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## BWW Reviews: Ballet Hispanico Bids Farewell to Vanessa Valecillos

May 1  by [Eryn Goldstein](#)

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It was a pleasure to attend [Ballet](#) Hispanico's April 27th performance honoring retiring company dancer Vanessa Valecillos. The diverse program showcased Ms. Valecillos' versatility and commanding presence in both ensemble and soloist roles.

The program began with Nacho Duato's captivating *Jardi Tancat*. Six dancers pulled the audience into their silent meditation, unfolding and contracting in a golden pool of light. Soon, they spread across the space in shifting groups. Moving in and out of perfect unison, the dancers were individuals united by hope and desperation. Duet sections highlighted Ms. Valecillos' clear lines and her care for completing each movement.

The highlight of the performance was Edward Liang's *A Verme*, performed by Ms. Valecillos and Jamal Rashann Callendar. Athletic and focused, the dancers made a beautiful couple. As their intertwined bodies described the balance of tension that accompanies timeless love, it was clear that the dancers enjoyed committing fully to the journey of Mr. Liang's choreography. Ms. Valecillos radiated warmth and contentment with a gentle smile and smooth phrasing.

*Sombrerísimo*, choreographed by Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, featured six men in bowler hats. The hats, and shadowy lighting referenced the surrealist paintings of Rene Magritte. The dancers stretched and tumbled across the space, trading spaces in unison phrases and performing miniature solos of acrobatic stunts. The witty, engaging scenes were filled with an abundance of energy.

A second work by Ms. Lopez Ochoa closed the program on a theatrical note. Described as a "tongue-in-cheek look at the Marias in all our lives", *Mad'moiselle* saw the dancers in bright red bob wigs, and slinky black costumes. Soaring, balletic phrases transitioned into melodramatic sections for small ensembles. In a striking final entrance, Ms. Valecillos glided past the other dancers in red platform boots and voluminous swaths of red tulle. As she ended her procession, Ms. Valecillos' feet rocked back and forth, boots bending at terrifying angles. Committed as ever, she crumbled to the floor in a memorable end to the show and her impressive performing career.

**Pictured:** [Ballet](#) Hispanico in Annabelle Lopez Ochoa's *Mad'moiselle*. Photo Credit: Eduardo Patino.