



## Dance: Ballet Hispanico, Festival Theatre, Edinburgh, four stars

March 8, 2018 – Tabitha James



Ballet Hispanico, the much acclaimed American company that brings a unique Latino spin to ballet, brings its take on Bizet's classic Carmen to Europe for its debut. Inspired by Picasso, this electrifying piece is sure to stun audiences with its sensual nature and the talent displayed on stage.

The evening commences with Linea Recta. Choreographed by Annabelle Lopez Ochoa,

this piece is visually stunning and mind-blowing. Described in the programme as a demonstration of the 'communication between the sexes' with a conspicuous lack of physical contact between dancers. One might expect tango to be physically intimate evoking sex with their every move however Ochoa plays with these expectations and shows how sensual a piece can be without any or little shared touch at all. On the evening I attended the main dancer, extraordinarily talented and absolutely hypnotising, suffered a wardrobe malfunction of her spectacular dress. The professionalism showed by the company as they tactfully escorted her off the stage in a way was incredible. The audience did not truly realise anything was wrong until the curtain dropped. The recovery was remarkable to be honest, and beautifully done. When the performance resumed, from the beginning, they calmly resumed their position and performed the

stunning dance. The beautiful backdrop warmed and cooled throughout the performance reflecting the music's ebbing and flowing.

The eagerly awaited namesake of the evening was the second piece Carmen. Maquia. Choreographed by Gustavo Ramirez Sansano this challenging piece brings the much-loved Carmen to the stage in a new light. It seems impossible there's any way to approach Carmen in a different way after so many years. With black and white costumes this is an altogether more monochromatic interpretation, but it is enlightening. Although I really did miss the trademark red of Carmen, especially after the incredible costumes from Linea Recta, I understood the relevance of the black and white reimagining. Shelby Colona as Carmen is seductive and entrancing, her independence is clear on stage, a powerful woman trying to make her way with the wares life has given her. Following the normal story of Carmen, although condensed into one hour, this classic story is granted extra drama through Sansano's choreography. Especially effective was the tragic ending between Carmen and Don Jose. I found it absolutely heartbreaking to watch. The violence was incredibly delicately told throughout their final dance. It gave me goosebumps as I could see the fight told throughout this dance and was chilling until the end.



This production was a fantastic showcase of the talent this American company has to offer and proof that old classics can be reimagined in new and exciting ways.

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