) is embedded seamlessly into the piece. This is no small feat! For this writer, it is this skill that separates the amazing choreographers from the merely proficient ones. The team of choreographers also utilize their dancers' unlimited talents to full effect. The company is chock full of dynamic, versatile dancers with outstanding technique and style. And they are stunning!—one of the most beautiful companies this writer has ever seen onstage! Part of what makes them all so beautiful is their sense of connection with each other and their obvious love of dance. This shines through in every piece and we are totally smitten. Not to spoil anything, but the closing moment of the evening is just as breathtaking as the first. Truly dance at its finest, this writer passionately recommends Ballet Hispánico for all audiences.



When:  
April 10-15, 2018  
Tue-Wed 7:30pm; Thu-Fri 8pm; Sat 2pm & 8pm; Sun 2pm  
Please also note--  
Ballet Hispánico  
Joyce Master Class with Michelle Manzanales at Gibney  
Friday, April 13th 10-12pm  
Where:  
The Joyce Theater  
175 Eighth Avenue (at 19th Street)  
NYC

Tickets:  
\$10+  
Available for purchase in person at the Joyce Theater Box Office, by phone at (212) 242-0800, or online The Joyce Theater website

Chicagoans NOTE:  
Ballet Hispánico will be in Glen Ellen, IL at College of DuPage  
on May 11th



*Photos by Paula Lobo*

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