

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

February 1, 2023

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A Celebration of the Life and Legacy of Tina Ramirez, Founder of Ballet Hispánico

Ballet Hispánico announces a ceremony to honor the passing of dance innovator Tina Ramirez, the iconic founding artistic director of the organization, to be held on Saturday, February 18, 2023 at 92NY. Tina Ramirez died peacefully on September 6, 2022, surrounded by her family. The event is open to the public, but seating is limited. To attend, please register in advance at 92ny.org/event/life-and-legacy-of-tina-ramirez.

“Words are unnecessary when movement and feeling and expression can say it all,” said Tina Ramirez, dancer and founder of Ballet Hispánico, born 1929 ([Read the obituary.](#)) - *The New York Times*, in the article *The Artists We Lost in 2022, in Their Words*.

The ceremony on February 18 will offer tribute – in both words and in movement – to all that Tina created. The memorial will feature performances by the Ballet Hispánico Company and School of Dance, with guest artists. Remarks and remembrances will be offered by Kate Lear, Chair of the Board of Directors; Eduardo Vilaro, Artistic Director & CEO; Verdery Roosevelt, Former Executive Director; artist Nancy Ticotin; Council Member Gale A. Brewer; and Jody Gottfried Arnhold, Founder of Dance Education Laboratory (DEL), 92NY and Ballet Hispánico Board Chair Emeritus.

“Tina was a bright light. She was an artist and activist who founded Ballet Hispánico to address structural inequities in the arts. From the moment I met her nearly twenty years ago, I knew I wanted to be part of the artistic movement she was passionately creating. Tina was fierce, brilliant, and completely her own person. She leaves behind a rich legacy of bringing dance, cultural connection, and transformation to students and communities throughout the world,” said Board Chair Kate Lear.

“I met Tina in 1967 when Ballet Hispánico was in residence at PS 75. I cemented myself to her then. She was a true visionary, a passionate and tireless cultural and artistic leader who was way ahead of her time. She built a company from community roots into a world-renowned treasure. With education always at the core of her mission, she gave the gift of dance and Hispanic culture to generations. I count myself lucky to be among the countless people she influenced,” said Board Chair Emeritus Jody Arnhold.

“Tina’s legacy lives on not only in the extraordinary gift that she left the world, but in each and every person, child, artist and family member that she touched and inspired. We are all part of her legacy of access and cultural pride and will continue her mission to give everyone the right to find their power and voice in dance,” said Eduardo Vilaro, Artistic Director & CEO.

Tina Ramirez (1929-2022) founded Ballet Hispánico in 1970 and served as Artistic Director until 2009. Under her direction, over 45 choreographers created works for the Company, many of international stature and others in the early stages of their career, including Talley Beatty, Ramon Oller, Maria Rivera, and William Whitener, among many others.

Ms. Ramirez was born in Venezuela, the daughter of a Mexican bullfighter and grandniece to a Puerto Rican educator who founded the island’s first secular school for girls. Her performing career included international

touring with the Federico Rey Dance Company, the Broadway productions of *Kismet* and *Lute Song* and the television adaptation of *Man of La Mancha*.

In recognition of her enduring contributions to the field of dance, Ms. Ramirez received the National Medal of Arts, the nation's highest cultural honor, in 2005. Juilliard awarded her an honorary degree, Doctor of Fine Arts, in 2018. Numerous other awards include the Honor Award from Dance/USA (2009), the Award of Merit from the Association of Performing Arts Presenters (2007), the *Dance Magazine* Award (2002), the Hispanic Heritage Award (1999), a Citation of Honor at the 1995 New York Dance and Performance Awards (the "Bessies"), the NYS Governor's Arts Award (1987), and the NYC Mayor's Award of Honor for Arts & Culture (1983).

Ballet Hispánico has been the leading voice intersecting artistic excellence and advocacy and is now the largest Latinx cultural organization in the United States and one of America's Cultural Treasures. Ballet Hispánico brings communities together to celebrate and explore Latino cultures through innovative dance productions, transformative dance training, and enduring community engagement experiences.

Tina Ramirez founded Ballet Hispánico in 1970, at the height of the post-war civil rights movements. From its inception, Ballet Hispánico focused on providing a haven for Black and Brown Latinx youth and families seeking artistic place and cultural sanctuary. By providing the space for Latinx dance and dancers to flourish, Ballet Hispánico uplifted marginalized emerging and working artists, which, combined with the training, authenticity of voice, and power of representation, fueled the organization's roots and trajectory. In 2009, Ballet Hispánico welcomed Eduardo Vilaro as its Artistic Director, ushering in a new era by inserting fresh energy to the company's founding values and leading Ballet Hispánico into an artistically vibrant future. Today, Ballet Hispánico's New York City headquarters house a School of Dance and state-of-the-art dance studios for its programs and the arts community. From its grassroots origins as a dance school and community-based performing arts troupe, for more than fifty years, Ballet Hispánico has stood as a catalyst for social change.

Ballet Hispánico provides the physical home and cultural heart for Latinx dance in the United States. Ballet Hispánico has developed a robust public presence across its three main programs: its Company, School of Dance, and Community Arts Partnerships.

Through its exemplary artistry, distinguished training program, and deep-rooted community engagement efforts, Ballet Hispánico champions and amplifies underrepresented voices in the field. For over fifty years, Ballet Hispánico has provided a place of honor for the omitted, overlooked, and oppressed. As it looks to the next fifty years and beyond, Ballet Hispánico seeks to empower, and give agency to, the Latinx experience and those individuals within it. For more information, visit www.ballethispanico.org.

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