



BWW Review: BALLET HISPANICO IS A DREAM OF DANCE DIVERTISSEMENT at The Broad Stage

April 8, 2019



March 23, 2019 Based in New York, Ballet Hispanico is not just a Spanish-oriented or Flamenco Dance Company. It covers many disciplined forms of dance, fusing them together and is both meticulous and marvelous at doing it. Founded in 1970, they are an established and recognized dance entity. They are recognized internationally for their diverse repertoire, utilizing strong ballet and contemporary influences along with Latin and Flamenco styles. All the company members are well-trained and seasoned dancers and performers who's

every move be it solo or as a unit is perfectly placed and technically correct. There is also a strength and passion to their movements that gives that extra depth and texture which is transmitted to the viewers. So that they are not just dancing the steps, or going through the motions, they are feeling the movements and intention from within. BWW Review: BALLET HISPANICO IS A DREAM OF DANCE DIVERTISSEMENT at The Broad Stage A beautiful looking company as well, Artistic Director/CEO Eduardo Vilaro and Johan Rivera, the all-important Rehearsal Director have helped sculpt three wonderful dance pieces, each created by a

different female choreographer - a theme that seems to be spreading throughout performances of all kinds. Yes, this is Women's Month, Year, Time to Speak Up and to Shine and it is befitting that expressing and incorporating this through movement was one of the themes of the evening. The first Offering, because it felt like a gift being presented to us, was the piece BWW Review: BALLET HISPANICO IS A DREAM OF DANCE DIVERTISSEMENT at The Broad StageLinea Recta, meaning a straight line, a Cuadro Flamenco work of Art. Staged and Choreographed brilliantly by Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, with spectacular lighting, costuming and performances, it was mesmerizing. Besides the dancers, in Flamenco the additional performer is the long skirt and glorious train. In Flamenco, the tale is told partially by that part of the costume. At times it has its own life, defining lines and creating images sometimes caused only by the flick of a wrist, or foot, and fascinating to watch unfold. It's the details that make the difference in Flamenco. Melissa Fernandez was superb in characterization and style as she masterfully controlled and contorted her gorgeous blood-red train to her bidding, using it to seductively lure her matadors, and they respond with passion and intensity. Jared Bogart, Raul Contreras, Omar Rivera and Lyvan Verdecia are strong and tantalizing as they maneuver their advances and conquests, all vying for the lady in red. An original classical guitar composition, composed and performed by Eric Vaarzon Morel gave just the right ambience and distinction to the choreography. The Costuming, designed by Danielle Truss, (that red Flamenco dress!) and the Lighting Designer Michael Mazzola, encompassed completely the Flamenco experience. BWW Review: BALLET HISPANICO IS A DREAM OF DANCE DIVERTISSEMENT at The Broad Stage The following section began in silhouette as three ladies with black lace fans danced and posed, backlit, creating the most beautiful images with the fans, as they began to move. The male dancers join in and also do some fancy fan work, while their arched body positions and tight partner work creates beautiful lines and an air of sensuality. The guitarist solos as intricate lifts are performed, accenting the plucking of broken chords in each peak of a lift, men lifting other men, with each lift a surprise, as the entire company seems to glide right from a movement, seamlessly, into the air. The tempo brightens... there are different sections, a solo, an interesting section with stylized bent wrists and arms in deep pli , a powerful men's section, where the lighting turns a deep red as they double tour en la air, and a quick-footed women's section. They end up locking arms in a circle, plie-ing, twisting and turning, tucking under each other, tightening into a small clump, never letting go of each other into a final culmination with lighting, music and the dancers leaping, clapping and yelling to a rousing conclusion. The last two program pieces both had their World Premiere only two years ago. BWW Review: BALLET HISPANICO IS A DREAM OF DANCE DIVERTISSEMENT at The Broad Stage Con Brazos Abiertos (With Open Arms) was a delightful tribute to choreographer Michelle Manzanales' heritage, based on her viewpoint of growing up in Texas as a Mexican-American. It had humor in its presentation by compiling a lot of popular idioms we are familiar with and most exposed to and bringing them to life visually and cleverly lightheartedly. It is more a celebration of a culture rich in the joy of living. Clad very sparingly at first in skin tone material the entire company was beautiful to watch as different scenarios played out to a variety of music from Cheech & Chong to Edward James Olmos, to Julio Iglesias, and other familiar tunes. It was a festive dose of Viva Mexico, mixed with some sadness and tenderness; from lively sections to quiet interludes, the pace, the music, the costumes, formations and lighting kept constantly switching and moving. Clothed in Mariachi pants and white halter dresses, the company was a stunning picture on stage. There were tillers with difficult footwork, a playful, limber solo with a sombrero, a tight and vibrant Reel section danced to a violin and

guitar melody, a very agile and technical mens' trio section, a lyrical ladies section with beautiful lines to the choreography, a fast-BWW Review: **BALLET HISPANICO IS A DREAM OF DANCE DIVERTISSEMENT** at The Broad Stage moving, pattern-switching mesh of pirouettes, lifts, aerial cartwheels, men lifting men, ladies lifting men with such ease and flow as they danced across the floor, more passionate now, in couples or in a straight line. As the music ends, they pose in couples, a spotlight tightening in to one couple, center stage - we then hear a plaintive techno-ized female voice speak while two dancers do a passionate, flowing pas de deux using the movement to express her words, escalating to him carrying her BWW Review: **BALLET HISPANICO IS A DREAM OF DANCE DIVERTISSEMENT** at The Broad Stage in a high lift across the stage, ending up with her pounding on his chest in frustration; when there is an explosion of white, as the dancers, both men and women, spin and twirl in, wearing long, flowing, billowing skirts, using their arms and legs to alter the shapes they are forming with them. As they spin in the air doing barrel rolls, fan kicks and various classical arm movements, it fills the stage with constant movement, much like a flurry of white windmills, or an ever-evolving kaleidoscope of joyous, spiritual elation. A Mexican Revelation, if you will. BWW Review: **BALLET HISPANICO IS A DREAM OF DANCE DIVERTISSEMENT** at The Broad Stage Catorce Dieciseis, the final piece, was a glorious celebration of the circularity of our movement through life, or Pi, choreographed by the incomparable Tania Perez-Salas, with heavenly accompaniment; the Baroque stylings of Vivaldi and other composers of that genre. The dancers moved so cleanly in unison; expressive, supple ballet and modern steps and combinations that fit the music and melody perfectly, They make use of their costumes to flesh out each concept posed, switching from one color dress to another by a slight movement, from black to red, then rolling in the dress on the floor, with plenty of contemporary floor work, with flexed bare-footed entrechats and a vigorous men's section to follow, embellishing the first combination. Two men then each sort of riff to the music and the fugue-like accents, twitching and undulating as they are each in their own spotlight. Blackout. A chorale begins as the dancers re-enter in different groupings, some illuminating an aria being sung, with the movement becoming more modern as each section keeps building musically, and the different hypotheses are articulated through their expressive and sensual fluid movements. There is a lightness to their dancing, embellished by the liturgy-like music as it crescendoes to a heavenly satiated feeling by the end of the piece. BWW Review: **BALLET HISPANICO IS A DREAM OF DANCE DIVERTISSEMENT** at The Broad Stage The outstanding dancers performing were Chris Bloom, Jared Bogart, Antonio Cangiano, Shelby Colona, Raul Contreras, Melissa Fernandez, Laura Lopez, Jenna Marie, Geena Pacareu, Omar Rivéra, Gabrielle Sprauve, Ella Valls, Dandara Veiga and Lyvan Verdecia. They versified dance with their impeccable unison and technique, along with their breathtaking expression through body movements, with a feeling of knowing and wisdom that can only come with seasoned maturity. A joy to partake! Learn more about Ballet Hispanico @ <https://www.balleshispanico.org/> and The Broad Stage's New Season: <https://thebroadstage.org/all-performances> Photos courtesy of Paula Lobo