

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Contact:** Michelle Tabnick, (646) 765-4773, [michelle@michelletabnickpr.com](mailto:michelle@michelletabnickpr.com)

**Ballet Hispánico Presents**  
***Instituto Coreográfico: Showcasing Mark Travis Rivera***  
**June 29, 2023**

**Ballet Hispánico** presents ***Instituto Coreográfico: Showcasing Mark Travis Rivera*** on Thursday, June 29, 2023 at 6:30pm at Studio 10 at the Arnold Center, 167 W. 89th Street, NYC. This free event offers a peek into the process of the creation of a new work! Doors open at 6pm, with a public showing at 6:30pm. Advance reservations required [here](#), and seating is general admission.

The program on June 29 is a public sharing of excerpts from a work-in-progress by choreographer Mark Travis Rivera, who will explore the experiences of what it means to be seen but not truly understood. His new piece, *Witness*, is named after and inspired by Afro-Latina poet and singer-songwriter Amyra León's latest album, which she described as "a look at love and loss, bliss and bloodshed. This album is my love letter to Harlem, to my spirit for insisting, to my sacred limbs for surviving, and to all that I have witnessed. I want people to listen to this and dance themselves out of captivity. I want to invite flight and peaceful reckoning. I firmly believe that we are individual universes to be navigated, and this is merely a look into mine."

One of Ballet Hispánico's signature programs, *Instituto Coreográfico* has served sixteen BIPOC artists from different Latinx countries in eight years, resulting in the creation of six new works thus far. Rivera will be the first physically disabled choreographer to be a part of *Instituto Coreográfico*. Ballet Hispánico alumni dancer Mario Ismael Espinoza will serve as a mentor to Rivera during the week and Dr. AnaMaria Correa will moderate the evening's discussion on June 29.

"We are delighted for the return of *Instituto Coreográfico*, one of our most cherished programs, and for the amazing opportunity to work with Mark Travis Rivera," said Eduardo Vilaro, Artistic Director & CEO of Ballet Hispánico. "Mark is a fiercely gifted and inspiring choreographer. We look forward to sharing excerpts of his work with an audience for the first-time this month."

“While I am beyond grateful for the opportunity to be a part of the legacy of Eduardo's vision through the *Instituto Coreográfico* and acknowledge the historical significance of being the first physically disabled Latinx choreographer to be a part of *Instituto*. This milestone is only possible because of the fierce women and my father-figure who made way for me,” said Mark Travis Rivera.

### **About Mark Travis Rivera**

Telling stories is at the core of Mark Travis Rivera’s purpose in life. He is an award-winning creative entrepreneur and the Founder + Chief Executive Officer of The Professional Storyteller.

As a writer, Rivera’s bylines include *The Bergen Record*, *Herald News*, *The Star-Ledger*, *Fox News Latino*, and *The Huffington Post*. He was also a contributing author in the anthology, *Crisis and Care: Queer Activist Responses to a Global Pandemic* (PM Press, 2022), edited by Adrian Shanker. His debut collection, *Drafts: An Imperfect Collection of Writing*, was published in August 2017. He was also a contributing writer for *Imagining: A Gibney Journal*, where he shared his experience as a disabled choreographer and dancer.

As a stubborn and determined 17-year-old, Rivera founded marked dance project (2009-2019), becoming the youngest person in the United States to create and lead an integrated dance company for disabled and non-disabled dancers. Inspired by his desire to dance as a person with cerebral palsy, he would go on to help disabled and non-disabled dancers alike find their voice as artists. As a Puerto Rican queer man, he was also one of just a handful of artistic directors of color in the disability dance field in the United States. As an independent disabled choreographer, Mark is determined to build a bridge between the main dance field and disability dance.

As a speaker, he has addressed audiences at various institutions of higher learning, including Harvard, MIT, Rutgers, and NYU. As a diversity, equity, and inclusion consultant and facilitator, he has spoken to corporate audiences virtually in the UK, Canada, Mexico, Latin America, Israel, China, and India, just to name a few. His TEDx Talk, “Embracing Yourself, Embracing Your Potential,” was a smash in 2014 at Bergen Community College.

A first-generation high school and college graduate, Rivera earned his bachelor’s degree in women’s & gender studies with a minor in public relations from William Paterson University of New Jersey. In 2013, Rivera received the Student Government Association’s Lifetime Achievement Award for his commitment to the William Paterson community. That same year, he was honored with the Campus Pride National Voice & Action Award for his work with the LGBTQ community. More recently, he won the Audre Lorde Award for Social Justice from John Jay College of Criminal Justice and the Lavender Legacy Award from William Paterson.

Mark also serves as Board Secretary for the Board of Directors at AXIS Dance Company, the nation’s leading integrated dance company. He formerly served as the Community Engagement Manager and apprentice. He is represented as a speaker by Hummingbird Humanity and their Speaks Bureau and is a member of the WE CREATE SPACE global collective of LGBTQ+ leaders. He was raised a Jersey boy, lived in New York City and the Bay Area, but now calls Atlanta, GA, home.

### **About *Instituto Coreográfico***

When Ballet Hispánico was founded over 50 years ago, Latinx artists were invisible to the dance field. Since its founding, Ballet Hispánico has played an instrumental role in changing the narrative - now,

generation of Latinx artists have produced art that reinterpret their heritage, bringing fresh perspectives on the Latinx experience.

In 2010, Ballet Hispánico's Artistic Director & CEO Eduardo Vilaro created the ***Instituto Coreográfico***, a choreographic institute for Latinx artists to create culturally specific work in a nurturing learning laboratory of dance. Now in its eighth year, *Instituto Coreográfico* invites dance patrons to respond, reflect, and enter into cultural dialogue with the artists about dance and culture in a safe, critical environment at a work-in-progress showing during the choreographer's residency. With this invaluable platform, Ballet Hispánico continues to give a voice to young artists of color and opens access to the dance-making process for all audiences.

Catalytic funding and partnership for Ballet Hispánico's Latinx Dance Institute, including the *Instituto Coreográfico*, is provided by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, who shares Ballet Hispánico's deep commitment to elevating the voices of Latinx leadership. Major sponsorship for the Instituto Coreográfico is provided by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the Mertz Gilmore Foundation. This project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

**Ballet Hispánico** is the largest Latinx/Latine/Hispanic cultural organization in the United States and one of America's Cultural Treasures. Ballet Hispánico's three main programs, the Company, School of Dance, and Community Arts Partnerships bring communities together to celebrate the multifaceted Hispanic diasporas. Ballet Hispánico's New York City headquarters provide the physical home and cultural heart for Latinx dance in the United States. It is a space that initiates new inclusive cultural conversations and explores the intersectionality of Latine cultures. The Ballet Hispánico mission opens a platform for new social dialogue, and nurtures and sees a community in its fullness. Through its exemplary artistry, distinguished training program, and deep-rooted community engagement, Ballet Hispánico champions and amplifies Latine voices in the field. For over fifty years Ballet Hispánico has provided a place of honor for the omitted, overlooked, and othered. As it looks to the future, Ballet Hispánico is pushing the culture forward on issues of dance and Latine creative expression.

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