

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **Lee Koonce Named Executive Director of Ballet Hispanico**

Lee Koonce, an experienced arts administrator and proven leader, has been named Executive Director of Ballet Hispanico, the nation's preeminent Latino dance institution, it was announced by Kate Lear, Chair of the Ballet Hispanico Board of Directors.

Mr. Koonce has spent the past seven years as Executive Director of New York City's Third Street Music School Settlement, the nation's oldest community music school. Prior to that, he held similar positions at the Sherwood Conservatory of Music in Chicago and senior positions with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Accenture/Anderson Consulting.

"Lee is an exceptional leader with a proven track record of building exciting and strategic arts organizations," said Ms. Lear. "His accomplishments in so many areas—staff management, planning, board governance and development—coupled with his strength of character makes him the ideal partner for Ballet Hispanico and our visionary Artistic Director, Eduardo Vilaro. Ballet Hispanico has flourished under Eduardo's leadership and the Board eagerly anticipates the next set of plans and dreams to be developed by this new team. We are thrilled by the possibilities."

During his tenure at Third Street, Mr. Koonce oversaw all aspects of the School, which provides music, dance and visual arts instruction to approximately 5,000 children and adults annually. He led efforts to strengthen the board, increase the endowment, complete long-range planning and implementation planning, increase enrollment and develop a strong and effective management team. He has consistently balanced budgets, increased earned and contributed revenue benchmarks, broadened outreach and created innovative programming that has propelled organizations forward at every position he has held. An accomplished pianist, Mr. Koonce received a Bachelor's of Music degree in Piano Performance from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, a BA in Spanish Literature from Oberlin College and a Master's of Music in Piano Performance and Literature from the Eastman School of Music.

"This is such an exciting time to join Ballet Hispanico," said Mr. Koonce. "Eduardo's and the Board's shared vision for the future builds so beautifully on the organization's rich history. Because of my own Colombian heritage, I am especially thrilled to be part of the Ballet Hispanico family and look forward to supporting all efforts to celebrate and increase awareness of the multifaceted culture of the Hispanic diaspora."

"This is a fantastic moment for Ballet Hispanico and I am delighted to be working with Lee. His passion for our work and our mission provides a remarkable foundation upon which to add his

skill and organizational vision. The possibilities of what we can create together are boundless; we will all benefit as a result,” commented Eduardo Vilaro, Ballet Hispanico’s Artistic Director.

Mr. Koonce succeeds Helene Blieberg, who has been serving as Interim Executive Director during this transition. He begins in January 2014.

### **ABOUT BALLETHISPANICO**

Celebrating 43 years of dance and culture, Ballet Hispanico is recognized as the nation’s premier Latino dance organization. Led by Artistic Director Eduardo Vilaro, Ballet Hispanico explores, preserves and celebrates today's Latino cultures through innovative artistic collaborations, world class dance training and national education and outreach programs. For more information, visit [www.ballethispanico.org](http://www.ballethispanico.org). Follow Ballet Hispanico on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).