



The Folk Dancer

The Official Newsletter of the BYU Folk Dance Alumni



Fall 2024

Upcoming Events

World of Dance

- Sept. 19-20 @ 7:30pm
 - Marriott Center, Provo
 - arts.byu.edu
- Sept. 21 @ 2 pm & 7:30pm
 - Browning Center, Ogden
 - onstageogden.org

Fireside/Dance Workshop

- Save the Date - Oct 11
- Location & Time TBD
- Come hear Ed & Vickie Austin report on their mission to Paris, France!

Journey: Reflections on Tour

- Nov. 4: Caldwell, Idaho
- Nov. 5: Ontario, Oregon
- Nov. 6: Sisters, Oregon
- Nov. 7: The Dalles, Oregon
- Nov. 8: Corvallis, Oregon
- Nov. 9: Eugene, Oregon
- [Click here for Tickets](#)

Alumni REC Night

- Nov 6 @ 7-8:30 pm
- 270/278 Richards Building on BYU Campus

Christmas Around the World

- Dec. 6 @ 7:30pm
- Dec. 7 @ 2pm & 7:30pm
- Marriott Center, Provo, UT
- arts.byu.edu
- Tickets on sale Oct. 23

CAW Alumni Reception

- Dec. 7 @ 4pm
- Gordon B. Hinckley Alumni Center Assembly Hall



Waiting to start the parade in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico

A First in Mexico!

by Jeanette Geslison, IFDE Artistic Director

The Brigham Young University Folk Dance Ensemble and Mountain Strings represented the United States of America at Festival Azteca Vallarta in Mexico from April 27-May 7, 2024. This is the first time for IFDE at a Mexican folk festival!

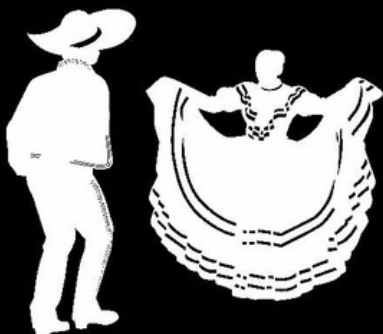
Festival Azteca Vallarta is in its 18th year as they share cultural dance and music heritage and promote cross-cultural friendship. We took 35 students and 4 leaders to the festival. We performed in many different locations while at the festival, such as Los Arcos del Malecon, with the Pacific Ocean as our backdrop in Puerto Vallarta. We also performed in Tomatlan, Ixtapa, and San Sebastian del Oeste. The festival hosted 6 international groups and 15 Mexican groups.

The students performed on main stages, walked in parades, did outreach performances at schools, taught American dances, participated in festival games, and enjoyed the beautiful area and people.



Festival group photo

As you folk dance alumni know, this kind of experience helps students gain a wider world perspective and helps them to understand and appreciate those who they meet. Student Emily Wall describes what she learned through this experience.



"It was such an enriching experience getting to perform at an International Folk Festival representing the USA. It's a lot of responsibility to represent your country. Festivals provide a unique opportunity to interact 1-on-1 with many people from different countries. Coming to these festivals has helped me come to better understand and admire other cultures as well as to reflect on what it means to be American (what constitutes American national identity?). I felt a sense of responsibility to represent my university and my country well."

Another student Austin Johnson stated,

"I felt my worldview expanding as I saw different countries proudly and joyfully sharing their culture through music and dance."

Dancer Brielle Bowden said,

"I absolutely loved getting to interact with the teams from other countries. We all shared a sense of camaraderie that I haven't found elsewhere. Showing interest in another team's culture and asking them about their traditions opened my eyes to new perspectives and new friendships."



BYU student Colton Fields trades hat with a Mexican dancer



Dancing Through the South



After the festival in Mexico, the ensemble flew to North Carolina where we embarked on a tour performing our international production *Journey: Reflections*. This 90-minute production features traditional dance and music from selected countries from around the world. Again, with 28 dancers and 7 musicians and a 6-member technical crew we presented vibrant choreographies from Poland, southern Brazil, Canada, Philippines, USA, India, Hungary, Slovakia, Tonga, Indonesia, and Ukraine.

We traveled throughout North and South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, and Florida. Besides performing our show, we did outreach performances at elementary, middle, and high schools. We also had the amazing opportunity to learn West African dance and drumming from the Uhuru dancers in Atlanta, GA.

It takes many hands to create a successful tour, and this year's students were remarkable in their teamwork and outreach as they interacted face to face with people they met before or after shows.



One student shared her thoughts about tour:

"Tour is one of the parts of my overall educational experience where I can directly see the influence of what I have learned. It provides a real-life application of the dances we are learning throughout the year. I remember watching teams from Serbia, Mexico, and Hungary dance at the festival and I was able to relate to it strongly because I've learned those dance styles myself. It's amazing that in a year you see the dancing you've learned pay off through connecting with other cultures, or in just performing ourselves and feeling the audience connect with our dances as well."

Brielle Bowden shared:

"One of my favorite parts of touring is seeing so many of you alumni in the audience at our concerts. I hope you will continue to come and bring your families and friends to see the BYU students perform. We love and appreciate any kind of involvement you alumni can offer as we come to your areas."

Come see the ensemble in *Journey: Reflections* Nov. 4-10, 2024 in Idaho and Oregon. Get tickets [here](#).



Bringing the Charleston to Life!

While on tour in the southern United States, the ensemble took the opportunity to film a traditional Charleston dance in the birthplace of the dance style... Charleston, South Carolina!

The film is directed and produced by Jeanette Geslison with choreography by Colleen West with Emily Hatch. The music was recorded by Mountain Strings and arranged by Mark Geslison.

Check it out on Youtube [here](#).

BYU Performance Groups Share the Gift of Dance with Outreach to Utah Elementary Schools

An excerpt from an article by Alex Marshall Hatch from the College of Fine Arts and Communications.

How does the BYU Department of Dance give back to the community and inspire the next generation? The answer comes through the department's outreach companies, Kinnect and Traditionz. These two companies spend winter semester rehearsing and preparing shows to perform at elementary schools and other locations across Utah during the spring semester. Each company chooses a theme and has individual goals and methods but they share a purpose: to inspire and uplift children through dance.



...Traditionz, led by Amy Jex, is performance based, with an educational narrative to accompany the dance and music. The company is a precursor to BYU's International Folk Dance Ensemble and is used to prepare students for international performance. This year, the company held 45 performances at elementary schools and one at a veterans center. Jex describes these performances as "mutually beneficial" for both the BYU performers and the audience members.



This year the Traditionz show was titled “Family Ties” and centered on how families celebrate with each other at holidays, weddings, etc. “Because our program is about cultures and people, it’s a good way to show elementary students things they might not have seen before,” Jex said. “It exposes them to people they might not have interfacing with or not appreciate. Dance is a fun introduction to somebody else’s life and their ways of moving and interacting.”

Jex recalled one elementary school principal who spoke to the students

after the show about seeing good in people who are different from themselves. The principal spoke about how the Traditionz performances can teach young children how to appreciate other people and cultures, especially in schools where there are multiple demographics.



The directors of both performing groups feel that the gospel and Jesus Christ are at the center of their process... Jex added, “We chose a hymn, “Go Forth with Faith,” that became our anthem. While [the theme of this year’s show] didn’t seem outwardly like we were preaching the gospel, inwardly we knew we felt that we had a message that was important—to strengthen families.”

...When asked about the impact of the performances, Jex recalls noticing a veteran singing along with the lullabies used during the traditional hula dance; he had tears streaming down his face. At schools, some children told the dancers that their grandparents would sing those lullabies to them. “[Experiences like this one] make it more real for my students,” said Jex. “They realize that these dances have meaning to people.”

The opportunity to engage with people in the community is what makes the performance companies worthwhile. “We’re always aiming to stand up for dance as an academic discipline and show its value in a university,” Jex said. “Having these experiential learning opportunities is what education is all about: taking what you learn in the classroom and going out into the world.”

Announcements

- We need your help! If you were on the 2003, 2016, 2018, or 2020 teams, we still need help to finish the histories! Please email gjrawlings@gmail.com to find out how to help.
- **Save the date!** Ed and Vickie Austin recently returned from their mission to Paris, France. They will be hosting a fireside and dance workshop on October 11 in the Richards building. More details to follow.
- The replenishment grant was awarded to Lauren Preece this semester. She dances on the Tier II ensemble.



What's New This Fall?

Guest Choreographers:

- **Greg and Sally Rawlings - IFDE**
 - August 2024
 - New Bollywood suite featuring a men's dance and a mixed dance.



- **Steven Weintraub - Tier II Ensemble**
 - September 2024
 - New Hannukah piece for CAW



Christmas Around the World Guest Performers

- Rhythm 'N' Soul, BYU's Africana performing team
- Rocky Mountain Express Cloggers



Alumni Giving Opportunity

Please consider donating to the IFDE endowment fund to help fund future tours.

- Click [here](#) to donate.
- Click "Search Other Funds" and enter the code **301501376**.
- This pulls up the endowment fund "International Folk Dance Ensemble Touring - BYU".
- Click "+Add", then enter an amount in the appropriate box at the top of the page and continue filling out the form.

Folk Dance Rewind

As part of our newsletter, we would like to highlight some fun moments from years past. This time we're revisiting 2007-2008.

The ensemble toured Idaho, Washington, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland, Belarus, & Ukraine



The group at Fisherman's Bastion in Budapest, Hungary



Rustin Van Katwyk, Dave Marriott, Justin Morgan, Steve Ord, Ben Watson, Lyndsey Wulfenstein, Jon Brame, and Colin Slade dance with members of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble in Budapest, Hungary



Performing In the town square of Plzen, Czech Republic



Plzen, Czech Republic



Posing at the castle in Prague, Czech Republic



Deborah Bailey



Amanda Dance Christensen with Polish dancers in Warsaw, Poland

Stay Connected

Visit our website at byufolkdancealumni.com to see Tour Histories, CAW programs and posters, newsletters, the archives, and more!

We also have a "[BYU Folk Dance Alumni](#)" Facebook group. Join us!

Stay up-to-date with the current team:

- [BYU Folk Dance](#) on Facebook
- [byu_folkdance](#) on Instagram
- [byufolkdance](#) on Tiktok
- [BYU International Folk Dance](#) on Youtube

Aren't getting our emails? Then please email alumni@byufolkdancealumni.com

