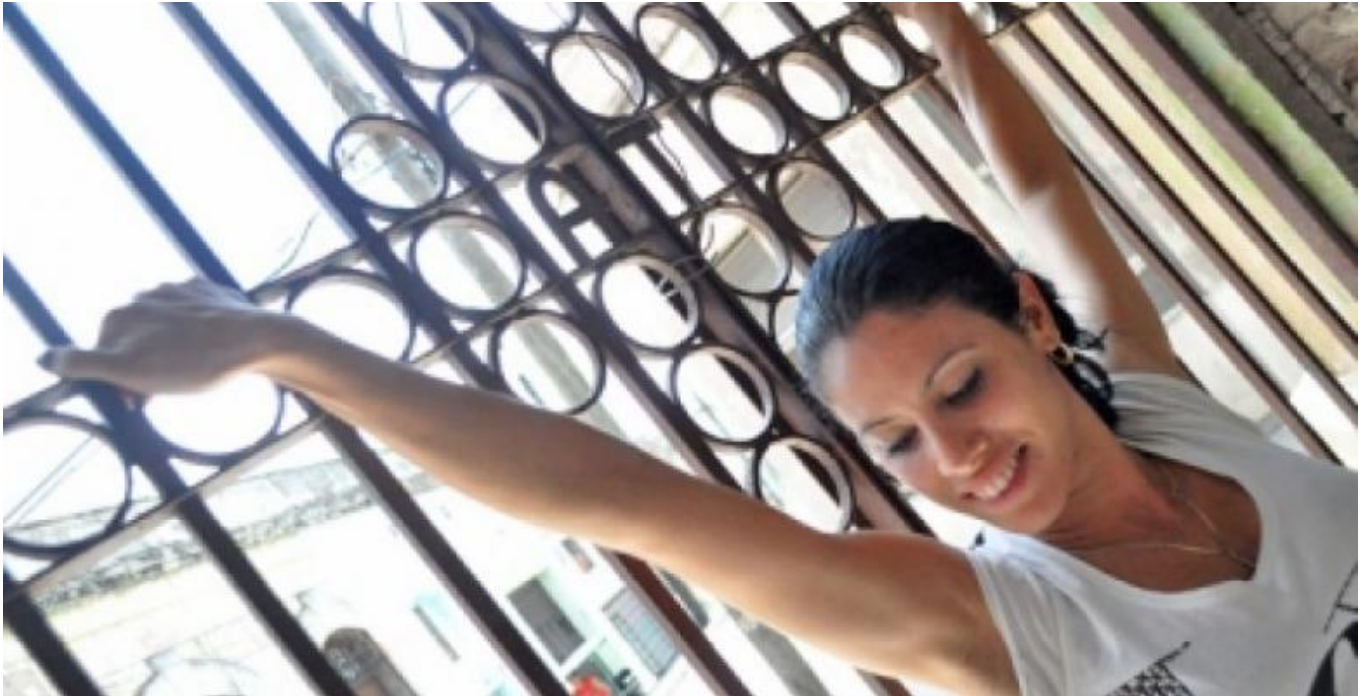

YOUNG AND ARTIST: “I would like to dance without having to go through rehearsals”

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Lisandra Gómez, first dancer of the Contemporary Ballet of Camagüey, is a delegate to the World Festival of Youth and Students. I interviewed her after a rehearsal at her company’s headquarters.

At the art school, Lisandra studied the technique and style of a more academic dance, but life took her through another course: for several years now she has been first dancer of a company, where you do not have to stand on your tips: The Contemporary Ballet of Camagüey.

—Do you miss you never danced a classic? Would you have liked, for example, to dance Giselle?

—I would have liked a lot to dance Swan Lake, which always was my favorite classic. Although I had the opportunity to do it in Peru, after having been dancing contemporary ballet for eight years.

—Why contemporary ballet?

—That was not a choice, it was a need. And it was the possibility to go on dancing. I could not continue dancing classics because of health problems. I had iron absorption problems and rigorous diets did not allow me to continue dancing a

more academic line.

—It seems you took on contemporary ballet without much desire....

—Of course, I took it with all desires! What I liked most was the possibility to come closer to very diverse languages. The freedom I felt captivated me, not only while dancing, but also while creating myself. I could break barriers I had from school, sometimes ballet teaching is pretty closed. An arabesque is an arabesque, but in contemporary dance you can “fracture” that same step and take two or three new ones with the same basis.

—They say dancers are too engaged in their world. How is your life beyond dance? What are you interested in?

—Of course, I am very passionate about photography. I would like to devote myself to it at some point in my life. My family is a vital topic for me. I like to spend time with my son, to arrive home and forget the problems of my workplace, simply to be that concerned mother, who sits next to him to help him with his homeworks.

—But you live with another dancer at home. What’s so good or bad to be married with someone who does the same job as you?

—I haven’t found anything wrong yet. And it’s been five years. At first, people used to tell me to be careful, that a relationship like that could not be healthy, because we spent too much time together, at work and at home, and that many things were going to mix... Certainly, we take work problems to the house, but I don’t think that will deteriorate the relationship. Jesús (Arias) is my support. He’s a person who knows me, who I do not have to take poses with. He’s the man who understands me when I arrived home very tired, because he knows from his own experience how difficult it is to develop a career like ours.

—What do you feel seconds before a performance begins?

—I get very nervous...

—How do you handle that nervousness?

—That only lasts some seconds, just the moment before coming on stage. After I am out there, it’s magic. I stop being myself and begin to feel differently. I cannot explain it to you with words, it’s ineffable.

—Is there any ballet, any character which you have particularly felt comfortable with?

—Yes, it has happened with "A él" (To him), piece by Pedro Ruiz. I love characters that demand from me not only a technique, but a feeling, a commitment, a psychology as well... That ballet demands so. And if you add that the character is Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, because I consider her the best. I always identify myself with that woman. She was absolutely revolutionary; she always went beyond her time.

—A dancer's career is usually short...

—I have never thought about the sadness of finishing. When you love art, dance, your career is forever, because there are many ways to go on contributing. The day when I cannot dance any more, I am not going to feel sad, because I will keep the desires to create. I feel a very strong need to teach. Right now, I lack time to investigate; perhaps I will have it when I stop dancing. I would like to venture into

With her husband and co-worker, first dancer Jesús Arias.

—When did you know you were going to be a dancer?

—In the last years at elementary level. Earlier, I just wanted to dance. When I was a girl my mother took me to watch a ballet performance and I fell in love with the tutu and ballet slippers. I wanted to dance but I was not very aware about what a profession meant. When I was in fourth year, I realized that in addition to pleasure, dancing implied great responsibilities. It was like a revelation. And hence, I knew that I wanted to be a dancer.

—I know what you are going to answer, but anyway I ask you: what do you like the most, the stage or the rehearsal room?

—Obviously: the stage! I would like to dance every day of my life without having to go through rehearsals. But well, that's impossible. Staging and rehearsing processes are indispensable. You must have chances to make mistakes without big consequences; you have to know your character, you have to work on the cleanness of your performance....

—Do you dream that you dance? Are you a better or worse dancer in your dreams?

—A lot! I see myself doing turns I cannot do in normal life.

—You are a delegate to the World Festival of Youth and Students. What prospects do you travel to Russia with?

—Those of the exchange with young people from all over the world. I might answer questions about the life of a young person in Cuba and would like to know about the reality of other places. Dialogue will always be the most important thing.

Translated by Jorge Mesa Benjamin / Cubasi Translation Staff