

Rolando Sarabia

Roanoke Ballet Artistic Director

Rolando Sarabia Oquendo is a Cuban ballet dancer. He is an acclaimed Principal Dancer for The Washington Ballet under Artistic Director Julie Kent. He has danced with many companies including the Cuban National Ballet, the Houston Ballet, the Miami City Ballet, and the American Ballet Theater as a guest artist in 2011. Erika Kinetz of The New York Times called him the "Cuban Nijinsky" and compared him to a young Mikhail Baryshnikov.

Sarabia was born in Havana, Cuba. His father was a ballet dancer with the Cuban National Ballet. Rolando grew up among ballet dancers and first performed with the Cuban National Ballet at the age of 5. In 1990, he was admitted as a student at the Alejo, Carpentier Elementary Ballet School in Havana, Cuba. He was trained by his father, Rolando Sarabia, and Alicia Alonso, Lázaro Carreño and Magaly Suarez at the National Ballet School in Havana. Early in his career, Sarabia's explosive performance style garnered comparisons to Nijinsky and Baryshnikov. "Sarabita" was so famous among young people in Cuba, that according to Sarah Kaufman of The Washington Post, his fans "glued him the suffix of endearment, -ita, onto his name like a kiss." In 2003, Sarabia left Cuba after Prima Ballerina Alicia Alonso refused to allow him to join the Boston Ballet where his younger brother Daniel Sarabia was dancing as a corps member. He has performed with renowned dancers Maya Plisetskaya, Patrick Dupont, Farouk Ruzimatov, Alisia Alonso, Tamara Rojo among many others.