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Flamenco Latino: A Company for the Community

Committed to bringing the classical art of Flamenco to New York—with a particular dedication to the borough of Queens—guitarist and composer Basilio Georges and dancer and vocalist Aurora Reyes of Flamenco Latino are consistent and persistent in their efforts to expand the arts audience. By regularly outstretching a welcoming arm to artists from other spheres, Flamenco Latino extends their flare to the non-traditional and alternative generously and seamlessly, exposing the community to other art forms, broadening their own and others' appeal, revealing the harmonies of collaboration and connection across cultures.

An excellent example of this is their entrancing tribute to guitarist Kenny Burrell, even to the title, “Burrell-eando,” a play on words, sort of “doing Burrell” and a reference to a particular flamenco dance, their generosity is in the melody's being carried by baritone saxophonist, Danny Rivera, rather than by Georges. The dance element, essentially improvised, features a grippingly contained Reyes making use of the few options a classical flamenco dancer has—toe, heel, flat—rooted in the ground against the explosive flashes of tap dancer, Omar Edwards, in the call and response technique utilized by both the Spanish and the American forms.

When Reyes performs “*Guajira con Guajeo*” in a softly ruffled two-toned salmon dress, the color of a sunset, you can feel the heat of late afternoon in Havana, a cobalt fan giving some relief, swirled and twirled, matching the sultry dancer's exquisite, sinuous movements, and tempered footwork. Reyes proves here that flamenco is not just rapid-fire fancy footwork; one can draw in the audience, as she often does, with control. Many in the theater are likely to recognize the Cuban classic, “*El Mentiroso*” (“The Liar”) by Pío Leiva, a member of the Buena Vista Social Club, utilized in the second half of the dance, and think, “Oh, I get this!” and want to come back for more.

Flamenco Latino's collaboration with Queens-based Kingdom Dance Company, “*Quejío*” (“Complaint”), confronts a contemporary issue, the “perceived limitations imposed on young women and their response to that perception.” Ominously commencing with what can be sensed as the tock of a clock or the beat of a heart, mournful and moving music underpins the stylized flamenco and hip-hop movement choreographed by Reyes and Kingdom's Paige “Queen Tut” Stewart, and Katy Oliver.

With the major flamenco studio in New York now long-closed, Flamenco Latino's role in preserving and fostering study and interest in the Spanish art form is ever more important, especially because they are so good at it.