

# The New York Times

[http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/21/arts/dance/review-ballet-hispanico-adds-style-and-bounce-to-an-apollo-homecoming.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/21/arts/dance/review-ballet-hispanico-adds-style-and-bounce-to-an-apollo-homecoming.html?_r=1)

## Review: Ballet Hispánico Adds Style and Bounce to an Apollo Homecoming

By BRIAN SEIBERT NOV. 20, 2016



Mario Ismael Espinoza and Melissa Fernandez of Ballet Hispánico in the premiere of Annabelle Lopez Ochoa's "Línea Recta," at the Apollo Theater on Friday. Credit: Andrea Mohin/The New York Times

Eduardo Vilaro, the artistic director of [Ballet Hispánico](#), looked out from the Apollo Theater stage and told the excited crowd, "This is home." Since 2011, his company has appeared at that Harlem theater annually around this time of year, and these performances have offered the best expression of how Mr. Vilaro, at the helm since 2009, has been maintaining and transforming this 46-year-old troupe. The show on Friday evening continued that tradition. While not quite living up to the claims of reinvention and originality in the printed program, it was a festive affair with excellent dancing.

The diverting tone was set with Gustavo Ramírez Sansano's "Flabbergast" (2001), which generates a lot of goofy pleasure just by using the 1960s Latin lounge music of [Juan García](#)

[Esquivel](#). Inside of a confusing frame about migration (the dancers carry suitcases), the piece is a standard comedy about shifting sexual mores. Modern women act as sexual aggressors! A woman, wooed by four men and their thrusting pelvises, goes off with another woman instead! Like the Esquivel recordings, Mr. Sansano's retro dance looks at the sexual revolution and says, "Crazy!" It itself is a kind of cocktail, with sleek and bouncy choreography that gives you a short-lived buzz.

"Línea Recta" was a premiere by Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, the in-demand Belgian-Colombian choreographer. Set to live Spanish guitar and percussion by Eric Vaarzon Morel, this work tries to update flamenco. A woman — wearing a red, long-tailed flamenco dress or brandishing a flamenco fan — is swung around by men. They pull her by the tail, wind themselves up in it, thread it between their thighs. That this kind of interaction is new to flamenco doesn't make it original. However fluent, expert and elegant, it is routine contemporary partnering with new accessories. The all-female and all-male sections of the work felt fresher, borrowing sharp flamenco shapes for an attractive exercise in style.

Mr. Vilaro's own "Danzón" (2009) lost some energy without the live playing of Paquito D'Rivera and his band that accompanied it [at the Apollo in 2012](#). Purporting to update another Latin dance tradition, the Cuban danzón, it isn't the most striking reinterpretation, either. But it's a pretty, pleasing piece, dancing to the music without particularly illuminating it. It offers this fine company of dancers many chances to shake and shine and look happily at home.

A version of this review appears in print on November 21, 2016, on Page C2 of the New York edition with the headline: An Apollo Homecoming With Style and Bounce.