



Ballet Hispanico: Songs danced by the living and the dead

April 29, 2012 – By Elizabeth Zimmer

Understanding Spanish is not a prerequisite for enjoying Ballet Hispanico, but it sure helps. All the dances on Program A are set to songs in Spanish by Latin American favorites including Susana Baca (performing live with a terrific quartet), Maria Dolores Pradera and Celia Cruz.

Three years ago founder Tina Ramirez retired and was replaced by former company member Eduardo Vilaro, who went on to become the founding artistic director of Chicago's Luna

Negra. He brought several dancers back with him, and the technical level of the 12-person troupe is strong.



ROSALIE O'CONNOR

The Ballet Hispanico program includes "Nube Blanco." The company is at the Joyce through April 29

Choreography runs the gamut from sweet and silly (Annabelle Lopez Ochoa's "Nube Blanco") to serious (Ronald K. Brown's ponderous new "Espiritu Vivo"). Vilaro's own "Asuka," made in collaboration with the company, uses scratchy recordings of Cuban radio to set the scene through a seductive series of social-dance variations. "Asuka" is ingratiating; the dancers are performing for your entertainment and satisfaction. It's similar to when Jessica Alejandra Wyatt appears in a puff of crinolines in "Nube Blanco," a string of visual jokes comes together in a powerful climax.

Brown's new piece, on the other hand, explores the stages of grief. Costumes mostly conceal the dancers' bodies and the lighting leaves you struggling to make out the choreography. Grounded in African traditions and exhibiting familiar Brown tropes like drifty, dreamy processions and sudden whirling jumps propelled by puffed-out chests, "Espiritu Vivo" really shows us the spirits of the dead with men resembling red ghosts in hoodies and loose trousers. It finally brightens --

but perhaps too little, too late.

If you go

Ballet Hispanico

Through April 29

Joyce Theater

175 Eighth Ave.

\$10-\$59, 212-242-0800

www.joyce.org

More about [dance](#) , [Ballet Hispanico](#)

Copyright 2012