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Dance Schools, Learning How to Dream with the Feet

03/04/2019



The teaching of dance in Cuba has a center of elementary level in each province and five academy level centers throughout the three domestic regions.

To dance is to dream with the feet, sang Joaquín Sabina, and that is a truth that seems Cuban, because in this island you live and dance with the same passion. We recently evidenced that in the TV show *Bailando en Cuba* (Dancing in Cuba) that monopolized audience rates for several Sundays of competition.

However, there is a far greater reality, made up by culture centers, community projects and, the very core of it: artistic teaching. As for dance, this specialized education comprises centers spread across the entire country.

About this system of institutions, CubaSí talked with Lídice Garrido, Director of the National School of Dance: “The National School of Dance is a reference center for methodological training that supervises 17 elementary level dance schools at a national level, from Guantánamo, to the Isle of Youth, also five schools of the High School level.”

The quality of teaching is similar in the whole country, assures Lídice and she explains: “The entire supervising is carried out through a methodological strategy designed by the methodological technical team together with the counseling technical team. The supervising exercise consists of visits at the beginning of the academic year to check how all the necessary conditions have been set to start and ends with the meeting of preparation for the new academic year scheduled for July.”

Specialists work supported in three regional centers, from end to end of the island “we have methodological teams and elementary level schools where boys and girls, since age 10 can enter the teaching of dance”, says professor Garrido who makes perfectly clear that the equality of opportunities and demands don't necessarily mean restrains, for example, “even when folklore teaching is delivered to the letter as it comes in the program, the identity of each province is imprinted in each class.”

The elementary levels that include primary and secondary schools, comprises 17 schools, one in each territory, while the intermediate level is given in five academies located in Havana, Villa Clara, Camagüey, Santiago de Cuba and Guantánamo. In Havana also work three educational groups: the Liza Alfonso Ballet, the Spanish Ballet of Cuba and Acosta Dance.

From the first years of studies, the competition in this system becomes an excuse for the exchange and the professional growth, says Lídice Garrido: "In February take place the regional competitions, after the competitions held at the schools of elementary level and in March we have the International Encounter among Academies for the teaching of Dance, where intermediate level schools and the educational groups taught by the artistic teaching participate."

The Director of the National School of Dance also offered her thoughts about the quality of the educational process of this artistic discipline: "Today the country has a very stable teaching personnel, we still have lack of materials, the government is doing a huge effort to keep dance floors fit for use, that is really expensive, because students get their gears from slippers, the stockings, the leotards, resources that are very expensive and are also given to students for free. In addition they receive at the same time general education classes and those of the specialty."

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