

Folklórico

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Behind the dance

The international popularity of ballet folklórico goes back to 1952 when dance pioneer Amalia Hernández founded Ballet Folklórico de México in Mexico City. She died in 2000, but the ensemble still performs throughout the world, and has appeared often in El Paso and Juárez. The June show in Juárez is part of a tour celebrating the 100th anniversary of Hernández's birth.

Hernandez talked about the power of folklórico to reporters during a 1991 tour:

"The power of the native dance, the power of these influences that have come into our days, this is what makes the folklore so rich. Not just steps, it all has a meaning," she said. "(The) sound of the bells, the masks, the dances in the churchyard, the social festivities—it's a beautiful environment, a beautiful feeling with all that happening. And the religious dances (have) tremendous devotion—the people are entranced, they are dancing in heaven."

One of the most intriguing aspects about folklórico dance are the stories behind each popular regional dance. Here are some more popular dances seen at many folklórico performances and the story behind a few of them:

- **La Danza del Venado.** The "Deer Dance" was created by Mexico's Yaqui Indians. It represents a deer hunt, with the main dancers in masks to represent the hunters, and antlers to depict the deer.
- **Jarabe Tapatio (Mexican Hat Dance).** The Tapatio is this courtship dance's most

popular version and originated in Guadalajara. In the most common version, a man expresses his love for a woman, who at first rejects him. He places his sombrero on the ground, and when she picks it up to place it on his head, their mutual romantic interests are confirmed. This is considered Mexico's official dance.

- **El Baile de Los Viejitos.** The Dance of the Little Old Men. This dance was first created to mock the Spanish upper class, but is now just done in good fun. The dancers wear exaggerated "old man" masks, and carry canes. They start by shakily hobbling around, the eventually burst out in energetic, coordinated moves.

- **Huapangos and Jarochos.** These dances from the Veracruz incorporate the rhythms and sounds of Spanish, African and Caribbean music. Dancers wear snowy white costumes, and their intense footwork often brings to mind that of flamenco dance. One of the most famous jarochos is "La Bamba," where dancers often tie large ribbons into bows with their feet as a symbol of their love.

- **Flor de Piña (Pineapple Dance).** The dance originated in the city of Tuxtepec in the state of Oaxaca. Female dancers stand in a line and move in sync with pineapples in their hands or on their shoulders. At the end of the dance, the pineapple, a symbol of life, is presented to a mother or other member of the audience.

- **Dance of the Machetes.** This dance comes from the state of Nayarit, which was once part of Jalisco. Men dance and clang together machetes to make a spark. Women dance through arches of the machetes. It represents a time when the Moors had conquered Spain, and influenced the region's music and dance.

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El Paso Scene accepts news items by mail (P.O. Box 13615, El Paso TX 79913) and email (news@epscene.com). There is no charge for news announcements. All items will be edited for brevity and style. News items should include an event name, description, time, date, place, sponsoring organization, information phone number and admission prices, if any. Please include a contact name and phone number. A "fill in the blanks" online press release form is at www.epscene.com/pressrelease.html

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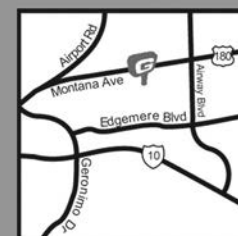
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