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Founded in 1970 by dancer and educator Tina Ramirez, Ballet Hispánico is a world-class dance and arts education institution and the largest Latinx cultural organization in the United States. For over fifty years, the company has maintained its mission of bringing communities together to celebrate and explore Latinx cultures through innovative dance productions, transformative dance training, and community engagement.

Since its founding, the New York City-based company has performed for over two million people across the world, and has produced over 75 dance pieces. The company employs a large number of diverse choreographers working within Latin music and history.

From the very beginning, arts education was a core component of Ramirez' vision for the company. Today, the company has a dance school which serves over 1,000 students every year with classes in flamenco, hip-hop, salsa, Afro-Caribbean, jazz, tap, ballet, and more. Ballet Hispánico has extensive outreach and engagement programs as well, reaching thousands of NYC students annually with public school residencies, performances, and community activities.

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*“I wanted to keep [Hispanic dancers] from having to dance in nightclubs. They were serious dancers and deserved the opportunity to be treated as such.” -Founder Tina Ramirez*

Founder Tina Ramirez, who moved to New York City from Venezuela as a child and died in 2022

Within the first decade of its founding, the company was touring nationally and internationally. In 2005, Ramirez received the National Medal of Arts, the highest cultural honor in the United States, in recognition of her enduring contributions to dance.

Eduardo Vilaro was a company member from 1988-1996 before returning as the new Artistic Director when Ramirez stepped down in 2009. Since taking over as Artistic Director he has expanded the company's educational offerings. Speaking about the importance of arts education, Vilaro says, "...[students] are given a chance to consider a different perspective and perhaps develop an aesthetic. Arts education is a transformative experience."

Vilaro also spearheaded "Diálogos," a conversation series exploring the interconnections of the arts, social justice, and Latinx cultures. The Instituto Coreográfico was launched in 2010 as an incubator for emerging choreographers, deepening the company's commitment to mentoring the next generation of artists.

Under the umbrella of the Instituto, they developed the All-Latina program, showcasing work exclusively made by Latina choreographers.

[Michelle Manzanales, director of the company's school of dance, says,](#) "Our goal is to break down stereotypes and preconceived notions about Latinx culture. We do that through infusing the traditional and contemporary and by portraying our authentic selves."



*Director of the school of dance Michelle Manzanales teaching a class to young dancers*

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Ballet Hispánico was built on the foundation of the dance styles Tina Ramirez studied: ballet, modern, and Spanish dance.

Spanish dance is not just one thing – it encompasses a multitude of styles originating from Spain and Latin America. There are more types of Spanish dance than can fit in just one packet, but here's a brief overview of some of the styles which Ramirez studied and which have influenced the work of Ballet Hispánico since the beginning!





is the Spanish way to say the word Hispanic. Hispanic refers to people in the Americas and Spain who speak Spanish or are descended from Spanish-speaking communities. For more on the nuance and intersections of these two terms, check out [this article from UC Berkeley!](#)

                     is an intentional interruption in the rhythmic flow of a piece of music, in which a note that would not normally be accented (or played “on the beat”)            he

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[DanceUSA Tina Ramirez Biography \(short video\)](#)

[Ballet Hispánico Interactive Google Arts & Culture Exhibit](#)

[University of California: What's the Difference between Hispanic, Latino and Latinx?](#)

[Article: Ballet Hispánico is Transforming Latine Lives](#)

[Article: Cultural Legacy of Ballet Hispánico](#)

[About Tina Ramirez](#)

[Danzón de Cuba: Music and Dancing](#)

[How Salsa Music Took Root in New York City](#)