

# APPlause!

K-12 Performing Arts Series



*Enriching lives, sparking imaginations, and inspiring a love of learning through the arts!*

## **Ballet Hispánico: Performances for Young People**

**February 7, 2025**

**The Schaefer Center for the  
Performing Arts**

Appalachian  
STATE UNIVERSITY

# Arabesque (1984)



Former Company Dancers in Arabesque | Photo from Ballet Hispánico's Archives

**Choreography by** Vicente Nebrada  
**Music by** Enrique Granados  
**Lighting Design by** Donald Holder  
**Costume Design by** Randy Barcelo and Diana Ruettinger

## About The Choreography

*Arabesque* is an elegant suite of dances set to the music of Spanish composer, Enrique Granados. The work was originally called *Eight Spanish Dances* and was later renamed *Arabesque*. Traces of Flamenco influence are hinted at in the upper body as the dancers move through a series of lush balletic contemporary phrase work separated into eight sections: Oriental, Zarabanda, Villanesca, Jota, Asturiana, Mazurca, Valenciana, and Oriental (Reprise). Although the movement is not 100% of Spanish dances, his choreography is inspired by elements found in Flamenco, Jota, and the simple Spanish-baroque style of Zarabanda.

## About the Choreographer

Vicente Nebrada is a Venezuelan dancer and choreographer. He was a founding member of the Harkness Ballet where he began his choreographic career in 1964. In 1975, he became the Founding Artistic Director and Resident Choreographer of the International Ballet of Caracas in Venezuela, creating numerous ballets and solidifying his reputation as an internationally acclaimed choreographer. In 1984, he was appointed Artistic Director of the National Ballet of Caracas, which he directed until 2002. His artistic support as resident choreographer helped establish Ballet Florida in Palm Beach in the mid-1990s. His work continues to be performed around the world and has been danced by more than 30 companies such as American Ballet Theater, National Ballet of Canada, Joffrey Ballet of Chicago, and Ballet Hispánico.



## Artistic Components

### Music

Soft piano music is used to enhance the dancers' movements and define the aesthetic and overall feeling of each section.

### Dance Form

Flamenco arms and movement is utilized in a fusion with contemporary ballet to add an element of culture and passion to the choreography.

## Vocabulary

### Flamenco

Flamenco dance (*baile*) is a highly expressive, Spanish dance form. Flamenco is generally a solo dance characterized by hand clapping, percussive footwork, and intricate hand, arm, and body movements.

### Contemporary Ballet

Contemporary ballet is a genre of dance that incorporates elements of classical ballet and modern dance.

### Fusion

The process or result of joining two or more things together to form a single entity.

### Zarabanda

A Baroque dance style, danced in a in triple meter, that started in Spain with simple hand gestures. It is from the 16th and 17th centuries and was popular in Spanish colonies.

### Jota

The Jota is a Spanish genre of music and dance that exists throughout Spain, but whose origins lie in the Spanish region of Aragon.

### Arabesque

A posture or shape in which the body is supported on one leg, with the other leg extended horizontally backward.

### Upper Body Work

Movement that is isolated in the upper region of the body including the torso, arms, shoulders, and head.

### Choreographer

A person who composes the sequence of steps and moves for a performance of dance.

## Guiding Questions

1. Where is the choreographer, Vicente Nebrada from?
2. Can you identify the Flamenco elements in the Zarabanda section of Arabesque?



3. What about this piece makes it a fusion of dance styles and how does the choreographer achieve this?
4. What is your favorite upper body shape from this section?

## Classroom Activities

**Activity A:** The name of this work, *Arabesque*, is also a shape made by many dancers (see the image in “Additional Resources” below). Create your own shape and give it a name. Take turns saying the name of your shape while the rest of the dancers guess the shape.

**Activity B:** Choose 3-5 of your favorite movements or shapes found in *Arabesque*, and combine them together to form a movement sentence. Teach each other your movement sentence in order to combine them into your own work!

## Additional Resources

- [Example of Zarabanda Dance from the 1700s](#)
- Ballet Hispánico School of Dance student (left) in an arabesque. Photo by Rachel Neville.



## **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 (cotillon), 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](#)





### ***Tres Cantos***

**Choreography by:** Talley Beatty

**Music:** Carlos Chávez, Lorenzo Fernández, and Silvestre Revueltas

#### **ABOUT THE CHOREOGRAPHER**

Talley Beatty is considered one of the master choreographers of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. His legacy as a dancer, educator, artist, and company director reflected on social issues and the Black experience. He emerged as a strong leader in spite of hardships such as “being forced to attend dance classes in the early mornings or late nights in a dressing room while classes were going on in an adjacent studio.” His style combines ballet, modern, jazz, and Afro-Caribbean dance forms. Beatty describes his style as “a mixture of Graham connective steps, Dunham technique, and a little ballet with Louisiana hot sauce on it.”

#### **ABOUT THE CHOREOGRAPHY**

*Tres Cantos* is about Spain’s conquest of Mexico. The choreography provides an essential retelling of Talley Beatty and Ballet Hispánico’s unique perspectives in Latin-American culture. The storyline is depicted through three songs (*tres cantos*) composed by Latin-American composers: Carlos Chávez, Lorenzo Fernández, and Silvestre Revueltas. The first section portrays an indigenous society in possession of its lands through





dynamic, broad air-sweeping movement. The second section reflects on the sorrow the indigenous people experienced trying to rescue their culture and traditions buried by the conquistadores with sinking lower sequences in sustained movement quality. The closing segment shows the re-emergence of the native's unconquered spirit celebrated through elated leaps and victorious gesture motifs.

### ABOUT THE COSTUME DESIGN

Costume Designer Diana Ruettiger researched the pre-colonial Mayan indigenous cultures of Mexico to bring a different aesthetic to the costume designs created for the piece in 1975. Her goal was to propose costumes that would represent what people wore at the time while supporting the choreography's contemporary vision. Her designs incorporated distinctive hieroglyphic symbols and rhinestone collar decorations to enhance the characters' roles.

### POINTS OF INQUIRY & INSPIRATION

How does the Spanish language spoken in Latin America reveal its history of conquering empires?

What languages are spoken in your school and neighborhood? How are these languages similar or different in comparison to the homeland of those who brought them to your town?

What are the communication and integration challenges faced by migrating families in your community? How does the resilience expressed in this choreography relate to the strength infused through our community's cultural advocacy?

### GUIDING QUESTION

*Discuss as a group the energy, shapes, and expressive gesture of the dancers shown in the photo.*

### CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES FOR EXPLORATION

**Activity A:** Become a composer! What sounds, rhythms, and instruments would you use to portray a section of the ballet? Why?

**Activity B:** Create a story through movement. How would you convey the context, beginning, climax, and resolution of its plot through dance?





### **Sombrerísimo**

**Choreography by:** Annabelle Lopez Ochoa

**Music:** Banda Ionica featuring Macaco el Mono Loco, Titi Robin, and soundscape by various artists

### **ABOUT THE CHOREOGRAPHY**

Is an absorbing movement exploration of identity, created by Belgo-Colombian choreographer, Annabelle Lopez Ochoa. *Sombrerísimo* makes references to the surrealist world of Belgian painter René Magritte, famous for his paintings of men in bowler hats. In this playful, athletic piece, we see six male dancers intertwine and exchange hats. With each new exchange, the dancers explore new identities and roles. The virtuosic music of the guitar along with the slow and eerie melodic sections brings us an exciting and athletic choreography.

### **POINTS OF INQUIRY & INSPIRATION**

**Teamwork – Trust – Identity – Partnering – Props – Athleticism – Strength - Playful**

### **GUIDING QUESTIONS**

*How can our clothing choices inform people of our cultural background?*

*How do your various social identities – gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic class, and religion, among others – are important aspects that shape your attitudes, behaviors, views and every day experiences?*



## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES FOR EXPLORATION

**Activity A:** Individually, invite students to reflect on an article of clothing, an object, or a keepsake that holds a special meaning or importance. Students can journal answering three questions:

- Where did this object or keepsake come from? How did you obtain it?
- What does this object represent or mean to you?
- Write down an experience where this object has brought you comfort.

**Activity B:** With a partner, choose one of the two journal entries and collectively write a haiku poem. These short poems use sensory language to capture a feeling or image. The first line is made up of five syllables, the second line is made up of seven syllables, and the last line is made up of five syllables. Use the answer from your journal writing to find themes and together compose a haiku poem.

Haiku poem: a major form of Japanese verse, written in 17 syllables divided into 3 lines of 5, 7, and 5 syllables, and employing highly evocative allusions and comparisons, often on the subject of nature or one of the seasons. a **poem** written in this form.

**Activity C:** In a circle, all students will explore slow, fast, sharp, soft, quick, and fluid movements together. Going around the circle, each student will share a gesture or movement inspired from the themes above. Encourage students to choose a movement quality (ex. slow, fast, soft, quick, fluid). Each new time the students begin a new round of the circle, ask them to do the same movement in a new way (ex. if movement was quick steps, perhaps change the movement to slow steps).





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.

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## K-12 Performing Arts Series

**Enriching lives, sparking imaginations, and inspiring a love of learning through the arts!**

Arts education and outreach programming at Appalachian is committed to connecting university arts resources to a diverse audience of community arts patrons, teachers and learners in the campus community, and in the public, private and home school network across our region. In doing so, the series strives to broaden and deepen arts experiences for audiences of all ages, while ensuring access to the arts for young audiences, building future audiences for the arts, and inspiring a love of learning through the arts.

Every season, affordable music, dance, film, and theatre events are offered to students and their teachers from K-12 classrooms across the region. Students experience everything from high-energy acrobatics and Appalachian music to international dance and literary classics brought to life through theatrical productions. In recent seasons, thousands of students across our region have attended APPlause! Series events.

This academic year, the APPlause! Series offers compelling programming to connect to K-12 classrooms, thanks in large part to generous donors who believe in supplying educators with arts programming that will spark creativity and inspire a love of learning.

Thank You to Our Sponsors!

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