

Ballet Hispanico at the Joyce Theater

by [Mari S. Gold](#) , April 25, 2015.



Ballet Hispanico, *Show.Girl*. Photo Grant Halverson

Ballet Hispanico

Joyce Theater

April 16, 2015

Artistic Director Eduardo Vilaro

This program, divided into three sections, showed the company in very different lights. Up first, *Show. Girl*, with choreography by Rosie Herrera, costumes by Diana Ruettiger and lighting by Joshua Preston, uses the “Cuban cabaret ethic” to put forth dances that don’t have much relationship to each other. *Show. Girl* opens with a line of women in columnar pink dresses with deep slits on both sides, moving rhythmically to silence other than the occasional slaps they give themselves. It’s a bit unsettling. After a time, they sing a banal song about a turtle and move in the creamy light, posing for one another and the audience. The mood shifts as men enter waving

large, white feathered fans. The stage fills with smoke as the men surround one woman in a silver, shimmery dresses and we hear *Another Love*. At times, it feels like the woman is in heaven; then, she appears bored with the whole thing. Finally, the stage darkens; when the lights come up, the women are costumed like Ziegfeld girls albeit in abbreviated outfits, showgirl-spangly with beaded headdresses. They gesture as harp music plays. The whole effect is cute and intensely theatrical if not filled with brilliant dancing.

The second piece was *Conquer* by Mexican-based Miguel Mancillas in a world premiere. The work deals with power and control as the company dances, some with pointed toes, others with flexed feet, all barefoot. There are lots of lifts, spins and unusual poses; at one point the group lines up at the edge of the stage so the shadows behind them are large and a little unsettling. The dance is very physical with huge leaps that seem effortless, men catching men or women as the steps demand. At one point, a woman is thrillingly tossed some distance across the stage into waiting arms—close to flying. I found *Conquer* the most persuasive work of the evening with bravura displays of arched backs and twisted torsos.

The evening ended with *El Beso* (The Kiss) by Gusvavo Ramirez Sansano with costumes by Angel Sanchez who can design my clothes any time he cares to—the women's dresses in navy blue or black have interesting cut outs and are runway-worthy. The men, also dressed by Sansano, wear singlets and mostly shorts. At the start, there's a large orchestral sound which signals that something huge is on the way —it's the lead up to a single man in shorts, socks and a singlet who seems confused at the focus on him. He winds up and takes over. Movement never stops, for him and the other dancers who join him. There are kisses, (mostly rhythmic rather than romantic), throughout but they are arch rather than intrinsic. The dancers are magically energetic and the end, when the troupe is in unison under a big, lacy insert, is filled with movement that are entirely absorbing. The performance as a whole is fun, sexy and often playful making me want to see more of this company.

Ballet Hispanico has been a leading Latino dance organization since 1970 with works that blend Latino roots with an appealing modern style. It's a great showcase for a creative, well-trained group of dancers and new choreographers with links to the Latino world and its traditions.

About Mari S. Gold

Mari S. Gold is a freelance writer who contributes to many magazines and websites. Her blog, *But I Digress...*, on cultural events, travel, food and other topics is at www.marigoldonline.net. She lives in New York City.