

# Shelby Colona

With her sweeping mobility, earthy passion and soaring lines, Ballet Hispánico's Shelby Colona illuminates the stage. Performing the featured role in Annabelle Lopez Ochoa's *Linea Recta* last season, Colona was so captivating in the flamenco-inspired piece that she earned a standing ovation before the dancing had even ended.

**Company:** Ballet Hispánico

**Age:** 24

**Hometown:** Houston, Texas

**Training:** Rowland/Ballard School (Kingwood, Texas), Kingwood Youth Ballet, Kingwood Jazz & Company, High School for the Performing and Visual Arts (Houston, Texas), The Ailey School certificate program

**Meeting her mentor:** Colona considers Peter Chu, current guest rehearsal director for Netherlands Dans Theater, her most influential mentor. "I've been working with him since I was 10," she says. "He really branched me out when it came to contemporary work."

**Starting out:** After completing The Ailey School certificate program, Colona was invited to audition for *BHdos* by former rehearsal director Nicholas Villeneuve in 2014. They had met years earlier at a summer dance camp in Colorado. "She's polished in her carriage and delivery on- and offstage—the full package," he says.

**Breakout moment:** Colona notes she found confidence within herself last season. "I started to focus on where the movement was coming from internally. I'm finally comfortable in my own skin—I've learned not to be so afraid anymore."

**Not your average ballerina:** Colona admits she's not your typical girly-girl ballerina. "I'm down and dirty, in the mud. It's actually a challenge for me to portray the lifted, technical aspect of ballet."

**What her director is saying:** "Shelby is a dancer's dancer," says Ballet Hispánico's artistic director Eduardo Vilario. "Not only is she technically brilliant, her lush movement is rich with articulation and natural dramatic intention."

**A different spin:** Colona loves exploring her Brooklyn neighborhood on her bike, sometimes cycling the eight-mile distance between home and Ballet Hispánico. "After a full day of classes and rehearsals, it's relaxing to pedal across the Brooklyn Bridge and look back at the city with the sun setting behind it." ■

BY GIANNELLA M. GARRETT



"She is quickly developing an astounding ability to jump from style to style without losing her expansive, fluid aesthetic."

—EDUARDO VILARIO

Colona credits a childhood hooked on dance for her knack for stepping into different roles and learning them on the fly.