PRE-PERFORMANCE REPERTORY RESOURCE GUIDE

We invite you to use the following as a reference and inspiration for the repertory you will experience.

Led by Artistic Director Eduardo Vilaro, Ballet Hispanico is the nation’s preeminent Latino dance organization.

Mission

Ballet Hispanico explores, preserves, and celebrates Latino cultures through dance. The mission unfolds in the work of the professional Company, the School of Dance, and the Education and Outreach programs. Together, these divisions celebrate the dynamic aesthetics of the Hispanic diaspora, building new avenues of cultural dialogue and sharing the joy of dance with all communities.

History

Recognized for her achievements by the National Medal of Arts, the nation’s highest cultural honor, Tina Ramirez founded Ballet Hispanico in 1970. From its grassroots origins as a dance school and community-based performing arts troupe, the organization has grown into a world-class institution. Ballet Hispanico’s New York City headquarters house a School of Dance and state-of-the-art dance studios for its programs and the arts community.

In August 2009, Ballet Hispanico welcomed Eduardo Vilaro as its Artistic Director. A former member of the Ballet Hispanico Company, Vilaro founded and led Chicago’s Luna Negra Dance Theater for a decade. Vilaro’s background in dance education and community outreach allows him to build on the company’s founding values and lead Ballet Hispanico into an artistically vibrant future.
Organization

The Company performs a diverse repertory by the foremost choreographers of our time as well as emerging artists. The works explore the diversity of Latino culture through a fusion of classical, Latin, and contemporary dance powered by theatricality, athleticism, and passion. Our choreographers represent a multitude of nationalities including Venezuela, Cuba, Trinidad, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Spain, Brazil, Argentina, and Colombia. The Company has offered over 3,350 performances to an audience of over 2 million, throughout 11 countries, on 3 continents.

The School of Dance offers a unique curriculum based on Spanish dance forms, classical ballet, and contemporary dance. The School offers rigorous pre-professional training, a general program, and unique classes for pre-schoolers and adults. It has trained more than 8,000 children who have gone on to successful careers in dance, theater, film, education, and many other professions.

Education & Outreach offers an innovative exploratory learning experience for school children, teachers, and parents. The in-school version of the program offers long-term teaching artist residencies and has touched the lives of some 20,000 New York City school children. The Outreach touring program includes teacher training sessions, classroom workshops and master classes with Company members, and has brought the joy of Latino dance traditions to countless thousands across the country.

![Tito On Timbales](https://example.com/tito_on_timbales.jpg)
Who we are

Founder, Tina Ramirez
Tina Ramirez recognized a need to provide access, training and performance opportunities for Latino dancers in the late 1960s and as a result, she created Ballet Hispanico. Born in Venezuela, she is the daughter of a Mexican bullfighter and grand-niece to the founder of Puerto Rico’s first secular school for girls. Because of her passion and commitment to dance and education, she has earned many awards and honors in recognition for her work, including the National Medal of Arts in 2005.

Artistic Director, Eduardo Vilaro
Eduardo Vilaro came to New York City at the age of six from his native Cuba and began his dance training at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center and the Martha Graham Center of Contemporary Dance. He joined Ballet Hispanico as Artistic Director in August 2009, following a ten-year record of achievement as Founder and Artistic Director of Luna Negra Dance Theater in Chicago. He has been part of the Ballet Hispanico family since 1985. As a dancer in the Ballet Hispanico Company, Mr. Vilaro performed works by Vicente Nebrada, Talley Beatty, Ramon Oller and other audience favorites. As an educator he assisted Ballet Hispanico founder Tina Ramirez in developing a program for children living in temporary housing and was involved with many aspects of the organization’s education residencies.

Our Educational Philosophy
All of us are shaped in some way by tradition and culture. We have at different times embraced them, passed them on through generations, questioned their value, and looked for ways to transform them given new influences. Ballet Hispanico’s work exists in part to help people understand the origins and influences of Latino traditions in dance. At the same time we encourage the exploration of traditions and culturally-specific elements that are interpreted and reinterpreted by artists, dancers, musicians, and choreographers.
Looking at Dance

Dance and music are a major part of our cultural identity. Many of the music and dances coming out of Latin American communities were created through the mixing of African, Indian, and European cultures. The term Latin America commonly refers to countries where Spanish and Portuguese languages are spoken, including Mexico, most of Central and South America, plus the Caribbean islands of Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. Latin America is therefore defined as all those parts of the Americas that were once part of the Spanish and Portuguese Empires. Dance is comprised of the following elements: postures and gestures, spatial patterns, music and theatrical effects. The questions below will serve as a guide for your exploration and engagement with the work.

POSTURES AND GESTURES

- What feelings or mood do the dancers’ movements make you think of? Are the movements fast or slow, repetitious or changing, angular or curved?
- What parts of the body are used most? What do the dancers’ facial expressions tell you? What gestures are repeated more than once? Why do you think they are being repeated?

SPATIAL PATTERNS

- What groupings do you see? How do the groupings change? (solos, duets, larger groups?) Why do you think they change?
- What "designs" on the floor do the dancers form onstage? Do they move forward and back, across, on a diagonal? (circles, lines, squares?) Are some of these patterns repeated?

MUSIC

- Is the music fast or slow? Does it change during the dance? In what ways? If you close your eyes, what mood does the music create? How might you describe the music?
- What instrument(s) do you hear? Is there singing? In what language?
- Do the dancers’ movements connect with the music? If so, how?

THEATRICAL EFFECTS

- Besides the performers that you see, how do the other roles in the production help make this dance possible? (Choreographer, Costume Designer, Lighting Designer, Musicians, Stage Manager, Dramaturg)
- Does the lighting change during the piece? In what ways? What kind of effect does the lighting have on the dancers’ movements? How do the costumes influence your understanding of the dance?
# Movement Activities: Embodying the Elements of Dance

## Space:
- Ask students to move through the space in specific line shapes (straight, curvy, diagonal, zig zag, vertical, horizontal...)
- Have line shapes on individually written on a card, divide students into 4 groups and have each group pick one card from which to create a sequence that moves in the line spacing.
- Have two groups at a time present their sequence.
- Ask students to not only look at the line spacing but also:
  - Whether the group moved in personal or general space
  - Whether they had high, medium or low movements in the space
  - Whether their movements were big or small.
  - Whether they noticed any type of relationship (time, force, movement)

## Time:
- Ask students to think about the concept of time. How do you tell time? (seconds, minutes, hours) Any movement takes time, but unlike a clock the speed can speed up and slow down.
- Mirroring: In pairs, have students face each other (one will be the mirror and the other will initiate the movement that the ‘mirror’ must follow). Ask lead to come up with slow movements that the mirror can follow.
- Shadowing: Have the mirror then become the person that the other person must shadow. Allow leads to do faster movements.
- Slowland/Fastland: Divide room into two areas that students can move between. One is dedicated as Slowland and the other is Fastland. (medium speed can be on the border of the two lands)

## Force:
- Smoothland/Sharpland: Divide room into two areas that students can move between. One is dedicated as Smoothland and the other is Sharpland.
- Make 4 groups and have them come up with a sequence of Smooth and Sharp movements that they can do strongly or lightly. Have each group share their sequence for the class.
- Ask students whether they noticed any type of relationships (spatial, time, movement)

## Body:
- Identify 4 body parts to explore in movement. One at a time have them move around the space moving that body part in as many different ways that they can imagine for each identified body part. (you can have them decide individually to move from one body part to the next or to give them a signal that indicates moving from one body part to the next)
- Divide the group into two so that they can see how others explore the body parts and how it looks in a group.
- Ask the audience to not only look at the exploration of specified body parts but also:
  - The shapes and groupings they see happening
  - Whether they noticed any type of relationship (spatial, time, force, movement)
The Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts:

New York City’s Arts Blueprint is a document, built around an awareness that “the diversity of art forms, cultures, settings, and practices that entice visitors from around the world are available every day to our City’s youth.” The Blueprint goes beyond the national and NYS standards, by conceiving of relevant learnings that are common to all the fine arts. The teaching and learning of dance, drama, visual arts, and music is organized into five “strands.”

**Strand 1: Dance Making: Engaging in the art form – Making Dance**

By exploring, creating, replicating and observing dance, students build their technical and expressive skills, develop their artistry and a unique personal voice in dance, and experience the power of dance to communicate. They understand dance as a universal language and a legacy of expression in every culture.

**Strand 2: Developing Dance Literacy: Learning the Lingo – Understanding the vocabulary of Dance**

Students develop a working knowledge of dance language and aesthetics, and apply it to analyzing, evaluating, documenting, creating and performing dance. They recognize their role as articulate, literate dancers in communicating about dance to their families, schools and communities.

**Strand 3: Making Connections: Linking life, history, culture and our world**

This strand provides social, cultural, and historical contexts in which students may understand the arts, while indicating some of the links to other disciplines in the curriculum. By investigating historical, social and cultural contexts, and by exploring common themes and principles connecting dance with other disciplines, students enrich their creative work and understand the significance of dance in the evolution of human thought and expression. How are you making connections with and for the students in the social, cultural and historical context of the dances and the student’s lives?

**Strand 4: Working With Community and Cultural Resources: Broadening access to the arts in the world around**

Students broaden their perspective by working with professional artists and arts organizations representing diverse cultural and personal approaches to dance, and by seeing performances of widely varied dance styles and genres. Active partnerships that combine school and local community resources with the full range of New York City’s dance and cultural institutions create a fertile ground for students’ dance learning and creativity. Students should be actively engaged with the institutions, schools, studios, community-based organizations, libraries, concerts, exhibitions, and artists that contribute to the cultural and economic vitality of the City. In what ways are you articulating connections to your form in the community – do your students know where to see more dance or learn more about this form?

**Strand 5: Exploring Careers and Lifelong Learning: Exposing learners to possibilities**

Students consider the range of dance and dance-related professions as they think about their goals and aspirations, and understand how the various professions support and connect with each other. They carry physical, social and cognitive skills learned in dance, and an ability to appreciate and enjoy participating in dance, throughout their lives. The career-building skills learned in arts activities are those required in all other fields of endeavor: goals setting, planning, and working independently and in teams. How are you guiding your students to understanding your profession as an artist and the many roles one can play in the arts that transcend the classroom or dance floor.
What you will see….

| Nube Blanco | Choreography by: Annabelle Lopez Ochoa  
Music: Maria Dolores Pradera |
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<td>Nube Blanco \textit{(White Cloud)} is inspired by Annabelle Lopez Ochoa’s childhood memories of the beautiful songs of Maria Dolores Pradera. Lopez Ochoa integrates brilliantly the Spanish \textit{zapateado} technique or footwork that is found in flamenco dance and gives it a contemporary twist. During her youth, Lopez Ochoa felt obstructed by her own multi-cultural heritage; she is half-Colombian and half-Belgian. She related more closely to her European roots, as she was raised in Belgium, and did not speak Spanish until later in life. Throughout her childhood, she was haunted by the duality of her heritage and searched for alternative mediums for communicating. She began combining art forms as a means of self-expression. Since leaving her performing career, Ms. Ochoa is a professional choreographer working with companies around the world.</td>
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| Points of Inquiry & Inspiration | Rhythms • Community Support • Partnerships • Gestures • Flamenco • Childhood Memories |
| Guiding Question | Explore the ways in which the choreographer uses rhythm, gestures, vocals, space, and costume to communicate connections between people. |
| About the Music | Maria Dolores Pradera is a Spanish melodic singer and actress, and one of the most prestigious voices in Spain and Latin America. She started her career as an actress, working in the theatre and in some of the most famous Spanish movies from the 1940s. During the 1950s, she started singing professionally, eventually abandoning her career as an actress in the 1960s. She has specialized in traditional Spanish and Latin American music: bolero, ballad, ronda, vals, and folk music. |

| Classroom Activities for Exploration | Activity A: As a class create 3 or 4 clapping rhythms that the students can repeat easily. Share these rhythms with the whole class in a sound and movement exercise. Have students share ideas for different ways to create sound using parts of their bodies (feet, snapping fingers, mouths). Then, have every student share their sound to be repeated by the group. Starting with a simple and sustained clapping, like a metronome, have each student, one at a time, add their rhythm. Keep going for a little while, once every student is included. Group students using similar body parts. Then, like an orchestra conductor, signal for each group to start and stop as the metronome rhythm is sustained. After a few rounds you can invite students to become the conductor of the ‘orchestra’. |
| Activity B: In Groups: Part 1: Each group creates a sequence of three everyday gestures and shares the sequence with the class. Part 2: They transform the gestures into abstract movements by manipulating the qualities of movement in time and space (i.e. slow/fast, small/big, high/low, fluid/sharp.) **Extension:** Students compose a written reflection to accompany the sequences relating the experience of engaging with the dance piece and how this influenced their own creation. |
Asuka

Choreography by: Eduardo Vilaro  
Music: Celia Cruz & Tito Puente

For his first choreographic piece for Ballet Hispanico, Eduardo Vilaro, honors the life and music of Celia Cruz, known around the world as the “Queen of Salsa.” Coming of age in the diverse musical climate of 1930’s Cuba, Ms. Cruz personified the evolution of salsa, from its roots in African rhythms to its emergence as a contemporary genre in the US. Her music inspired countless immigrants who sought shelter on foreign shores and turned to her music for comfort and solace.

| Points of Inquiry & Inspiration | Icons • Societal Roles • Cuban history • Immigration • Loss • Identity • Nostalgia • Tribute |
| Guiding Question | How does the choreographer explore roles, history and tribute in the dance piece? |
| About the Music | Celia Cruz was Cuban-American and one of the most successful salsa performers of the 20th century, having earned twenty-three gold albums. She is known internationally as the "Queen of Salsa." She is the best known and most influential female figure in the history of Cuban music. "She spent much of her career living in New Jersey, and working in the United States and several Latin American countries. The music in Asuka depicts the versatility and legacy of Celia Cruz’s work, which spans over 50 years. Musical forms included in this piece are: Mambo, Bolero and a custom mix of music that combines Ms. Cruz’s contemporary contributions which include Rap, Reggaeton and House music. |

| Classroom Activities for Exploration | Activity A: As a class, invite students to explore what it means to leave one’s homeland. Families can come from many different places. Investigate family heritage and immigration experiences by identifying similarities and differences from the past and now. Students can also investigate the personal life journeys of Celia Cruz and Tito Puente sharing the contributions they made to culture, art and music.  
Activity B: In groups of 6, each group is assigned: Choreographer, Costume Designer, Lighting Designer, Sound Designer, Researcher and Dancer. Using theatrical elements and meaning inspired by this work, the groups will explore how each role contributed to the dance Asuka. Once each group has explored the activity, they will re-imagine the work exploring a theme of their choice – recreating Asuka with their icon, choreographic style, costume design, research, lighting and movements of their choice. Each group will present their findings and justification of their artistic choices to the class.  
Activity C: Individual and groups: Students create Cinquain poems (in one and/or two languages) inspired by Asuka. (i.e. Cinquain Pattern #1: Line1: One word, Line2: Two words, Line 3: Three words, Line 4: Four words, Line 5: One word (one of these words must be about water) or Cinquain Pattern #2: Line1: A noun, Line 2: Two adjectives, Line 3: Three -ing words, Line 4: A phrase, Line 5: Another word for the noun.) |
### Club Havana

**Choreography by:** Pedro Ruiz  
**Music by:** Israel López, Ruben Gonzáles, A.K. Salim, Perez Prado, and Francisco Repilado  

Latin dance forms first came to this country in the 1920s and 30s, when Cuban immigrants introduced the Conga and Rumba. In the late 1940s through the 1950s, the Mambo and Cha-Cha were added to the mix, creating a fever all over New York. At the same time, American jazz infused a different energy into popular music in Cuba. The Cuban choreographer, Pedro Ruiz, has drawn on all this history, together with ballroom and modern dance styles, to create this swirling party. The intoxicating rhythms of the Conga, Rumba, Mambo, and Cha-Cha are brought to life as Pedro Ruiz imagined his very own Club Havana.

### Points of Inquiry & Inspiration

- Rhythms
- Cuban Musical and History
- American Jazz
- Nightlife
- Socializing in Community
- Dances of an Era
- Teamwork

### Guiding Question

Explore the ways in which the choreographer represents a specific era in history, community and relationships in the dance.

### About the Music

One of the composers and musicians represented in Club Havana is Perez Prado. Though diminutive in stature, Pérez Prado was a giant in the world of post-war popular music. Dubbed "The Mambo King," he reigned supreme as one of the most influential pop orchestra leaders of the early 1950s. As the mambo rhythm spread across the continents, a society emerged from the dark years of World War II to shed its inhibitions and embrace the frenzy of this Afro-Cuban beat.

### Classroom Activities for Exploration

**Activity A:** In a circle, invite students to think of some activity or chore from everyday life and create a simple mime, motion or gesture that conveys one movement associated with that activity. Have them repeat that single gesture several times so that it creates a rhythmic momentum. Once this rhythmic repetition has been established, the rest of the class can "accompany" it by clapping the beat. Have several students join the first student in a line and perform precisely the same rhythmic movement. Ask student to share what they notice about the group repeating a rhythmic pattern. (e.g. how "meaning," can be made through "choreographed" rhythm in space.)

**Activity B:** Group or Individual work: Engage students in “mind-mapping” the current era and in community groups, invite them to create mind maps inspired by 1950s New York and Cuba. (They will need time to research this on a on the internet to gather information for the eras above.) The mind maps can be as creative as possible, incorporating words, images, and color through collage.
Resources:

Books about dance for teachers:
- Dance: A Social Study - The Latin American Tradition. By ArtsConnection
- Evernight Life: Culture and Dance in Latin/o America. Celeste Fraser Delgado and José Esteban Muñoz
- Children Dance in the Classroom. G. Diamondstein.

Curriculum Inspiration:

Choreography Footage: To see Ballet Hispanico footage Google “Ballet Hispanico” and click the You Tube tab.

Books about dance for students:
- Colon - Vila, Lillian, and Roberta Collier-Morales. Salsa
- Delacre, Lulu. Vejigante Masquerader
- Johnston, Edith. Regional Dances of Mexico
- Komaiko, Leah. Aunt Eliane Does the Dance from Spain
- Locker, Thomas. Home: A Journey Through America

Film:
- Pedro Ruiz: Coming Home is an hour-long documentary and performance film, telling the story of Pedro’s return to Cuba. The film shows the power of art to transform lives and cross divides.

Please send us your work! We would love to receive letters, drawings, poems, film or any creative work inspired by our repertory. Send it by email, snail mail or YouTube! Ballet Hispanico Education & Outreach 167 West 89th Street, New York, NY 10024 info@ballethispanico.org