



BALLET FOLKLORICO MEXICO



About the Company

The full name of the spectacular folk dance Company is the **Ballet Folklórico Mexico de Los Hermanos Avila**, founded in 1972 by Carmen and Jesus Avila (sister and brother) who are still performing with the company. Joined by a second and third generation of Avilas, Jesus is the director while Armando Contreras is choreographer, costume designer and artistic director. The authentic traditional regalia, lavish and colorful, are an important part of the show as they transform the energetic dancers from one scene to another. The majestic costumes are symbolic and are adorned with beads, suede, and colorful pheasant tails, some of which are six and a half feet in length.

The Ballet Folklórico Mexico has been recognized by U.S. and Mexican officials as one of the most exciting groups presenting authentic regional dances of Mexico. The group has received proclamations and commendations from the State of Wisconsin, as well as from the Mexican Government Tourism Office. The dancers consider themselves multicultural ambassadors from around the world. Many of the dancers are college students; some come from Mexico, Puerto Rico and from as far as Japan and China. While the home base of the group is in Madison, Wisconsin, some members have performed in Germany, Russia and Mexico. The dancers perform rigorously and in great precision practicing four to five days a week.

The Ballet was created to preserve Mexican folk dances. It also, serves as a means to provide others with the opportunity to appreciate diversity among cultures.

About the Performance

The program includes historic dances from Azteca, Michoacan, Guerrero, Sonora, Jalisco, and other regions of Mexico, as well as dances dedicated to the "soldaderas," the courageous women who supported and even fought alongside the men during the Mexican revolution. Regional dances reflect the unique tradition of a great country where many groups were physically isolated from one another, yet shared for the most part, language and common spirit. The Ballet transcends cultural influences from around the world. Mexico is a land of many faces. It has mountains and beaches, deserts and tropical rainforests, uninhabited wilderness and one to the largest cities in the world. Food, music, dress and dance vary from one region to another, even from village to village.

A 900-year pilgrimage to find a symbol that would tell the people where to build their empire ended when a band of Aztecs discovered an island on which they saw an eagle devouring a serpent over a cactus. The island in Lake Texcoco was inhabited by Aztec men and women, where they celebrated life (with their gods) with magnificent rituals and ceremonies, in which music and dance were key elements. Elaborate feathered outfits were thought to provide mystical communication with the gods.



Zapateados are dances enjoyed throughout the state of Guerrero. They reflect the rhythm of people willing to express the joy of life with all their strength. In the state of Sonora, the Yagui Indians perform their elaborate Deer Dance before beginning the hunt.

Dance is very important to Mexico and the Mexicans. Almost everybody dances socially, learning at least a few of the many different club-style dances. Children are taught to dance every year in school. The best are allowed to participate in the school's own Ballet Folklorico. After school there are many professional dance groups throughout Mexico. What you will see in these performances are a few of the different styles of dance in Mexico. One of the goals of the Ballet is to be able to awaken a sense of culture within the students' own lives, creating interest and pride in their own cultural backgrounds, and engendering a sense of respect for other cultures.

Dances

Paso de Camino

This dance honors the four directions: north, south, east and west. The dance begins with the performers lowering their bodies in a symbolic homage to each of the four directions.

Guadalajara

This is a dance that honors our ancestors, the Aztecs. It also contains various tap combinations, which are called **Zap Ateados**.

Tonancin

The entire dance is performed in a circular configuration to show reverence to the mother of all peoples, mother earth. Dancers also demonstrate reverence to the heavens and to the land when they raise and lower their outstretched arms in unison.

Fuego

This spectacular dance is dedicated to the sun. The Aztecs worshiped the sun as a force that creates and sustains life.

El Segundo Jarabe and Diana

These are dances whose movements give a taste of the history of Michoacan, a region that was strongly influenced by Spain in the 16th and 17th centuries.

La Raspa

The purpose of this dance is to encourage children to carry on the dances and traditions of Mexico and other cultures. It involves audience participation and teaches children and adults alike some basic movements and steps of the well known Mexican dance.

Son de la Negra and Jarabe Tapatio

These flirtatious dances from Jalisco highlight the courtship of this region of Mexico. The men's costumes show influences from Spain and China.

Son de la Negra is a love song that the men of Jalisco dedicate in admiration to the dark, exotic beauty of the women of this region.

Jarabe Tapatio, commonly known as the Mexican Hat Dance, is the fast-paced, happy love song that is considered the national folk dance of Mexico.

Vocabulary

Ballet Folklorico- Used to signify groups that dance the folk dances of Mexico, as opposed to groups that dance classical ballet, a French invention.

Piñata- A traditional children's game. It is a paper-mache object in any shape desired, filled with goodies. The children take turns trying to hit it while blindfolded, until it breaks and releases the toys and candies.

Plano- A step, where the whole foot is suspended in the air and then hits the ground flat.

Tacon- The heel of the shoe. As a step, where the whole foot is in the air and only the front of the shoe hits the ground.

Gatillo- A step wherein the front part of the foot remains on the ground, only the heel lifts and then strikes the ground.

Sencillo- Where the foot hits the ground once.

Doble- Where the foot hits the ground twice.

Huehuetl- The big drum used by the Aztecs to give them rhythm.

Teponastle- A smaller percussion instrument used to give a higher pitched sound.

Guaje- A hallowed-out gourd filled with seeds used as a rattle. Every dancer carries one.

Penacho- The elaborate headpieces worn by the dancers.

