



Shannon Garçon, founder of the House of Garçon, strikes a pose in front members of the house in The St. Regis Washington, D.C. Ballroom. (Photo: Marriott International)

LGBTQ Travel

How D.C.’s House of Garçon Gives Voice and Visibility to Ballroom Culture

By *Kwin Mosby*

For LGBTQ+ people of color, Ballroom culture — a social movement and creative collective noted for its fashion, pageantry, dance and, yes, balls — goes far beyond what most people may have seen in Madonna’s iconic “[Vogue](#)” video or the revealing documentary “Paris Is Burning,” both of which introduced the scene to the mainstream.

To understand it, you need to go straight to one of Ballroom’s most entrenched sources, someone like Twiggy Pucci Garçon, a Washington, D.C.-based member of the House of Garçon — one of Ballroom’s noted “houses” that make up an infrastructure of safe spaces comprised of one’s chosen family.



Twiggy Pucci Garçon is a key person in D.C. Ballroom. (Photo: Marriott International)

“Ballroom is a culture and a movement created initially out of resistance to homophobia and transphobia from the Black church during the Harlem Renaissance [1920s to 1930s],” said Twiggy, who started walking balls almost 20 years ago in her hometown of Portsmouth, Virginia. “It has shifted to become a phenomenon and a place where folks can discover themselves, where they can find support and their chosen family.”

In the Ballroom community, your house is usually led by “mothers” and “fathers,” experienced members of the ballroom scene. Members then adopt the name of their house as their last name. And today, the Ballroom community consists of more than 25 houses, including Balenciaga, Ninja, Khan, Mugler, Ebony, Revlon and Garçon.

Twiggy has earned legendary status in the Ballroom scene, where she shows off her queer nonbinary swagger to onlookers clustered around the runway and beyond.

But Twiggy does much more than walk the runway. She manages the day-to-day global operations of the House of Garçon, which includes overseeing the executive board, as well as in-person visits to each chapter for at least one ball and one house meeting every year.



Twiggy Pucci Garçon runs the runway scene. (Photo: Marriott International)

A staunch purveyor of accurate storytelling about the Ballroom community, Twiggy served as a consultant and choreographer for the ballroom scenes in the hit TV show “Pose,” infusing the show with its authentic ballroom vibe and helping facilitate the casting of the judges and walkers, as well as the glam and wardrobe teams.

“What you saw was a really different way of a TV show and creative team leaning into working alongside the [Ballroom] community to get the story right,” said Garçon, who was also a writer for the critically acclaimed documentary “Kiki,” worked on the marketing campaigns for the Ballroom competition TV series “Legendary,” and is the Director of the film “MnM,” which is a part of the [Queer Futures Series](#).

In real life, following the Ballroom community via social media or a personal connection to a house are the primary routes to experiencing a ball. If you’re visiting New York City, then you may have an opportunity to attend [OTA](#) by Open To All Entertainment, a weekly mini-ball series featuring local stars and international icons.

However, in [Washington, D.C.](#), the Ballroom community is smaller and the balls less frequent. You may be able to get your first ballroom experience at [DC Black Pride](#), held every Memorial Day Weekend, which is also, conveniently, Garçon Weekend.



Members of the House of Garçon pose behind the scenes at The St. Regis Washington, D.C. Ballroom. Top row (L-R): Lola Garçon, Kenya Garçon, Que Garçon; Middle row, seated (L-R): Imani Garçon, Drake Garçon, Twiggy Garçon; Bottom row, laying (L-R): Skyy Garçon, Phoebe Garçon. (Photo: Marriott International)

House members from around the globe converge on the city for special events including the Unity Ball, a “Garçons of the Year” awards ceremony, a drag brunch featuring Godmother Stasha Sanchez Garçon and East Coast Mother Haven Garçon, and a cookout hosted by founding Mother Shannon Garçon.

Twiggy continues to push the necessity of visibility for the Ballroom community as well as the queer and transgender communities. Ballroom culture has spread to all corners of the world, including Australia, South Africa and even an emerging community in Portugal.

For travelers seeking an authentic Ballroom experience, there’s one thing Twiggy wants everyone to know: “There’s likely to be a ball wherever you are traveling,” she says. “Ballroom has now expanded to be a global culture and movement, and while it was born in New York, it has quite literally migrated across the U.S., the world — and the House of Garçon has members worldwide.”