BAILA Society Choreographer Ahtoy Juliana Awarded Residency at Guggenheim Works & Process

New ethnotheater work with Ahtoy Juliana and Jessica Ho reclaims the women who shaped Latin Hustle's history



Ahtoy Juliana and Jessica Ho performing the Latin Hustle. Photo by Alla Bronskaya.

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, September 18, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Ahtoy Juliana, PhD, founder and co-director of BAILA Society, has been awarded a residency through the Guggenheim Museum's Works & Process program to develop a new ethnotheater work exploring the feminine histories of Latin Hustle. Ahtoy will create and perform the piece in collaboration with Jessica Ho, a BAILA Society principal dancer, and the pair will trade the lead and follow roles throughout, reflecting Latin Hustle's own tradition of fluid roles. The residency marks a return to Works & Process for Ahtoy, who previously performed at the Guggenheim with Do the Hustle, directed by Abdiel Jacobsen, a production that also traveled to Jacob's Pillow.

The new project builds on Ahtoy's ongoing archival initiative Dance Is Life, which gathers oral histories from the earliest generation of Latin Hustle dancers, a form created by Puerto Rican teenagers in the early 1970s South Bronx at the crossing point of salsa, disco, and Rocking. Rather than treating that history as settled, the residency work returns to it with a specific question in mind: what happens when the women and feminine-identifying dancers who shaped the form, so often remembered as followers, are recovered instead as its leaders, innovators, and cultural carriers. Onstage, Ahtoy and Jessica take up that question directly, each stepping into both roles in turn so that no single body is fixed as leader or follower.

The piece will also draw a line between Latin Hustle and Rocking, the related Puerto Rican dance form that helped give rise to breaking and hip hop, tracing the visible and formative role women

played in a lineage frequently narrated as exclusively masculine. Choreographically, the work will unsettle the fixed roles of leader and follower that have hardened around Latin Hustle since its commercialization, building instead toward structures of continuous negotiation, where dancers initiate, respond, and co-create in real time, echoing the social conditions under which the dance was first made. Ahtoy and Jessica's shared performance practice, moving fluidly between both positions, is the piece's clearest expression of that negotiation.

Ahtoy's application drew on two recent works that anticipate this direction. Where's My Money?, created in collaboration with a classical Indian dance community, reworks Latin Hustle's turn patterns and rotational vocabulary around a shared authorship between partners, using spoken word by the performers themselves to structure the piece's rhythm and arc. Native New Yorker places lyrical jazz and Latin Hustle in conversation as twin inheritances of Black and Puerto Rican survival, tracing how joy in both forms was forged under conditions of grief, neglect, and erasure rather than despite them.

The residency will support rehearsal development alongside dancers trained in Latin Hustle and related forms, incorporating interview excerpts, period music, and movement reconstructed from oral history into what Ahtoy describes as a living, evolving score rather than a fixed reproduction of the past. Public-facing components, including open rehearsals, are planned to extend the work's historical framing to Works & Process audiences directly.

Ahtoy is the founder and co-director of BAILA Society and teaches Afro-Latinx social dance history at Scripps College. She holds World Latin Hustle Championship titles alongside Edwin Tolentino and has served as a judge and mentor within the Afro-Latinx social dance competition circuit since 2008, including as a founding judge of The Summit.

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