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Rehearsal @ Ballet Hispanico



Above: **Ballet Hispanico** rehearsal image by Paula Lobo; the dancers are Melissa Fernandez and Mario Ismael Espinoza

Wednesday November 13th, 2013

Since I'll be unable to attend [Ballet Hispanico](#)'s upcoming performance at the Apollo Theater (on November 23rd), the Company's publicist Michelle Tabnick very kindly arranged for me to watch a studio rehearsal today of Eduardo Vilaro's new creation **HOGAR**. This ballet will have its world premiere at the Apollo Theater performance and is set to music by the Russian composer [Lev Zhurbin](#).



Above: Mario Ismael Espinoza with Lauren Alzamora rehearsing **HOGAR**; photo by Paula Lobo

When I arrived at the studio today, the dancers were just about to start a run-thru of **HOGAR** which - though not quite finished choreographically - already reveals a strong sense of structure and utilizes a large cast to striking effect. Mr. Vilaro uses the Zhurbin score, interlaced with some passages danced in silence, to mix ensemble segments with more intimate modules: quartets, duets and solos.

HOGAR (which may be translated as *Home* or *Hearth*) opens with a restless, questing solo danced by Jamal Rashaan Callender. He is then silently observed by the community. The dancing takes flight with some spacious partnering motifs, and individual dancers traverse the space in lively combinations. The first of two central duets is danced by Melissa Fernandez and Mario Ismael Espinoza: a sexy and passionate episode with a touch of quirkiness thrown in. Jamal and his partner Kimberly Van Woesik take the second *pas de deux*: a very attractive couple dancing with expressive physicality. A quartet of men and then a quartet of women sweep across the space, and then a very gently witty and warm duet for two women: Vanessa Valecillos and Jessica Alejandra Wyatt. The ballet's ending is still under construction, and so I left the studio - somewhat reluctantly - so that they could continue working. The late afternoon sun was filtering into the space, making me wish I'd brought along a photographer.

Ballet Hispanico have quickly become one of my favorite ensembles; and it was great to see Chris Bloom again - he has recently joined the Company and is fitting right in with his energy and artistry.

Watch a Vimeo sampling of the **Ballet Hispanico** dancers and rep [here](#). The photos within this article are by [Paula Lobo](#).

Full details of the November 23rd evening at The Apollo:

Ballet Hispanico, recognized as the nation's leading Latino dance organization since 1970, returns to the legendary Apollo Theater on Saturday, November 23, 2013 at 7:30pm, following last season's sold-out holiday performance. The performance is sponsored by **Goya Foods**. Highlights include a seductive

world premiere by Edgar Zendejas inspired by the beloved Mexican celebration "Día de los Muertos" (Day of the Dead), and the Apollo premiere of Belgian-Colombian Annabelle Lopez Ochoa's ***Sombrerísimo***, an athletic tour de force for six male dancers. The world premiere of Artistic Director Eduardo Vilaro's ***Hogar*** will be set to vibrant *live* music by Lev Zhurbin and his string ensemble, a mix of classical, Latin, and gypsy melodies. The Apollo Theater is located at 253 W. 125th Street, NYC. Tickets start at \$28 and are available for purchase in person at the Apollo Theater Box Office, or through Ticketmaster at 800.745.3000.

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