ENSEMBLE ESPAÑOL
Spanish Dance Theater
IN RESIDENCE AT NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

RAISED IN CHICAGO READY FOR THE WORLD

STRATEGIC PLAN: SEASONS 41 TO 46
Dame Libby Komaiko, Founder

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INTRODUCTION

As the Ensemble Español Spanish Dance Theater celebrates 40+ years, the company eagerly looks toward its future, and is pleased to announce its strategic plan, *Raised in Chicago, Ready for the World*. Here, the organization prepares to reinforce its position as the premier Spanish dance center in the United States, making sure that the art form has a dynamic home that is worthy of local, national, and international artists and students. Starting in 2010-2011, the organization participated in the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts’ *Capacity Building Program*, led by Michael Kaiser, currently of the DeVos Institute. The Ensemble Español set out to transform its role within the larger dance community: it formulated the necessary action steps, enlisted supporters, appropriate resources, evaluating its current program and professional methods found, and finally developed the plan that will guide the company through the next five seasons.

STRENGTHENING THE PRESENT AND PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Over the past five years, the Ensemble Español Spanish Dance Theater underwent significant changes, particularly as they relate to the professionalization of the company’s artistic and administrative teams. Through the *Smart Growth Program* supported by the Chicago Community Trust, as well as through the MacArthur Funds for Arts and Culture at the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation, the organization hired a director of development and its first, full-time dancer. With the campaign fabled enthusiasm, the EE heartily took on its challenges of seeking greater funding opportunities, and researching what it would take to transition the organization to a
completely, full-time professional dance institution. It was during this time that the Ensemble Español received a critical, in-kind grant from the Taproot Foundation. The company’s needs were thoroughly assessed, and the current strategic plan was created. The recommendations set forth by the Taproot Foundation team included: invest in and train the artistic and administrative teams to their fullest potential; embrace the Ensemble Español’s national importance as the only organization that preserves, promotes, and presents the three styles of Spanish dance; seriously review and establish better marketing practices; and, draw new stakeholders through board membership, audiences, students, and volunteers.

To do so, immediate action was taken to focus the organization within the business community, which involved joining the Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, the LGBTQ Chicago Chamber of Commerce, the North River Commission/Albany Park Chamber of Commerce, as well as successfully participating in the prestigious Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses program. Likewise, the Ensemble Español reinvigorated its role in the arts community through its membership of See Chicago Dance, Forefront and receiving preferred vendor status through the Chicago Public Schools. All of these actions were designed to strengthen the organization through revenue diversification, consistent income generation, and positioning the company for future sustainability.
MISSION, VISION, VALUES, AND HISTORY

Mission
The Ensemble Español Spanish Dance Theater preserves, promotes, and presents the Flamenco, folkloric, classical, and contemporary dance and music traditions of Spain.

Vision Statement
The Ensemble Español Spanish Dance Theater will be a leader among culturally specific arts organizations, and uphold its commitment to artistic excellence, its dedication to the preservation of cultural integrity, and maintain its responsibility to creative and higher learning.

Values Statement
The Ensemble Español Spanish Dance Theater remains committed to artistic achievement, cultural integrity, and educational inquiry. Believing that the arts are inherently part of the human experience, the Ensemble Español, therefore, pursues those projects and creates those programs that reflect the diversity, tradition, and excellence of its 40+year history.

Artistic Excellence
The Ensemble Español Spanish Dance Theater maintains a commitment to the highest standards of artistic excellence through its exchange with master artists, training programs, and presentation of productions, classes, and other programs.
Diversity and Cultural Integrity
Recognizing its responsibility to present culturally specific art forms with authenticity and respect, the Ensemble Español appreciates its role as a leader in bringing Spanish dance and music to a wide range of artists, audiences, and students. We strongly encourage the exchange of artistic perspectives, historical experiences, and personal backgrounds to strengthen all artistic disciplines.

Education and Accessibility to the Arts
Given its singular relationship with higher education, the Ensemble Español encourages learning, and advocates for students, educators, mentors, as well as aspiring and established artists. The Ensemble Español brings quality arts education programs to a broad range of communities, and provides endowed scholarships to dancers who seek college degrees.

Leadership and Community
The Ensemble Español understands that it is part of a global community, and that it plays a role in stressing the importance of the arts to many constituencies, including business, government, technology and science. Consequently, the Ensemble Español works to involve many individuals in its programs, fosters an environment where stakeholders are welcome and come from all walks of life, and supports connections that benefit communities.
HISTORY

Founded in 1975 by Dame Libby Komaiko, the Ensemble Español was incorporated as a nonprofit organization in 1976, and built an artistic residency with Northeastern Illinois University. Today, the organization is a critically-acclaimed performance ensemble that tours nationally and internationally, and is considered one of Chicago’s most dynamic arts organizations.

For over four decades, the Ensemble Español has produced and designed artistic programs that demonstrate the highest standards of artistic excellence and cultural integrity, and strongly dedicates itself to arts education, higher education, and life-long learning for all communities. Through its relationship with Northeastern Illinois University, the Ensemble Español extends the university’s designation as a Hispanic-serving organization and recognizes that culturally specific art forms require a rigorous knowledge of historical context, cultural influences and associations, as well as respectful and vibrant professional presentation.
This is especially critical as traditional art often gains a measure of popularity, and is then folded into contemporary perspectives by eager artists who use it for experimentation and inspiration. As such, the Ensemble Español consistently works with master artists to ensure that Spanish dance and music are appropriately and creatively taught and performed in the United States. Therefore, it is not surprising that many of the principal artists in the field have traveled to Chicago to teach, train, and perform with the company. It is through this collaborative effort that the Ensemble Español has:

- Trained and Presented Over 95 Dancers, Representing Nearly 20 Countries and Cultures
- Trained and Presented Over 170 Youth Company Members from Ages 10-22
- Presented Over 90 Guest Artists and Musicians from Spain and the Americas
- Created and Produced Over 135 Full-Length Original Choreographies
- Presented Over 10,500 Arts Education Programs
- Awarded Over 2,600 Scholarships to Aspiring Dancers and Musicians
- Nearly 39,000 Audiences Members Reached in FY2017
- Over the past three fiscal years, the Ensemble Español has served nearly 80,000 young students throughout the region
STRATEGIC GOALS AND ACTION STEPS

Strategic Goal One ~ Strengthen Artistic and Administrative Teams

Action Steps

1.1 Transition all Artistic and Administrative Staff to Full-Time and/or Part Time Status, with Fair Market Wages
1.2 Develop, Train, and Hire New Teaching Staff
1.3 Provide Ongoing Professional Development Opportunities to Both Teams
1.4 Develop, Train, and Hire New Administrative Staff, Including Marketing, Grant writing, and Company Management Positions
1.5 Develop New Internship Program
1.6 Develop New Mentoring Program for Both Teams

Strategic Goal Two ~ Reinforce Organization’s Administration, Governance, Board Needs, and Infrastructure

2.1 Develop and Implement Board Recruitment Methods and Tools
2.2 Review Current By-Laws for Relevancy
2.3 Double Board Membership
2.4 Create Blue Ribbon Committee for Fundraising
2.5 Create Junior Board
2.6 Build and Launch a Major Endowment Campaign
2.7 Undertake and Design a Plan that Addresses Space Needs
2.8 Develop Necessary Tools for Marketing, Funding, and Management, including a Bi-lingual Website, Social Media Campaigns, Online Funding and Individual Giving Programs

**Strategic Goal Three ~ Strengthen and Support Artistic Exploration**

3.1 Create New, Collaborative, and Ongoing Artistic Opportunities for Company
3.2 Create and Implement New Training Program for Professional Company
3.3 Create (3) New Choreographies
3.4 Create New Tour Markets in Southwest, Southeast, and Northwest United States
3.5 Create New Tour Markets in Europe and Latin America
3.6 Create New Performance Opportunities for the Youth Company
3.7 Create New Markets in Southern and Rural Illinois, and Other Midwest States
3.8 Create an apprentice Program for Dancers who are transitioning to Professional Dance Careers, a Designated Ensemble of Youth Company Dancers Who Are Specifically Trained to Perform and Teach at Selected Programs
Strategic Goal Four ~ Strengthen and Support Arts Education Mission

4.1 Implement Designated Teaching Staff for All Residencies, Classes, and Workshops
4.2 Expand *Paso a Paso* Program throughout Chicagoland Region
4.3 Create (2) *Paso a Paso* Programs for Southern/Rural Illinois
4.4 Analyze Residency Potential for CPS/Reapply for Preferred Vendor Status

PROGRESS DEMONSTRATION

At the end of each fiscal year, the Ensemble Español’s Artistic and Administrative Staff will meet and discuss how well the strategic plan is working, what needs to be adjusted, eliminated, and further assessed. Success will be measured through artistic achievements, quality of collaborations, number of programs fulfilled, generated revenue, audience attendance and community support through funding, memberships, and counsel.
ABOUT THE LEADERSHIP

Dame Libby Komaiko ~ Founder

For over half a century, Dame Libby Komaiko’s visionary career has encompassed art, education and culture. Her pioneering creations are respected and hailed throughout the Americas. In 1982, she was decorated with Spain’s highest honor, the Lazo de Dama de Isabel La Católica by the Royal Court, and Spanish government for fostering Spanish dance and culture in the United States, and throughout the world. Dame Komaiko is now professor emerita of Northeastern Illinois University’s Department of Music and Dance Program, and was recently given the Distinguished Scholar Award by the university.
Dame Komaiko began her dance training and performance in classical ballet with Elisa Stigler at the Chicago Musical College of Roosevelt University. Later, as a teen, she studied and performed Jazz, Modern and Musical Theater with Gus Giordano. At the age of 18, she auditioned for the legendary José Greco and was given the opportunity to perform with his world famous Spanish Dance Company. Her beloved journey into Spanish dance also led her to the company of Lola Montes. She studied extensively in Spain and the United States with María Alba, Nana Lorca, Edo, Manolo Vargas, Paul Haakon, María Magdalena, Pedro Azorín, Ciro, Pacita Tomas, and Roberto Lorca, with whom she partnered for several years.

In 1975, Dame Komaiko founded the Ensemble Español at Northeastern Illinois University, and began an unparalleled professional and educational training program for Spanish dance and music. What began with a company of seven, is now a full company of 40 dancers and musicians. She choreographed the majority of the company’s 135+ choreographic works, and has produced their major international Flamenco ballets and dramas, folkloric suites and classic modern interpretations with guest artists from Spain and the Americas. She is a sought after teacher, choreographer, and master teacher throughout the community and nation.
Dame Komaiko’s career also includes musical theater, opera, television, film and orchestra, including performances with Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops. With the Ensemble Español, she performed with the Detroit Symphony, the Evanston and Skokie Valley Symphonies, and repeated performances with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. She has been the choreographer and coach for several Chamber Opera Chicago performances.

The recipient of numerous awards including civic honors, national awards, and choreography fellowships, Dame Komaiko received the coveted *Ruth Page Award* in 2003 at the Ravinia Festival and the prestigious *International Latino Cultural Center Lifetime Achievement Award* in 2004. She is also on the roster of the Illinois Arts Council as a Master Teacher through the Arts-in-Education and Artists-in-residence programs. Dame Libby completed the filming of a video documentary, *Ensemble Español: The First 20 years, 1976-1996*, in 1998. In 2008, Dame Libby was honored with the Distinguished Alumni Award from her Alma Mater, Evanston Township High School. She also received the Outstanding Partnership Award from Mayor Richard M. Daley for her collaboration of Spanish dance, music and education with the Joyce Kilmer Elementary School in Chicago’s Rogers Park neighborhood. In recent time, Komaiko produced a recording of Spanish music and castanets, “*Dama Libby and Friends,*” which benefits the campaign Youth Scholarship and Endowment Funds.
Irma Suárez Ruiz ~ Artistic Director

Born in Chicago, Suárez Ruiz moved as a child to Mexico, and returned to the Midwest in 1973. She started her formal dance training in classical ballet and Spanish dance with Dame Libby Komaiko in 1979. She graduated with honors from Northeastern Illinois University in April 1983 with B. A. in Foreign Languages and Literature, and a minor in Dance. Suárez Ruiz was honored with the Artistic Ambassador Award from the Ruth Page Foundation and Northeastern Illinois University in recognition of her artistic achievements and contributions to dance.

She was also honored by the Chicago Cultural Center during its Viva Latina! series for her master artist status. She is on the dance faculty of the university, and was a guest choreographer for the Civic Ballet’s production of Black Tights/Spanish Rhythms, presented by the Ruth Page Dance Series. She is an accomplished choreographer, and has worked and trained with many of the leading Spanish dancers in the world.
Born in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Pérez started his dance career with Dame Libby Komaiko in 1985, after receiving a scholarship apprenticeship. He is a graduate of Northeastern Illinois University with a B.A. in Speech Communication/Performing Arts, and a minor in Dance. Pérez has been honored with the Artistic Ambassador Award from the Ruth Page Foundation and Northeastern Illinois University, in recognition of his artistic achievements and contributions to dance. In 2002, he received an Appreciation Award from Richard M. Daley, Mayor of Chicago, for his exceptional contribution to the arts in Chicago. In 2004, Jorge Pérez and Irma Suárez Ruiz were honored with the Twentieth Anniversary Award from the St. Louis Cultural Flamenco Society. His accomplishments are listed in Who’s Who among Hispanic Americans, Who’s Who among Business Leaders of America and Who’s Who in Dance.
STRATEGY CALENDAR

Year One: Season 41

• Transition all Artistic and Administrative Staff to Full-Time and/or Part Time Status, with Fair Market Wages
• Develop, Train, and Hire New Teaching Staff
• Provide Ongoing Professional Development Opportunities to Both Teams
• Develop, Train, and Hire New Administrative Staff, Including Marketing, Grant writing, and Company Management Positions
• Develop New Internship Program
• Develop New Mentoring Program for Both Teams
• Develop and Implement Board Recruitment Methods and Tools
• Review Current By-Laws for Relevancy
Year Two: Season 42

- Double Board Membership to 16 Members
- Create Blue Ribbon Committee for Fundraising
- Create Junior Board
- Build and Launch a Major Endowment Campaign
- Undertake and Design a Plan that Addresses Space Needs
- Develop Necessary Tools for Marketing, Funding, and Management, including a Bi-lingual Website, Social Media Campaigns, Online Funding and Individual Giving Programs
- Create New Markets in Southern and Rural Illinois, and Other Midwest States

Year Three: Season 43

- Create New, Collaborative, and Ongoing Artistic Opportunities for Company
- Create and Implement New Training Program for Professional Company
- Create (3) New Choreographies
- Create New Tour Markets in North America
- Create New Performance Opportunities for the Youth Company
- Create EE2, a Designated Ensemble of Youth Company Dancers Who Are Specifically Trained to Perform and Teach at Selected Programs
- Begin Planning for 45th Anniversary
Year Four: Season 44

- Implement Designated Teaching Staff for All Residencies, Classes, and Workshops
- Expand *Paso a Paso* Program throughout Chicagoland Region
- Create (2) *Paso a Paso* Programs for Southern/Rural Illinois
- Analyze Residency Potential for CPS/Reapply for Preferred Vendor Status
- Create New Tour Markets in Europe and Latin America
- Formalize and Program 45th Anniversary Season

Year Five: Season 45

- Complete New Strategic Plan for Seasons 46-50
- Prep Tours for North American and Latin American Tours in Honor of 50th Anniversary
- Plan Asian Tour for Season 46
RAISED IN CHICAGO,
READY FOR THE WORLD

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