



The Folk Dancer



The Official Newsletter of the BYU Folk Dance Alumni

Spring 2024



¡Viva México!

Christmas Around the World: Celebration! 2023 featured an exciting Mexican collaboration.

By Jeanette Geslison, IFDE Artistic Director

The highlight of this year's concert was our cross-cultural collaboration with Ballet Folklórico from University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) and Living Legends (LL) Latin section with International Folk Dance Ensemble (IFDE). We were also fortunate to feature our Balinese guests Mr. Windha and Mrs. Warsiki and the BYU Gamelan Ensemble directed by Dr. Jeremy Grimshaw, and their students.

On Nov. 29th, 16 student performers with Ballet Folklórico and their artistic director Miguel Peña arrived in Provo. We collaborated to create three Mexican dance pieces/medleys.



Upcoming Performances

- **Journey: Reflections**
 - Feb. 7-9: Dance Performance Theater, Richards Building, BYU campus, Provo, UT
 - Find tickets [here](#).
- **Mid-semester Tour: Southern California**
 - Feb. 13: Irvine
 - Feb. 14: Escondido
 - Feb. 15: San Diego
 - Feb. 16: Ontario
 - Feb. 17: Thousand Oaks
 - Find tickets [here](#).
- **Winterfest: Journey: Reflections**
 - Mar. 16: Conference Center Theater, SLC, UT
 - Find tickets [here](#).
- **Journey: Reflections**
 - Mar. 23: Delta, UT
 - Find tickets [here](#).
- **Spring Festival of Nations**
 - Mar. 30: Wilkinson Center Ballroom, BYU Campus, Provo, UT
- **Traditionz Showcase**
 - April 17: 270/278 Richards Building, BYU campus, Provo, UT
- **Festival Azteca Vallarta**
 - April 27-May 7: Puerto Vallarta, Mexico
 - We will be representing the United States of America at this international festival.
- **Summer Tour: Southern States: May 7-22**
 - Greensborough, NC
 - Atlanta, GA
 - Nashville, TN
 - Birmingham, AL
 - Tallahassee, FL
 - And possibly South Carolina
 - Find tickets [here](#).





1. **Aztec Medley:** BYU Living Legends (15 dancers) and UTRGV (16 dancers).

2. **Appalachian:** BYU IFDE (16 dancers) and UTRGV (16 dancers) created a percussive cultural dance exchange of American clogging and Mexican zapateado footwork rhythms. This choreography was created in October of 2023 during Miguel’s initial visit to BYU. Miguel and I worked together with Greg and Maria Tucker to choreograph this piece with the BYU dancers. Upon his return to Texas Miguel worked with his UTRGV dancers to teach them their parts of the choreography.



3. **Fiesta en Jalisco:** Together the UTRGV (12 dancers), BYU IFDE (28 dancers), and BYU Living Legends (12 dancers) performed three different dances as part of this festive medley from Jalisco.

The purpose of this project was to provide a cross-cultural artistic experience working together with and learning from Miguel Peña. The goal was to expand cultural understanding and a broader appreciation amongst the student performers, faculty, and audience members.

Miguel’s expertise in Mexican dance and his professional skill level inspired the students. It raised their skill level as they gained a better understanding of the appropriate movement qualities and step work for the Mexican dance styles. During joint rehearsals and performances, they shared their specialized dance training and experience while creating friendships. Because very few cultural dance programs exist in north American higher educational institutions, our collaborative experience was unique, rare, and unifying for all who were involved in the experience.

The UTRGV dancers were highly enthusiastic about this experience. Many expressed that it had been the highlight of their year. Our students were all sad to see them leave at the end of their stay.

Here are a few student statements about their experience:

“Being a part of the percussive collaborative piece was amazing! The whole creative process was so cool to witness and be a part of. It first began when Miguel Peña came and the footwork for each respective style was created on the spot. It was cool to watch each director work off each other back and forth creating the exact same beats with two completely different footwork patterns and folk styles. Then Miguel went back home to Texas and we were left to work on our own, It was interesting to practice with such a large hole in the piece. It was hard to imagine what the final product would be and how it would work. Two days before Christmas Around the World, we had our first group rehearsal and I greatly anticipated what the final product would be. We pieced it together with the Ballet Folklorico dancers and it was magical! It fit together like a puzzle and the energy was felt throughout the whole stage. It was such a uniting piece and showed the magic of folk dance. We are so much more connected around the world than we think, and dance especially is a uniting factor! The collaboration with the UTRGV dancers was such a highlight of this year’s show!”

-Clara Smilanick



“I am so grateful for the opportunity we had to collaborate with dancers from UTRGV for this year’s Christmas Around the World. The highlight of this experience for me was creating our percussive footwork piece. Hearing it all come together and feeling the camaraderie grow was an incredible experience. The interaction on stage with the UTRGV dancers made this piece genuinely fun to perform. The dancers were so talented yet so humble, and I really enjoyed getting to know them! Experiences such as these have greatly enhanced my educational experience by providing a cultural lens through which I now see the world. I have noticed that lens informing my worldview in my study of neuroscience and my work in healthcare, allowing me to see the beauty of culture in many interactions.”

-Kenzie Bellon

New Choreographies for IFDE

Southern Brazilian Medley

We are so excited to have just finished a full week with guest choreographers Mateus and Priscila Arruda Antunes from Lages, Santa Catarina in southern Brazil. They have taught IFDE a medley of three traditional Brazilian dances: Tirana, Chula, and Rancheira. This will be the first time that IFDE will include Brazilian dances in our repertoire. Mateus and Priscila brought a new set of costumes with them that have been designed and constructed in Brazil. This new medley will be premiered in Journey: Reflections this year. This project was initiated through connections made by alumni folk dancer Kye Davis when he embarked on a research trip one year ago with four other folk dance students to study the traditional Gaucho Chula dance with Mateus Arruda in Brazil. Because of Kye’s newly developed friendship and language ability, the students have had the opportunity to learn directly from them. Kye is working as the IFDE rehearsal assistant this year and has helped host our guests. We are so excited about our connection with our new friends.



Oberek

A new Polish Oberek choreography by Jeanette Geslison was premiered in September 2023 in World of Dance. It will also be included in Journey: Reflections.





Canadian Step Dance

We hosted Gary Larsen (our own alumni) this December, just following Christmas Around the World. He came down here to Provo to set a new Canadian step dance piece that combines styles from Quebec, Ontario, and Cape Breton. We so excited to premiere this piece in Journey: Reflections.



Filipino Medley

Our own dance major and IFDE student Tana Bybee choreographed a beautiful new Filipino dance medley for Christmas Around the World. This was her senior capstone project. Part of this medley will also be included in Journey: Reflections: Bangko and Tinikling.

More photos from Christmas Around the World



Cultural Dance Area Master classes offered fall semester 2023:

- Mexican Dance by Miguel Peña
- Bhangra by Gurpreet Singh, Yuvraj Rathour, and Prince from the DC Metro Punjabi Academi
- Capoeira by Mestre Jamaika





Folk Dance Rewind

As part of our newsletter, we would like to highlight some fun moments from years past that can be found in our BYU Folk Dance Archives.

This time we're revisiting 1957-1958.



Helene Lysy in Ukrainian



Row 1 (left to right): Wanda Cluff, Virginia Rae Messervy, Student Co-ordinator; Mary Bee Jensen, Faculty Sponsor; Donna Nicholson, Marilyn Robertson. Row 2: Carol Meservy, J. Bascaglia, Darlene Carpenter, Roy Griffiths, Judy Peterson, Bob Thorson, Helene Lysy. Row 3: Duane Young, Blaine Kelly, Anna Lee Bartholomew, Bob Welton, Afton Kingsford, Gary Bowen, DeAnne Dorny, Roy Elmer, Gloria Grimmert, Vernon Ingham, LuAnn Duffin, Kloyd Donaldson, Linda Callister, Noreen Hansen, Lyman Durfee, Student Co-ordinator; David Noyes.

Folk Dance Club Photograph



Row 1: Carol Meservy, Helene Lysy, De Anne Dorny, Virginia Rae Meservy, Mary Bee Jensen
Row 2: Bob Clark, Bob Welton, DeWayne Young, Roy Elmer



Boarding the bus for mid-semester tour to Montana: Afton Kingsford, Wanda Cluff, Linda Callister, Marilyn Robertson, Donna Nicholson, LuAnn Duffin, Judy Peterson, Gloria Grimmert, Helene Lysy, Darlene Carpenter, Carol Meservy, Virginia Rae Meservy, and others.

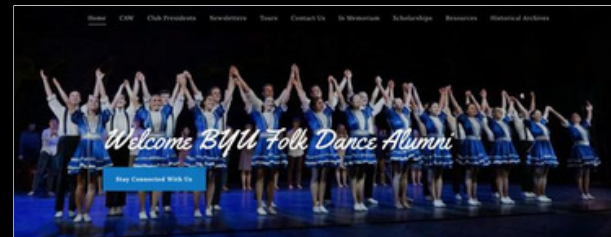
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