

A full-page photograph of a female dancer in a vibrant red, ruffled dress, captured in a dynamic pose with her arms raised and eyes closed. The background is dark, and the lighting highlights the dancer and her dress. A solid red vertical bar is on the left side of the image.

ENSEMBLE
SPAÑOL★
Spanish Dance Theater
IN RESIDENCE AT NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

ETHNIC DANCE & MUSIC
Symposium

JUNE 2024

THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES: PRODUCING ETHNIC DANCE & MUSIC IN MODERN SOCIETY

HOW DO WE AFFIRM THE IMPORTANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF ITS INFLUENCE ON AMERICAN CULTURE

Introduction:

Ensemble Español Spanish Dance Theater, established in 1976 by Dame Libby Komaiko, is a leading company for Spanish Dance and Music in the United States. Guided by Artistic Director Irma Suárez Ruiz and Executive Director Jorge Perez, the organization is committed to preserving, presenting, and promoting the diverse traditions of Flamenco, Folkloric, Classical, Escuela Bolera, and Contemporary Dance and Music from Spain. As the resident company at Northeastern Illinois University's Department of Music and Dance, Ensemble Español serves as a beacon for cultural enrichment, celebrating Spain's vibrant heritage through performances, educational initiatives, and community engagement programs. With over four decades of dedication to sharing the richness and relevance of Spanish arts, Ensemble Español inspires artists, students, and audiences worldwide.

Purpose:

The art and mission of Ensemble Español is not Eurocentric, however. The art form draws on a mosaic of world cultures and is led, studied, choreographed, and danced by persons from a wide range of diversity by race, ethnicity, and religion. In 2022, we decided to convene a group of professionals to discuss, share, and educate about what Spanish Dance and Music is for us and how we represent world cultures that are preserving a culturally relevant art form rooted in a diversity that is as widespread as Chicago itself. The theme of the 2022 conference was: The Black and Brown Roots of Spanish Dance and Music. Our conference met with a tremendous amount of support from the community, with a live audience and an online audience of more than 2000 people from over 16 countries.

Who:

Ensemble Español Spanish Dance Theater identifies as a BIPOC organization. Our leadership, target audience, and company represent marginalized populations from the Latino/x/e and Black communities. We continually seek BIPOC individuals for our Board of Directors, contractors, and vendors, showing our loyalty and openness to work with our community in all aspects of our business. Our educational programming, inschool programming, and community outreach are to black and brown communities in the greater Chicagoland area. We offer programs free of charge to eliminate financial barriers to families, who want in school programming to learn about the cultural richness and ethnic complexity of Spanish Dance.

What:

Our Symposium fosters informed discussion surrounding our art form and others with similar cultural contexts. We aim to facilitate a conversation that dispels misconceptions that can limit the perception of the Ensemble and our mission.

Central to our Symposium is the belief that meaningful dialogue requires diverse perspectives and expertise. By consulting with thought leaders across various fields, we ensure that our conversations are grounded in nuance and depth, addressing topics that resonate with our community, our supporters, and stakeholders.

Through this collaborative approach, we seek to build bridges and foster understanding. Our Symposium will empower participants to engage critically with the cultural landscape, while celebrating the diversity that enriches our collective experience.



Where:

Our Symposium partners with Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU). Our collaboration with NEIU is significant as it aligns with the university's status as a Hispanic Serving Institution ((HSI) and as a Minority Serving Institution (MSI). Northeastern Illinois University is an ideal venue for our event, given its commitment to supporting Hispanic, Latine, and BIPOC communities and advancing equity across various dimensions. As an organization deeply rooted in promoting diversity and inclusion, Ensemble Español recognizes the importance of partnering with institutions that share our values.

When:

This year's Symposium will take place over three days from June 10-13, 2024, with two discussion panels per day..

Why:

Continuing the conversation is essential for our relevance and growth. By remaining engaged and proactive, we push the boundaries of our art form, exploring new possibilities and challenging conventional norms. Through ongoing dialogue and exploration, we not only evolve as artists but also inspire others to support and engage with a dynamic arts community.





Questions/Discussion:

During the 2022 Symposium, we explored the roots of Spanish Dance and Music. We discovered that nearly every ethnic group represented in the Latine, African American, Jewish, Arabic, South Asian, and European communities has ownership in the Spanish Dance movement.

During the 2024 conference, dance critics from major periodicals and journals will discuss the complexities in reviewing ethnic dance and music. We will also explore how the ethnic arts community is integral to a strong arts community overall. Further, post-pandemic, what other efforts are underway to develop and showcase the arts as an economic power base and community anchor and thereby be inclusive of ethnic arts.

In the spirit of myth-busting, we will discuss with three prominent dance professionals who have transcended their art forms beyond community arts and entered the field of mainstream community. We will ask them how they were able to reach commercial success and what tips they can give to emerging artists in dance.

Like many forms of ethnic art, Spanish Dance and Music are often passed on in families and become a way of life. We will chat with several family artist duos, who embody the lifestyle of Flamenco.

In the spirit of fusion, we will mash up Flamenco, Tap, and Jazz as accessible art forms and take a journey with several dancers as they swing and sway between genres. We will discuss their creative process and how they can work between many styles yet stay true to their own.

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**JOSÉ MANUEL
ALCONCHEL**



**BRIL
BARRETT**



**MATTHEW
BRUCE**



**WENDY
CLINARD**



**JOSÉ DÍAZ
'EL CACHITO'**



**KELLEE
EDUSEI**



**PACO
ESCOBAR**



**VICTOR
GARCIA**



**MARK
HOWARD**



**CHELSEA
HOY**



**RON DE
JESÚS**



**LA
LUPE**



**CURRO DE
MARÍA**

**MacArthur
Foundation**

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Northeastern
ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

**THE CHICAGO
COMMUNITY TRUST**
AND AFFILIATES



**CAERUS
FOUNDATION, INC**

DCASE
Department of Cultural Affairs
and Special Events

AXIOS

**UNIVISION
CHICAGO**

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**JOSÉ
MORENO**



**ANTONIO
NAJARRO**



**JORGE
PEREZ**



**NINO DE
LOS REYES**



**OTIS
SALLID**



**WADE
SCHAAF**



**BRIAN
SEIBERT**



**LEANDRO LÓPEZ
VARADY**



**STEVEN
VARGAS**



**LAUREN
WARNECKE**



**HEDY
WEISS**



**ZACHARY
WHITTENBURG**



MONDAY JUNE 10

10 AM

The Complexities of Covering
Ethnic Dance & Music

Moderator:

Monica Eng, Axios

Panelists:

Brian Seibert, *New York Times*

Steven Vargas, *LA Times*

Lauren Warnecke, *Chicago Tribune*

Hedy Weiss, *Chicago Sun-Times*

Zachary Whittenburg, *Dance Magazine*

2:30 PM

Arts Economic Ecosystem:
The New Workforce Development
Plan to Build Strong Community

Moderator:

Laura Trejo Lozano, City of Chicago

Panelists:

Matthew Bruce, *Chicago Workforce Funder Alliance*

Kellee Edusei, *Dance/USA*

Mark Howard, *Trinity Irish Dance Company*

Chelsea Hoy, *Trinity Irish Dance Company*

Jorge Perez, *Ensemble Español Spanish Dance Theater*

Wade Schaaf, *Chicago Reperatory Ballet*

TUESDAY JUNE 11

10 AM

Ethnic Arts Crossing Genres

Moderator:

Michael McStraw, *Chicago Dance History*

Panelists:

Ron De Jesús, *Broadway/Film*

Otis Sallid, *Broadway/Film/TV/Branding*

Antonio Najarro, *Disney, Former Artistic Director of the National Ballet of Spain*

1 PM

Expanding Flamenco Musical
Language

Moderator:

José Moreno, *Flamenco Master*

Panelists:

Paco Escobar, *Flamenco Guitarist and Professor at the University of Seville*

Curro de María, *Flamenco Guitarist and Composer*

WEDNESDAY JUNE 12

2:30 PM

It's a Family Affair:
Ethnic Art,
Oral Traditions,
Art as a Way of Life

Moderator:

Irma Suárez Ruiz, *Ensemble Español*

Panelists:

La Lupi & Curro de María

Nino de los Reyes

THURSDAY JUNE 13

8 PM

From Flamenco to Tap and
All That Jazz
Purchase Symposium &
Old Town School of Folk Music
Concert Ticket

Moderator:

Roderick Hawkins,
Northwestern University

Panelists:

Wendy Clinard

Leandro López Váradý

José Moreno

Bril Barrett

Victor Garcia

Diego "El Negro" Alvarez

José Díaz 'El Cachito'

José Manuel Alconchel