

BROMMEL-KOMAIKO-PEREZ SCHOLARSHIP IN ENSEMBLE ESPAÑOL
AND
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These two scholarships were created to recognize and support the Ensemble Español, Northeastern's best cultural program that reaches thousands through its performances in the city, the USA, and around Europe and Asia. No artistic program sponsored by the university has a wider and more faithful audience. The annual festivals attract great dancers from Spain who work with the faculty at NEIU and the students. These two scholarships recognize the contributions of the founder of the Ensemble, **Libby Komaiko**, and one of her esteemed students, Jorge Perez, who serves as First Dancer and Executive Director of the Ensemble. I have long admired the artistry, diligence and dedication of these two people in creating and maintaining this outreach program at Northeastern. Libby remains an adored colleague and Jorge a respected bright former student!

Komaiko started the Ensemble Español Spanish Dance Theater in 1975. She pioneered the academic program at Northeastern in Dance that teaches students classical, folkloric and flamenco dance and music. In addition to her work as a teacher, Libby was a fine dancer and performer that enchanted audiences. Add to that the many dances that she created as a choreographer! Space does not permit me to list these fine dance creations. Since it is the 25th anniversary of the creation of her Bolero, based on the music of Ravel, I single it out for special recognition. Having seen many of her dances over the years, this Bolero work culminates and celebrates Libby's talents at the highest artistic level. To me it is her signature work of art.

Just seven years after she founded the company King Juan Carlos I of Spain awarded her the title of "Lazo de Dama de Isabel la Catolica" for her "superlative work in spreading the cultural and artistic values of Spain throughout the U.S." Thereafter she became known as Dame Libby! Now retired from dancing, she continues to advise and promote the Ensemble. Her title of Artistic Director has been capably taken over by another First Dancer and student of hers, Irma Suarez.

Jorge Perez, born in Puerto Rico, came to Northeastern where he became a Communication major. That is how and why he ended up a student in one of my classes in Persuasion. Quickly he found Dame Libby and she began his formal training as a dancer in 1985. The company was small but Jorge stood out as a brilliant performer—just like his teacher Dame Libby. Jorge has never left the Ensemble and worked up from student aide to Executive Director today. He assisted Dame Libby in the administration of the company, especially in the planning of the many tours both within this country and Europe and Asia. Meanwhile he continued his studies with great Spanish dancers and taught beginners in the Español classes. Jorge became First Dancer and lead performer along with Irma Suarez, another First Dancer, in many of Dame Libby's creations.

As a student, Jorge worked so hard to excel in my class. His speeches commanded attention, just like his dancing. No matter how much work I expected he never complained. In the class he became a leader in group activities. From afar I admired his work as assistant to Dame Libby and saw how he enabled her to do so many more things creatively as he gradually took over the administration of the Ensemble. I noticed after creating the first scholarship for the Ensemble that most of the winners were women—most deserving choices. However, from my own experiences in supporting the arts, I recognize how hard it is to get men to be performers in any art whether it is in music, theatre or dance. I thought a scholarship for a male dancer would help Jorge and Irma in recruiting. Such a scholarship might go to a student like Jorge who came to Northeastern without training and in need of financial support. With all the practices required in any of the arts, students in those fields need help since they have to rehearse hours and cannot do as much part-time work.

-Dr. Bernie Brommel