

Línea Recta **(2016)**



Lyvan Verdecia and Melissa Verdecia in *Línea Recta* | Photo by Paula Lobo

Choreography by Annabelle Lopez Ochoa

Music by Eric Vaarzon Morel

Costume Design by Danielle Truss

Lighting Design by Michael Mazzola

About The Choreography

Colombian-Belgian choreographer Annabelle Lopez Ochoa's motivation for creating *Línea Recta* originated from the intense flamenco training in her childhood. Annabelle observed there is rarely "touch" between the dancers in flamenco. She became intrigued to create a physical connection between dancers in the construction of her own work. Annabelle used props including a long bustle skirt and fans as a third element between the dancers, which emphasized the distance between their partners, reiterating the conspicuous absence of physical partnering.

The title of the piece, *Línea Recta*, comes from a French expression meaning, "directly to the point," contradicting a key element of the flamenco dance style, which aims to have dancers circle around each other.

About the Choreographer

Annabelle Lopez Ochoa completed her dance education at the Royal Ballet School of Antwerp in Belgium. After a 12-year long career in various European dance companies, Annabelle decided in 2003 to focus solely on choreography. Annabelle is an award-winning and sought-after choreographer that has created works for 61 dance companies around the world. Ms. Lopez Ochoa is a versatile choreographer who works regularly within the dance field but also creates choreographies for theatre, opera, musical theatre and in 2006, for the celebrated Dutch fashion designers Viktor & Rolf.

Ms. Lopez Ochoa has won several choreography awards and accolades which range from the Jacob's Pillow Choreography Award and honorary mention in the *Libro de Honor del Teatro Alicia Alonso, Cuba*. In 2014, Fall for Dance NYC commissioned her work, *Sombrerísimo*, created for Ballet Hispánico, included in the "Best of 2013" by *Dance Magazine*.



Artistic Components

Music

Flamenco guitar runs in the family for composer, Eric Vaarzon Morel, who created the music heard in *Línea Recta*. His grandfather was a painter and a Dutch flamenco guitarist. Morel learned to play the flamenco guitar at sixteen years old and in the 1980s, he toured throughout Europe with a flamenco group. He started his own band named “Chanela” and worked internationally with a variety of artists.

Costume

The costumes, designed by Danielle Truss, were inspired by the typical flamenco dress, known as a *sevillana* dress or a gypsy dress, and by the work of Colombian photographer, Ruvén Afanador, in *Mil Besos*. In the opening of the work, the lead dancer uses a red dress with a long skirt. Ms. Lopez Ochoa’s initial idea for the skirt was to have it represent a river. She imagined the long skirt moving through space creating waves. The dress highlights the movement of the dancer creating the image of a creature, a worm, or perhaps a caterpillar. During the creative process, Ms. Lopez Ochoa discovered that the costume informs the movement, and utilized this to complement the choreography.

Props

Fans were introduced to Spain by the people of North Africa in the 14th century. They became very popular and characteristic of flamenco dance. In *Línea Recta*, the dancers use them to complement the movement and help reference the flamenco influences of the work.

Vocabulary

Flamenco

Flamenco is an art form based on the various folkloric music traditions of southern Spain and originated in the culture and traditions of the *Cale Roma* people, commonly known in Spanish as *Gitanos*, from the Andalusia region. They also having a historical presence in Extremadura and Murcia. In a wider sense, the term is used to refer to a variety of Spanish and Roma musical styles. Flamenco origins are still unclear and the subject of many hypotheses. The most widespread belief is that flamenco was developed through the cross-cultural exchange between Andalusia's *morisco* (formerly Muslim) peasantry and incoming *gitanos* during the 16th century, specifically in Southwestern Andalusia. However, new research has supported older origins of flamenco in the Roma migrations of the 14th century from Rajasthan, pointing to the many similarities between flamenco and Kathak, a dance of Northern India which later adapted into modern flamenco. On 16 November 2010, UNESCO officially added flamenco to the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

Fusion

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the word “fusion” refers to “a union by or as if by melting: such as, a merging of diverse, distinct, or separate elements into a unified whole.” In dance we refer to fusion when dances combine different techniques or dance forms. In the case of *Línea Recta*, the work is a fusion of ballet, flamenco, and modern dance.

Palmas

Palmas is a handclapping style which plays an essential role in flamenco music. It is used to help punctuate and accentuate the song and dance. There are two main ways to clap in flamenco, ***palmas sordas*** and ***palmas claras***. ***Palmas claras*** are used



during furious and loud footwork or during loud musical pieces. The first three fingers of one hand are held firm and clapped into the outstretched palm of the other. This should result in a very crisp snappy sound. **Palmas sorda** are used during guitar intros or during the singing, so as not to drown it out. The hands are cupped softly so that the fingers of one hand fit snugly into the gap between the thumb and forefinger of the other. When the hands are brought together a muffled pop can be heard.

Dance Partnering

This is dancing performed by a pair of dancers, in which the pair strives to achieve a harmony of coordinated movements so that the audience remains unaware of the mechanics.

Guiding Questions

1. *How do you find ways of embracing different cultures within your own family traditions?*
2. *What are other ways dancers can partner together without making any physical contact?*

Classroom Activities

Activity A: Find two props at home. Use these props to inspire a short dance creation.

Activity B: Invite students to choose a song that relates to their family's culture and to play it for the class. Afterwards, have them talk about their culture, the instruments being used, and how music plays a role in their culture and in celebrating traditions.

Additional Resources

- [Behind the Scenes: Annabelle Lopez Ochoa's *Linea Recta*](#)
- [5 Interesting Facts About Flamenco](#)
- [Mil Besos, Ruvén Afanador](#)

Danse Creole **(1976)**



Lenai Wilkerson and Paulo Hernandez-Farella in *Danse Creole* | Screenshot from Ballet Hispánico's 50th Celebration

Choreography by Geoffrey Holder
Music by Franz Cassius

About The Choreography

Danse Creole was inspired by the folk dances of Trinidad, where choreographer Geoffrey Holder, was born. Trinidadian folklore developed from a mix of West African roots, European influences, and the religious traditions, legends, and spiritual healing practices of the indigenous Taino. Most of Geoffrey Holder's work reflects the context of the Caribbean Island, presenting a unique blend of cultures that developed throughout the country's history of colonization and the intersection of Indigenous, Spanish, West African, East Indian, and French cultural influences.

In *Danse Creole*, the movement incorporates European and West African influences. European references can be seen in the way the dance is performed by couples in a poised manner, referencing European social dances such as the waltz and the quadrille (see vocabulary section). West African dance references are enlivened by percussive polyrhythms accented by shuffling steps, gestures, hip movements, and expressive articulation of the spine. The choreography also incorporates other cultural references, including East Indian head isolations. A mosaic of ethnicities and cultural layers shaped the creation of this work.

About the Choreographer

Geoffrey Lamont Holder (1930-2014) was an acclaimed choreographer and legendary figure in the dance world. A versatile artist, Holder was a respected actor, Tony Award-winning director, costume designer, singer, music composer, voiceover artist, orator, painter, sculptor, and photographer. As a child, although he was challenged by dyslexia and a tendency to stammer, his father encouraged him to study piano, and his brother Boscoe, a musician, artist, and dancer, taught him to paint and dance. At age seven, he joined his brother's folk-dance troupe, which he eventually directed while gaining popularity as a painter in Trinidad.

American choreographer, Agnes de Mille, encouraged Holder to move to New York, where he taught classes at Katherine Dunham's company. Geoffrey Holder met his wife, dancer Carmen de Lavallade, during his debut in the musical, *The House of Flowers*. In 1955, Holder joined the Metropolitan Opera Ballet as a principal dancer, flourishing further as a choreographer and film actor with memorable dance numbers in films including *Annie* (1982). In 1975, he won a Tony Award for Best Direction of a Musical with his staging of the Broadway musical *The Wiz*, a Tony for costume design for *Timbuktu!*, and a Guggenheim Fellowship in fine arts award.

Artistic Components

Costume

The attire, based on a European style, showcases full skirts, tight corsets, and fans. The style is fused with the Caribbean accents, such as the fedora hats.

Vocabulary

Creole

The term used to refer to a person of mixed European and African descent who was born in North and South America or the Caribbean.

Danse

The French term to refer to dance.

Quadrille

A European social dance performed in a square formation, which blossomed in France in the late 1800s. The dance consists of four to six consecutive contradances performed by four couples. Throughout the dances, the couples take turns dancing, creating geometric floor patterns and exchanging partners. In the 17th-century, the term "quadrille" was used to refer to the military parades where four mounted horsemen executed square formations. This concept was adapted in the French court and utilized in Louis the XIV's French Court by a two-couple dance (cotillion), which eventually expanded to four couples and received the name of the quadrille.

Contradance

A popular 18th century French dance developed from English country dances and popularized in Central Europe during the 1800s. Originally, the contradance was performed with men and women standing in parallel lines taking turns between dancing through the parallel formation and stepping back into the line. Eventually, these dances incorporated the geometric formations found in folk dances, such as the quadrille's square figure.

Trinidad

The largest of the two islands that make up the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Trinidad was originally inhabited by the Arawak (Taino) and the Carib (Kalinago) peoples. Trinidad was visited by Christopher Columbus on his third voyage in 1498 leading to Trinidad's colonization by Spain in the 1500s. The island was later captured by the British in the 1700s and became independent in 1962 (Gertrud Aub-Buscher).

Trinidad English Creole

English is the country's official language, but the main spoken languages are



Trinidadian English Creole and Tobagonian English Creole. Both creoles contain elements from a variety of African languages. Trinidadian English Creole is also influenced by French and French Creole (*Patois*).

Guiding Questions

1. *What can social dance teach us about a place and its traditions?*
2. *What does the term “cultural fusion” mean to you?*
3. *Are there cultures today in your community that are coming together? Share some examples.*

Classroom Activities

Activity A: Are there different cultures mixed in your family? How can you show that in movement? Create your own movement phrase incorporating elements from your culture(s).

Activity B: Utilizing any medium of expression, think about some cultural symbols that can describe a part of your culture.

Additional Resources

- [Geoffrey Lamont Holder \(1930-2014\)](#)
- [Archival Performance of *Danse Creole* from the 1970s](#)





Ballet
Hispanico



Buscando a Juan

Choreographed by Eduardo Vilaro

Pas de O'Farill

Choreographed by Pedro Ruiz

Ballet Hispánico is the largest Latinx/Latine/Hispanic cultural organization in the United States and one of America's Cultural Treasures. Ballet Hispánico's three main programs — the Company, School of Dance, and Community Arts Partnerships — bring communities together to celebrate the multifaceted Latinx diasporas. Ballet Hispánico's New York City headquarters provide the physical home and cultural heart for Latinx dance in the United States. Through its exemplary artistry, distinguished training program, and deep-rooted community engagement, Ballet Hispánico champions and amplifies Hispanic voices in the field.

Descriptions

Buscando a Juan

Choreography by Eduardo Vilaro

In his newest work, Ballet Hispánico Artistic Director and CEO Eduardo Vilaro is inspired by the exhibition Juan de Pareja, Afro-Hispanic Painter. The MetLiveArts commission, which features dancers from Ballet Hispánico, explores sancocho, or a mixed soup of cultures and diasporas, and will consider the assumptions experienced when witnessing people of color in white spaces in relation to the exoticized body and fixation on gestures and sensuality.



Pas de O'Farill

Choreography by Pedro Ruiz

World Premiere of Pas de O'Farill by Pedro Ruiz, a collaboration between Ballet Hispánico & New York City Ballet, commissioned by Lincoln Center. In tribute to the music of Latin Jazz sensation Arturo O'Farill, Pedro Ruiz takes on the classical ballet form and fuses it with the movement and essences of the Afro-Cuban diasporic legacy. The duet seeks to immerse the classical technique with the Latinx voice and expand the idea of what ballet is and can be.



Melissa Verdecia, Eila Valls, and Jenna Marie in *Club Havana* | Photo by Paula Lobo

***Club Havana* (2000)**

Choreography by: Pedro Ruiz

Music: Israel López, Ruben Gonzáles, A.K. Salim, Perez Prado, and Francisco Repilado

ABOUT THE CHOREOGRAPHY

Latin dance forms first came to the United States in the 1920s and 1930s, 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. 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.”

ABOUT THE CHOREOGRAPHER

Pedro Ruiz was born in Cuba and choreographed three celebrated ballets during his 21-year tenure as a principal dancer with Ballet Hispánico. Choreography credits include The Joffrey, Luna Negra, New Jersey Ballet, the Ailey Professional School and the Ailey/Fordham B.F.A. Program. He is on the dance faculty of Marymount College, The Ailey School and Scarsdale Ballet. Awards include the Bessie Award, the Choo-San Goh Award, The Cuban Artist’s Fund, and The Joyce Foundation Award. He was profiled nationally in 2007 on PBS’s *In The Life*.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

This ballet uses a wide variety of lively tunes and artfully sews them together combining the rhythms of the cha-cha, mambo, rumba, and conga. The Buena Vista Social Club transports us into pre-revolutionary Cuba through their warm, romantic, and acoustic rhythms. 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.

POINTS OF INQUIRY & INSPIRATION

Cuban history – Afro-Cuban influence – Socializing in community – Immigration – Voicing social issues – Mambo

GUIDING QUESTIONS

What are different ways in which the choreographer represents historical eras, communities, and relationships in dance?

Think about how the different rhythms and dance styles transport you through time, and how do they make you feel?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES FOR EXPLORATION

Activity A: Being a dramaturg: Divide your classroom into groups to explore/research elements of this work:

Group 1: Discover Cuban musical roots and the music of Club Havana

Group 2: Research the 1950s in the world, Cuba, and New York City

Group 3: Investigate Cuban culture and diaspora

Group 4: Research the history of Ballet Hispánico

Group 5: Research choreographer, Pedro Ruiz. What inspires his work?

Students will report from their groups and share their findings with the whole class. Encourage dynamic and creative expressions of findings incorporating words, images, native language use, technology, or collages.

Activity B: Exploring character: In a circle, invite students to think about the different characters that a community gathering can have and strike a pose representing each character. Brainstorm the traits of each character, the costumes they would wear, their props, and think about what music or sound would represent the characters.

Activity C: Exploring rhythm. Think of an activity from everyday life and create a simple mime, motion or gesture that conveys one movement associated with that activity. Students can 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.