



Ballet Hispánico: passion and precision meet athleticism and elegance

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European debut of America's premier Latino dance company lives up to its billing

For its first ever UK performance, nearly 50 years since this grassroots Latino dance school was set up in New York, the curtain rises on a very stereotypical Flamenco scene.

A toned set of naked shoulders ripples backwards towards the audience, each muscle somehow looking angry and turned on at the same time. A tense pair of arms is flexed up high and a long, red fishtail of frills is stretched out below.

The taut, whipcrack sensuality of the Spanish dance style is explored with passionate precision in *Línea Recta*, a lacy blur of red satin, gelled hair and flamenco guitar by a solo female dancer, joined later by four male dancers, with an accidental flash-forward to the nudity that was meant to happen later in the show. (There's a wardrobe malfunction a few seconds in, but that particular free the nipple stunt was unintentional, and gracefully glossed over).

Part two from Ballet Hispánico, which has grown from a community project into America's biggest Latino dance company, is *CARMEN.maquia*, a Picasso-influenced update on Bizet's opera, *Carmen*.

It's a gorgeous monochrome study of lithe arrogance, where bodies speak in an angular language, stamping their message out firmly somewhere on the line between athleticism and elegance. David Delfin's costumes are beautiful, with transparent panels on silky Greek tracksuits and art deco ballgowns, and Gustavo Ramírez Sansano's choreography glides impressively between the Toreador's full-of-himself peacocking (as the cigar factory girls, and maybe some of the soldier

boys, look on and swoon) to a heartbreaking finale, where Don José (Chris Bloom) closes the tragic, very macho story with raw, pained moves like some kind of anguished robot.
Reviewed at Festival Theatre, Edinburgh

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