

unity



Celebrating Food, Art & Culture

Hispanic Heritage Issue  
September 15-October 15  
September 2017 Edition No. 86



## Hispanic ballet company hosts international festival

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Unity is published in February (African-American History Month), March (Women's History Month), May (Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month), June (Sustainability Issue), September (Hispanic Heritage Month) and November (Native American Heritage Month).

# Hispanic ballet company hosts festival



Twenty-two companies will perform this year.  
Photos courtesy of IBFM

The nonprofit Miami Hispanic Ballet Company, established in 1993, identifies and promotes professional dancers of Hispanic descent in Miami-Dade County. Since its inception, Miami Hispanic Ballet has also produced and presented major gala performances, including its signature event: the International Ballet Festival of Miami.

Held each year from the last week of August through mid-September, IBFM spotlights a wide range of dancers. This year's performances begin on Sept. 2. A full schedule of events is available at <https://www.internationalballetfestival.org/schedule-tickets>.

Each year, Pedro Pablo Peña, Miami Hispanic Ballet Company's artistic director (see box) and IBFM's founder, collaborates with a team of advisers to select the principal dancers who will perform at the festival. Twenty-two ballet companies will be represented this year, including the National Ballet of Slovenia; Italy's Ballet Company of Teatro alla Scala; English National Ballet; National Ballet of Mexico; Teatro Estable Ballet de Colon, Argentina; National Ballet of Uruguay; Dutch National Ballet; Cuban Classical Ballet of Miami; Boston Ballet; and The Washington Ballet (Washington, D.C.).

As in previous years, two of the major honors – A Life for Dance lifetime achievement award and the Criticism and Culture of Ballet award – will be presented during the 2017 IBFM.

This year's festival venues include the Fillmore Miami Beach at Jackie Gleason Theater, Miami-

Dade County Auditorium, Colony Theatre Miami Beach and the Light Box at Goldman Warehouse. For the first time, an event will be held at the Union City Performing Arts Center in Union City, New Jersey.

The 22nd IBFM, says Karen Couty, the festival's spokesperson, is larger than its predecessors. "We have dance films, a book presentation and signing, master classes and an art exhibit inspired by dance," she says.



Pedro Pablo Peña

Born, educated and raised in Havana, Cuba, Peña began his ballet training during childhood. He danced for Havana's Opera Ballet, the National Ballet of Cuba and the Musical Theater of Havana, where he also served as choreography director and director of the First Choreographic Dance Workshop in Havana. Peña was choreographer for "The Specialist," a Warner Brothers film. In 2011, he was selected by ABC's "Dancing With the Stars" for an interview about classical ballet, the first time a Hispanic ballet director was interviewed for the show.

Peña has earned numerous honors and founded several dance companies.

Since 2013, Peña has also served as the general director of the Miami Hispanic Cultural Arts Center, home to several arts organizations in Miami.

# One bibliophile's crusade to fill a literary void



Noëlle Santos expects her indie bookstore, The Lit. Bar, to open in 2017. Photo by Ebbs 'n' Flows Photography

New York City's fourth-largest borough doesn't have a general-interest bookstore. One of its most determined residents is going to change that.

In 2014, Noëlle Santos joined 3,000 protestors to save the Barnes & Noble store. Despite those and other efforts, Barnes & Noble closed its Bronx location two years later. Since then, Santos has dedicated herself to bringing books back to her borough. The Bronx native started by googling "how to open a bookstore." Along the way, she entered the New York StartUP! 2017 Business Plan Competition and won the \$7,500 second-place prize. And she launched an Indiegogo campaign; filmmaker Michael Moore tweeted that he'd made a contribution to it.

These and other efforts are part of Santos' plan to open The Lit. Bar, a bookstore and wine shop serving the 1.4 million residents of the Bronx. She expects her brick-and-mortar business to open in 2017.

Santos spoke to *Unity* in mid-2017 about The Lit. Bar, being a bookworm and writing her own book.

**Q. Did your Indiegogo campaign extend beyond March 31? If so, what's the new total? And what is the overall total that you need to open The Lit. Bar?**

A. Yes, it has been extended. ... My \$100,000 goal represents about a third of what I need to open. I raised a little over \$50,000 above my ask. The rest of it is on me.

**Q. Do you work full time in human resources? How many hours per week do you spend on The Lit. Bar?**

A. I work full-time in HR (Monday-Friday, nine to five) and side hustle for about five hours each evening, so that's 25 hours a week, plus my entire



The Lit. Bar will stock mainstream and indie titles.

weekends. I'll get around to celebrating a birthday or holiday in the next year or two.

**Q. How many employees do you plan to hire? Will you work onsite?**

A. No less than four people on day one. I'm leaving a Wall Street (tech firm) to be poor and happy.

**Q. In which formats will The Lit. Bar sell books?**

A. The Lit. Bar will sell print books initially and I'm currently exploring digital format. My mission is satisfied by print, and I anticipate it being subsidized by my bar and events, so the dollars need to make sense for me to move on to other formats.

**Q. In addition to indie publications, will you sell mass-circulation books?**

A. Yes, mainstream and indie titles will coexist at The Lit. Bar.

**Q. Were you a bookworm as a child?**

A. Yes, but I was not a willing participant. Thank God for my parents.

**Q. Will you write a book about your efforts to open The Lit. Bar?**

A. I've never written a book before or thought it was in the cards for me, but my supporters have been pushing me in that direction. I will likely bottle up my experience in a book, but within the greater context of my life's lessons.

For the latest information about The Lit. Bar or to donate to its Indiegogo campaign, visit [www.thelitbar.com](http://www.thelitbar.com).

# Images from childhood, steeped in cultural heritage

The artwork in this edition of *Unity* reflects each artist's memories of her native country.



"A Sweet Escape to the Sea" by Laelanie Larach

## LAELANIE LARACH

Laelanie Larach began painting at an early age in her native country, Honduras. She drew inspiration from the foliage that surrounded her.

"I truly feel alive and in tune with nature when I am painting," she says. "Throughout my body of work, one can see recurring themes drawn from my early experiences in Honduras."

Larach says Honduras' picturesque mountains, tropical forests and sandy beaches inspired her to experiment artistically. The colors she uses are luminous and full of positive energy.

One example is "A Sweet Escape to the Sea," which consists of a brilliant sunset of fiery yellows, oranges and reds with backdrops of cascading lights in different abstract forms. The multicolored blue sailboat moves through waves created with blended brushstrokes of purples, blues and reds.



"Tropical Green Forest" by Laelanie Larach

Larach describes "Tropical Green Forest" as "a forest of green leaves with fresh swirls moving inside an abstract jungle of trees and flowers." The red sunset and different shades of green represent the beautiful forests in Honduras.

"Hawaiian Heavenly Flower" inhabits the profile of a hidden Hawaiian princess whose head is adorned with a hat of radiant blue leaves. Her silhouette – subtle, yet prominent – is depicted in rectangles of yellows and orange-reds. Her lips are outlined and colored with a smidgen of red, purple and turquoise blue.



"Hawaiian Heavenly Flower" by Laelanie Larach

Larach says her art, a powerful form of expression, has had a huge impact on her life. "It opens my creativity and takes me to a different level of consciousness," she explains. Larach's work has been exhibited in Honduras, New York City and the Spectrum Miami Art Show.

## KYRA BELÁN

Kyra Belán asserts that she has been an artist all of her life. While growing up in Argentina, Belán says she earned top honors and awards in art and was far ahead of her classmates. After graduating from high school, she moved to the U.S., and graduated from Arizona State University with a BFA in fine arts. She continued her education at Florida State University, and graduated with an MFA in creative arts. Belán also earned a doctorate in art history and higher education from Florida International University in Miami.



"Allegro Andante" by Kyra Belán

Belán attributes her rich, vibrant and nuanced color palette to her Hispanic culture. Her work can be described as magical realism which, she says, is deeply ingrained in the arts of South America and seemingly innate in her artistic expression.

"Allegro Andante," created with colored pencils, depicts a surreal, magical interpretation of a



"Artemis" by Kyra Belán

lush, tropical environment. "The birds are symbolic of freedom," says Belán, "as they possess the ability to fly. The complex colors suggest harmony of all living things."

"Artemis," the five-petaled flower, portrays a universal symbol of femininity and beauty, says Belán. In Greek mythology, Artemis

was a goddess and, among other things, a protector of young girls. Belán describes this larger-than-life flower as soothing and happy.

A close-up view of "Selu," with a protruding pistil and stamen, emerges prominently from the hibiscus flower of yellow and shades of lavender.

"My art reflects my interest in Mother Earth," says Belán. "The energy of this planet creates and houses the flora of exceptional beauty, which I attempt to recreate in my artworks."

Belán has had many solo and group exhibitions in the U.S., and around the world. Her work can also be found in numerous public and private collections.



"Selu" by Kyra Belán

### SILVINA MIZRAHI

Silvina Mizrahi was born and raised in the small town of Tucuman, Argentina. As a child, she made sculptures out of boxes and what she terms "junk" found around the house. She received her degree in fine arts at the University of Tucuman. After earning that degree, Mizrahi moved to Buenos Aires and trained in sculpture under the supervision of different artists.

Although sculpture remained Mizrahi's main interest, she began painting on canvas after moving to the



"Poem" by Silvina Mizrahi

United States and living in New England. "The snow was white and I needed to create color," she recalls.

Invigorated by a renewed sense of continuity and awe of how creation occurs, Mizrahi added various colors, her daughter's drawings and small toys to her work. Her love

for mixed-media collage shows in her piece called "Poem." Mizrahi notes: "A real flower started the process (of creating the artwork) followed by bright light, freedom and the outdoors."

"Internal Topographies" is reminiscent of the homes where Mizrahi lived in Argentina. "The home that I was born in and my grandmother's home are warm and welcoming places that I remember in moments of uncertainty and despair," she says.

"Blowing Wind" was inspired by Mizrahi's childhood memories of flying kites and enjoying the music of the wind. She started with one canvas of a woman

flying a kite and realized she needed more open space, so she expanded the piece to a triptych (artwork separated into three sections).



"Internal Topographies" by Silvina Mizrahi

Mizrahi has participated in group and solo exhibits throughout the Boston area, Sausalito, California, and Argentina.



"Blowing Wind" by Silvina Mizrahi

# A taste for the restaurant business



Veteran actor Danny Trejo's roster of California eateries includes a coffee/doughnut shop and cantina. Photos courtesy of Trejo's Tacos



High-profile celebrities have certainly claimed their spots in the culinary sphere over the years. Some (Eva Longoria and Jennifer Lopez, for example) have faltered. Others – neophytes included – are flourishing. Here are four examples of celebrities who (at this writing) are still open for business.

## Danny Trejo Trejo's Tacos

Trejo opened his restaurant in Los Angeles, California in 2016. Business was robust, so he opened a cantina in Hollywood. Now, there's also a coffee shop and plans to open a cantina in Pasadena. "People think that just because you're a celebrity you can do something," Trejo told *The New York Times* in 2017, "but the reality is if the food isn't good, they ain't coming back." <https://www.trejostacos.com>

## Jose Andrés ThinkFoodGroup

Named outstanding chef by the James Beard Foundation in 2011, Andrés is an internationally recognized celebrity and chef/owner of ThinkFoodGroup. TFG comprises eateries in Las Vegas, Nevada; Los Angeles, California; Miami, Florida; Washington, D.C.; and Puerto Rico. His establishments include Barmini in Washington, D.C., and Saam by Jose Andrés in Los Angeles. [http://www.joseandres.com/en\\_us/restaurants](http://www.joseandres.com/en_us/restaurants)



Jose Andrés is the chef/owner of ThinkFoodGroup. Photo by Charles Ommanney

# Tasty pepitas are a potent snack



The name pepita comes from the Mexican Spanish phrase *pepita de calabaza*, which translates to “little seed of squash.”

Technically, pepitas and pumpkin seeds are the same thing. But pepitas don’t have a shell and are found in only select pumpkin varieties.

Pumpkin seeds are a common element in Mexican cuisine. Marinated and roasted, they are an autumn snack available in Mexico, Latin America and the U.S., as well as a commercially produced and distributed packaged snack, available year-round.

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## Pepita Brittle

*Recipe courtesy of Pati Jinich*

- 2 cups raw, hulled pumpkin seeds or pepitas, lightly toasted
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter at room temperature, divided
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoons piloncillo grated, or more brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons corn syrup
- Vegetable oil to grease the spatula
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- Sprinkle of kosher or coarse sea salt (optional)

Heat a medium skillet over medium-low heat. Add the pumpkin seeds and let them toast, slightly, until they start making popping sounds and have begun to darken, 3 to 4 minutes. Scrape into a bowl and let cool.

Use 1/2 tablespoon of the butter to grease a 6-by-10-inch nonstick, rimmed baking sheet.

In a medium saucepan set over medium-low heat, combine the water, brown sugar, granulated sugar, piloncillo and corn syrup. Stir with a wooden spoon or spatula until the sugars dissolve. After 15 minutes or so, the mixture will have a thick, syrup consistency and will be bubbling. Check with a candy thermometer to make sure it reaches 290 F (but no more than 300 F), or the sugar is at “hard crack” stage. Then turn off the heat.

Now you have to move fast: Grease a spatula with vegetable oil. Remove the saucepan from the heat; add the baking soda, the remaining butter and the pumpkin seeds; and stir as fast

as you can. The mixture will bubble for a few seconds. Stir well and immediately scrape the mixture onto the buttered baking sheet, as it hardens incredibly fast. Spread evenly with the greased spatula to about 1/4-inch thickness. Sprinkle salt on top, if desired.

Let cool for 20 to 25 minutes and break into pieces. If you want to cut the brittle in even squares or rectangles, use a moist knife to do so a few minutes after its been poured, before it hardens. Leave it to further cool, dry and harden.

The brittle will keep for a month in an airtight container.

Yield: 10 to 12 servings



# A taste for the restaurant business

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Gloria and Emilio Estefan's newest culinary venture is Estefan Kitchen. Photo by Joe Seer / Shutterstock.com

## Gloria and Emilio Estefan Estefan Kitchen

In 2017, Estefan Kitchen debuted in the Miami Design District Palm Court. Open daily, the upscale Cuban eatery serves everything from Baked Cuban Empanadas and Bacon-Wrapped Maduros to Guava Barbecue Pork Ribs and Cuban Picadillo Cannelloni Pasta. There's also live entertainment.  
[www.estefankitchen.com](http://www.estefankitchen.com)



Actor Jon Huertas' West Coast hot spot, Clutch, serves a plethora of California favorites.

## Jon Huertas Clutch

Not only is Huertas a member of the acclaimed ensemble cast on NBC's "This Is Us," he also owns a Cali-Mex restaurant in Venice, California. The roadhouse eatery — popular with motorcyclists and the classic-car crowd — features dry-rubbed barbecue and surf and turf.  
<https://www.clutchcalimex.com>

# Tasty pepitas are a potent snack

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"Pepitas are also a craved-for snack for many Mexicans, including myself, when going to the movies," says TV show host Pati Jinich on her website. "Un-hulled, soaked in salted water, dried and toasted, they are sold in little packages in street stands and bring long-lasting entertainment. ..."

They are also used hulled and un-hulled, toasted or fried, to make salsas, moles, soups and drinks.

Mellow, somewhat nutty and almost sweet are some of the best ways to describe how pepitas taste.

Pepitas are much more than a tasty treat. The numerous health benefits of pumpkin and

other seeds have been well-documented. What sets pumpkin seeds apart is their prostate-protection properties. According to Prevention magazine, pumpkin seeds contain protective compounds called phytosterols, which might be responsible for shrinking the prostate. They also contain chemicals that might prevent some transformation of testosterone into dihydrotestosterone. High levels of DHT are associated with an enlarged prostate.

Prevention's clinical herbal adviser suggests eating a handful (about 1 ounce) of shelled pumpkin seeds three times a week to help prevent an enlarged prostate.

**On the cover:** Held each year, the International Ballet Festival of Miami spotlights a wide range of dancers. Featured is a performance of "Giselle" by England's Birmingham Royal Ballet. Photo by Carlos Llano. Published six times per year, *Unity* is exclusively distributed to clients of Thompson Hospitality and Compass Group, both world leaders in foodservice. To contact us, send an email to [marketing@thompsonhospitalityjv.com](mailto:marketing@thompsonhospitalityjv.com). ©2017 Thompson Hospitality and Compass Group. Produced by Content Spectrum.

