

**Brigham Young University**  
**International Folk Dance Ensemble**  
**Tour History**  
**2024**

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# **Mid-Semester Tour**

**Southern California**

**“Journey: Reflection”**

**Feb. 12-18, 2024**

# Personnel List

## **Tour Manager:**

Stacey Christensen

## **Artistic Director:**

Jeanette Geslison

## **Dancers:**

Tori Allen  
McKenzie Bellon  
Brielle Bowden  
Tana Bybee  
Abby Collins  
Amy Hawkes  
Jillian Iverson  
Jade Madison  
Makeila Morgan  
Clara Smilanick  
Tori Stone  
Bailey Tucker  
Carly Wanlass  
Janelle Wilson

Tanner Birtcher  
David Chandler  
Dawson Collins  
Remington Comp  
Nate Cox  
Braden Duke  
Colton Fields  
Crozier Fitzgerald  
Levi Hancock  
Dallin Lyon  
Matthew Peterson  
Isaac Schaat  
Efrain Villalobos  
Anthony Xanthos

## **Tech Crew:**

Walter Iverson  
Renée Howard  
Valeria Peynado  
Elizabeth Padgett  
Hannah Tran

## **Musicians:**

Director: Mark Geslison  
Ellie Geslison  
Christina Iverson  
Austin Johnson

Arthur Prusso  
Emily Wall  
Tyler Anderson  
Madeline Charles

# Journey Set List

## JOURNEY 2024

Opener: Reflections

Poland: Oberek

Oberek and Kujawiak are two of Poland's five national dances. Oberek is a vibrant and exciting couple dance which is balanced here with the romantic Kujawiak couple dance.

*Choreography:* Jeanette Geslison

*Music:* "Poznanski Oberek" and "Wesele w Jerioranach," and "Wczesne popołudnie" (traditional); performed by *Mountain Strings*

Brazil: Bailares Gaúchos

This exciting medley of Brazilian Gaucho dances begins with Tirana do Lenço, a courtship dance originally from 18th century Spain, that expresses a lady's gradual acceptance of her suitor's romantic advances. After 100 years in South America, the Brazilian Tirana do Lenço became a tradition unto itself, characterized by a taste for accordion music and intricate footwork. This is followed by a men's chula, a percussive dance performed over a spear that arose from competitions between cattle drivers on the road from Rio Grande do Sul to São Paulo. The medley concludes with the cheerful Rancheiro de Carreirinha, a 19th century social dance that grew from the European waltz and mazurka and was infused with exciting Brazilian rhythms.

*Choreography:* Mateus Arruda Antunes

*Music:* (traditional)

USA: Orphan Girl

*Music:* "Orphan Girl" (Gillian Welch); performed by *Mountain Strings*

*Musical Arrangement:* Mark Geslison and *Mountain Strings*

Canada: Attache ta Tuque!

Using a variety of styles of step dancing from Eastern Canada (Ottawa Valley, Cape Breton and Quebecois styles), this is a lively fusion of historical and contemporary music and dance expressions reveling in complexity and playfulness.

*Choreography:* Gary Larsen

*Music:* "Shoot the Moon" (Ten Strings and a Goad Skin); performed by *Mountain Strings*

*Musical Arrangement: Mark Geslison*

Philippines: Mabuhay!

“Mabuhay,” a Filipino greeting, is usually expressed as “mabuhay!” meaning “to live!” or “live!” or “long live.” In this medley we present two traditional Filipino dances. First *Sayaw Sa Bangko*, where dancers must use good skill and balance while performing exciting movement on narrow benches. This is followed by the national dance of the Philippines, *Tinikling*, where dancers imitate the movement of the Tikling bird as they dance between bamboo sticks. Here is to life–Mabuhay!

*Choreography: Tana Bybee*

Music: “Sayaw Sa Bangko” (traditional), recorded by RCLA; and “Tinikling” (traditional)

USA: Dancin’ in the Country

Showcasing the current “Power Tap” Style of American Clogging mixed with Traditional figures and footwork, ending with a celebration of the fun and excitement that clogging brings.

*Choreography: Greg & Maria Tucker*

Music: “Dancin’ in the Country” (Tyler Hubbard); “Blues Berry Hill” (Nitty Gritty Dirt Band), and “Cuckoo’s Nest” (traditional); performed by Mountain Strings

*Musical Arrangement: Mark Geslison*

Canada: Volcanic Jig

This Cape Breton fiddle piece conveys it’s traditional music style with vibrancy and excitement.

Music: “Volcanic Jig” (Natalie MacMaster); performed by Mountain Strings

*Musical Arrangement: Mark Geslison and Mountain Strings*

India: Pushpanjali

“Pushpanjali” is a traditional invocatory piece in bharatanatyam style, the oldest classical dance form from the southern part of India. The word pushpanjali literally means “offering flowers to the almighty.” More than 2,000 years old, this exquisite dance form combines facial expression, subtle eye movements, hand gestures, and explosive rhythmic footwork to integrate mind, body, and spirit. Most classical dance forms are based on Hindu mythological stories.

*Choreography: Divya Narayanan*

Music: “The Chase,” by Amit Heri and Mani Sharma; recorded by Gayathri; “Dance like a Man,” by Ganesh and Kumaresh; recorded by Ganesh and Kumares

India: Bhangra

Traditionally a men’s Punjabi harvest dance accompanied by the infectious rhythm of the dhol drum, bhangra is now danced at celebrations, performances, and competitions worldwide. This work includes the traditional wooden sapp.

*Choreography: Greg and Sally Rawlings*

*Music: “Bhangra” (Gypsy Aujla), recorded by Saini Surinder*

India: Discowale

Bollywood, the famed film industry based in Mumbai, India, is characterized by elaborate music numbers, love triangles, and melodrama. This dance style combines traditional Indian dance with Western movement such as hip-hop.

*Choreography: Greg Rawlings and Sally Rawlings*

*Music: “Discowale Khisko: by Pritam Chakraborty; recorded by Krishnakumar Kunnath, Sunidhi Chauhan, and Rana Mazumder*

## MUSICAL INTERLUDE

Hungary: Dulandlé

In Kalotaszeg, Transylvania, a dulandlé was placed on the head of the new wife until the birth of the first child. This is a fine white veil with embroidery around the edges. This choreographic work portrays the emotional state of a young girl preparing for marriage, accompanied by the beautiful and distinct dances of the Kalotaszeg region. The spectacular men's dance—the competitive Legényes, often considered in Hungary as the “King of Dances”—is accompanied by two types of couples' dances: the csárdás, which is perhaps the quintessential Hungarian couple dance, and quick csárdás (szapora), that is manifest in its speed and virtuosity.

*Choreography: Juhász Zsolt*

*Music: Traditional; recorded by Göncöl band*

*Music Arrangement: Kelemen László*

Slovak Republic: Lúčnica

“Forever Young,” best describes this set of two dances from Slovakia: *Verbunk & Syracovy*. It also is the name of the *Slovak National Folklore Ballet*, our friends in Bratislava.

*Choreography: Ervin Varga*

*Re-staging: Jeanette Geslison*

*Music: Traditional*

*Musical Arrangement: Peter Jantosciak, performed by Mountain Strings*

Tonga: 'Upē 'O Siu'ilikutapu

The tau'olunga, a traditional Tongan dance still performed today, can be presented at any special occasion. Most often performed by an individual young woman or a small group of girls, the dance consists of hand movements which interpret the meaning of the song. “‘Upē ‘O Siu'ilikutapu” is a well-known lullaby that was composed by the late Queen Salote Tupou III and written to welcome the newly born Princess Mele Siu'ilikutapu. The Princess became well

known for being the first female elected as a Member of Parliament in Tonga. With her recent passing, "Upē 'O Siu'ilikutapu" has grown to be even more popular. The Tongan people dance to this song in memory of Princess Siu'ilikutapu, as she will always be endeared for her life of devotion.

*Choreography: Valeti Mapuna a Vaiola Sekona*

*Music: "Upē 'O Siu'ilikutapu", recorded by Folau*

*Soloist: Makaila Latapu Morgan*

Indonesia: Saman

This dance form originates from the Gayo people of Aceh Province in northern Sumatra. Traditionally performed for national or religious celebrations, these dances unify villages. The Saman dance tradition includes live singing by the performers, with lyrics that tell folktales to give counsel or offer spiritual enlightenment. Often referred to as the “dance of a thousand hands,” the dancers sit in a long line and produce shifting rhythms with their hands.

*Choreography: Rustin Van Katwyk*

*Music: Hai Jala and Hayla Hotsa, (traditional); with drums by Tyler Anderson & Arthur Prusso.*

USA: Every Which-A-Way

*Music: “Every Which-A-Way” (Aubrey W. “Moon” Mullican); performed by Mountain Strings*

*Musical Arrangement: The Quebe Sisters, Mark Geslison & Mountain Strings*

USA: The Breakaway Rag

A Charleston-style tap dance.

*Choreography: Dawson & Abby Collins, and Jacob Madsen*

*Music: “Ain’t She Sweet” (Milton Ager & Jack Yellen); performed by Mountain Strings*

*Musical Arrangement: Mark Geslison*

*Soloists: Dawson & Abby Collins*

USA: Charleston

The Charleston dance craze of the 1920s was popularized by the rhythms of James P. Johnson’s tune “The Charleston.” It was made popular in Harlem and on stages worldwide.

*Choreography: Colleen West with Emily Hatch*

*Music: “Five Foot Two,” (Ray Henderson); performed by Mountain Strings*

*Musical Arrangement: Mark Geslison*

Ukraine: Ukraine, My Ukraine

*Music: Odessa Mamma & Milenkiy Druzhocek, performed by Mountain Strings*



*Musical Arrangement:* Dean Marshall, Nate Olson & Mark Geslison

Ireland: Irish Blessing

*Music:* Geoff Groberg; performed by Mountain Strings and dancers

*Lyrics:* Traditional

Ukraine: Hopak

Recognized as the national dance of Ukraine, Hopak was performed exclusively by men in the 15th and 16th centuries during the famous Cossack period. By the 19th century, women had become a regular part of the dance, adding to the vivacious spirit of this Ukrainian hallmark.

*Choreography:* Colleen West, Jeanette Geslison, with Edwin G. Austin, Jr.

*Music:* Traditional, performed by the Intermountain Symphony Orchestra

*Musical Arrangement:* Tyler Castleton, Daniel Lee

# Tour Itinerary

<b>Monday, Feb 12th</b>	<b>Depart Provo. Travel to Irvine, CA</b>	
<b>Hotel:</b> Best Western Plus Irvine Spectrum Hotel (23192 Lake Center Dr, Lake Forest, CA 92630)		
<b>6 Female Triple Rooms</b>	<b>6 Male Triple Rooms</b>	<b>5 Single King Rooms</b>

8:30 am Meet at RB, load bus (order breakfast, have it delivered before departure)  
 9:00 am Depart for Cedar City (3 hours/ 205 miles)  
 12:00 pm Bathroom break in Cedar City  
 12:30 pm Lunch in Cedar City, strip of restaurants on 200 north  
 1:30 pm Depart for Primm, (3 hours 10 mins /217 miles until break)  
 Primm Outlet Malls, NV 32100 S Las Vegas Blvd, Primm, NV 89019

-----TIME CHANGE PACIFIC TIME ZONE-----

3:45 pm Bathroom break in Primm  
 4:15 pm Depart for Victorville, Mariposa Rd. (2 hr. 10 min/145 miles)  
 6:30 pm Arrive in Victorville  
 6:45 pm Dinner, bunch of restaurants along Mariposa Rd. (including Chick-fil-A),  
 bathroom breaks  
 7:45 pm Depart for hotel (1 hours 40 mins/80 miles)  
 23192 Lake Center Dr, Lake Forest, CA 92630  
 9:30 pm Arrive at hotel, check-in  
 10:00 pm Go to bed

<b>Tuesday, Feb 13th</b>	<b>Travel to Irvine, CA</b>	
<b>Hotel:</b> Best Western Plus Irvine Spectrum Hotel (23192 Lake Center Dr, Lake Forest, CA 92630)		
<b>Venue:</b> Irvine Barclay Theatre (4242 Campus Dr, Orange County, CA 92612)		
<b>6 Female Triple Rooms</b>	<b>6 Male Triple Rooms</b>	<b>5 Single King Rooms</b>

8:30 am Breakfast at hotel  
 9:00 am Free time (possible beach time)  
 11:30 am Depart for Irvine Barclay Theatre  
 4242 Campus Dr, Orange County, CA 92612

12:00 pm Lunch – at venue  
 1:00 pm Arrive/load in at venue  
 4:30 pm Dinner - at venue  
 5:30 pm Community reception (some dancers dressed up to meet and greet).  
 7:00 pm Performance[SC1]  
 9:30 pm Performance ends, meet and greet, strike  
 Post-performance snack  
 10:00 pm Depart for hotel

<b>Wednesday, Feb 14th</b>		<b>Depart Irvine, CA. Travel to Escondido.</b>	
<b>Hotel:</b> [SC2] Springhill Suites Escondido (200 La Terraza Blvd, Escondido, CA 92025)			
<b>Venue:</b> California Center for the Arts (340 N Escondido Blvd, Escondido, CA 92025)			
<b>9 Female Double Rooms</b>		<b>9 Male Double Rooms</b>	<b>5 Single King Rooms</b>

8:00 am Breakfast at hotel (breakfast closes at 9)  
 8:45 am Meet in lobby for departure  
 9:00 am Depart to Classical Academy Middle School (1 hr 25 min/65.2 miles)  
 144 W Woodward Ave, Escondido, CA 92025  
 10:30 am Arrive at Classical Academy Middle School  
 11:00 am Outreach at Classical Academy Middle School  
 12:15 pm Walk to venue  
 12:30 am Lunch – at venue  
 1:00 pm Load in California Center for the Arts  
 340 N Escondido Blvd, Escondido, CA 92025  
 4:30 pm Dinner - at venue  
 7:00 pm Performance  
 9:30 pm Performance ends, meet and greet, strike  
 Post-performance snack  
 10:00 pm Depart for hotel

<b>Thursday, Feb 15th</b>		<b>Depart Escondido. Travel to San Diego, CA.</b>	
<b>Hotel:</b> Springhill Suites San Diego (900 Bayfront Court, San Diego, CA 92101)			
<b>Venue:</b> The Balboa Theatre (868 Fourth Ave, San Diego, CA 92101)			
<b>9 Female Double Rooms</b>		<b>9 Male Double Rooms</b>	<b>5 Single King Rooms</b>

8:30 am Breakfast at hotel (breakfast closes at 9)  
 9:00 am Meet in lobby  
 9:30 am Depart for Mormon Battalion Historic Site (35 minutes/29.3 miles)  
 2510 Juan St, San Diego, CA 92110  
 9:50 am Arrive at Mormon Battalion Historic Site  
 12:00 pm Lunch – at Mormon Battalion Historic Site  
 12:30 pm Depart to San Diego Balboa Theatre (23 min/13.7 miles)  
 868 Fourth Ave, San Diego, CA 92101  
 1:00 pm Load in  
 4:30 pm Dinner - at venue  
 7:30 pm Performance  
 9:30 pm Performance ends, meet and greet, strike  
 Post-performance snack  
 10:00 pm Depart for hotel

<b>Friday, Feb 16th</b>	<b>Depart San Diego, CA. Travel to Ontario, CA</b>	
<b>Hotel: Springhill Suites Ontario (3595 E Guasti Rd)</b>		
<b>Venue: Chaffey High Auditorium (Gardiner W. Springs Auditorium, 1245 N Euclid Ave, Ontario, CA 91762)</b>		
<b>6 Female Triple Rooms</b>	<b>6 Male Triple Rooms</b>	<b>5 Single King Rooms</b>

8:30 am Breakfast at hotel (breakfast closes at 9)  
 9:00 am Meet in lobby for departure  
 9:15 am  
 Depart to Ontario (2 hours 30 minutes/112 miles) [AF3]  
 Chaffey High School Gardiner W. Springs Auditorium, 1245 N Euclid  
 Ave, Ontario, CA 91762  
 12:00 pm Lunch – possibly at stake center  
 1:00 pm Load in  
 1:30 pm Outreach with Chaffey High Folklorico team  
 3:30 pm Outreach ends  
 4:30 pm Dinner - at venue  
 5:30 pm Community reception (a few dancers in costume to meet and greet)  
 7:00 am Performance  
 9:30 pm Performance ends, meet and greet, strike  
 Post-performance snack  
 10:00 pm Depart for hotel

<b>Saturday, Feb 17th</b>		<b>Depart Ontario, CA. Travel to Thousand Oaks, CA.</b>	
<b>Hotel:[AF4] Best Western Plus Thousand Oaks (75 W. Thousand Oaks Blvd, Thousand Oaks, CA 91360)</b>			
<b>Venue: Fred Kavli Theatre (2100 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd, Thousand Oaks, CA 91362)</b>			
<b>6 Female Triple Rooms</b>		<b>6 Male Triple Rooms</b>	<b>5 Single King Rooms</b>

8:00 am Breakfast at hotel (breakfast closes at 9)  
8:45 am Meet in lobby for departure  
9:00 am Depart City of Hope (TBD/? miles)  
9:30 am Possible visit to City of Hope  
11:00 am Depart for Thousand Oaks (1.5 hr/ 76.5 mi)  
12:30 pm Lunch - possibly at stake center  
1:00 pm Load in  
4:30 pm Dinner - at venue  
5:30 pm VIP Reception (a few dancers in costume to meet and greet)  
7:00 pm Performance  
9:30 pm Performance ends, meet and greet, strike  
Post-performance snack  
10:00 pm Depart for hotel

<b>Sunday, Feb 18th</b>		<b>Travel home to BYU</b>	
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7:00 am Breakfast at hotel  
7:45 am Meet in lobby for departure  
8:00 am Depart for home (10 hours/681 miles)  
11:30 am Break in Baker  
1:30 pm Lunch in Vegas  
3:30 pm Depart for Provo  
TIME CHANGE MOVE FORWARD ONE HOUR  
7:30 pm Dinner in Fillmore  
8:30 pm Depart for Provo  
10:00 pm Arrive @ BYU RB

# Daily Details

<https://youtu.be/mcW-YO8Hzis>

## Mon, Feb 12

We started the day early at the RB in Provo. We ate an incredible breakfast of kolaches. We then embarked on a three hour bus ride to Cedar City where we took a break and ate lunch. Jimmy John's and other places were included.

We then drove through Las Vegas where the Super Bowl was recently held. To our amazement, there was no traffic! We did not see Taylor Swift but we did see the new sphere theater. We then finished driving through Vegas and stopped at Primm Nevada outlets for a quick bathroom trip. We admired the artwork in the mostly abandoned mall. Then, we



finished driving to Irvine California and had tasty dinners at chick fil a and steak and shake. Tanner predicted the right time that the group would arrive in Irvine and for that, he won a lava lamp. To end the night, team members played card games!

## Tues, Feb 13

We started Tuesday with a yummy breakfast at Best Western, our hotel. Then, a small group of the team played at Newport beach, walked the pier and shops along the shore. The weather was incredibly warm compared to Utah and we danced everywhere we went. When the small group arrived back at the hotel, we prepared to leave for the theater. Sadly, we were informed that



Braden and Jade Duke would not be joining us because of a sickness they acquired the night before! As performers, you learn to make adjustments and not give up when hard things appear. We prayed for their quick recovery and made plans to re block the whole show. Once we

arrived at the beautiful 755 seat theater, we re blocked the show. It was a tender mercy from the Lord that no major changes were required and we successfully performed our show that night. After the show, a small group of dancers met with the attendees and received wonderful comments on the performance. It is also significant to note that many folk dancers and non members of the church were there in attendance beforehand to dance some recreational folk dances.

### **Wed, Feb 14**

We left for escondido in the morning. It was beautiful, warm, and sunny. We arrived at classical academy middle school, a grade 7-8 public charter school. We performed for the entire student body. At first, it appeared as if the students thought we were kind of lame, but by the end of the show, students were smiling, clapping, and a few were even dancing with us. A tender mercy of the day was getting the sound to work after it went out during the men's bhangra dance.



After the performance, we walked to the California Center for the Arts theater. The theater was stunning. It had loges for more privacy and flexible viewing and the decorations around the theater were gorgeous. We ate a wonderful lunch from members of the area including a Filipino lady, Alex, who was so excited to meet Tana :). She gave us yummy filipino food and watched our performance that night. She was enthralled by the Tinikiling and Bangko dances.

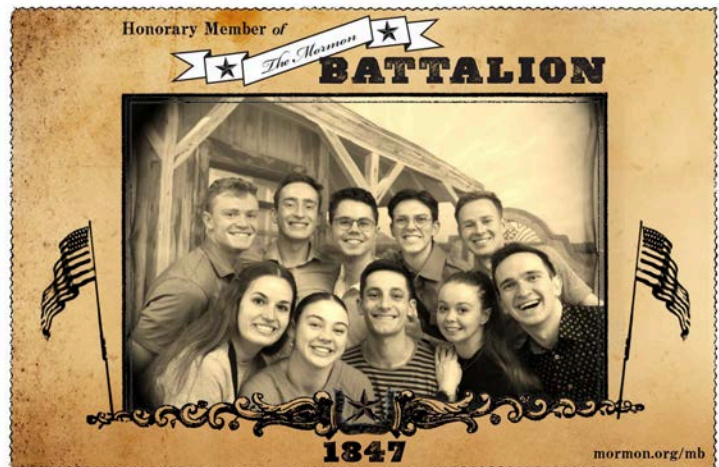
In addition to the wonderful performance, Jade and Braden were blessed with enabled strength to dance that night.

### **Thurs, Feb 15**

San Diego was incredible! Beautiful blue skies and with light wind. We started the day at the Mormon Battalion site. We were given a lovely tour by sister missionaries and learned about the Saints in the battalion. They sacrificed so much for the church and contributed much to the bringing forth of the Salt Lake City Saints. We were touched and uplifted to hear their stories.

After the historic site, we traveled to the Balboa theater downtown, San Diego. It was an older theater with past performers who performed there like John Legend.

The show went really well although the stage was small. We were worried about quick changes because of the changing rooms downstairs but thanks be to God, we made this quick changes.



The highlight of the spectators was meeting a Ukrainian couple that were overly joyed to watch Hopak.

### **Fri, Feb 16**

Travels to chaffey high school for an outreach with the folkloric dancers. One interesting thing to note is that the majority of the student body are minorities and come from economically disadvantaged families. Our hearts were filled with joy to see the high school students dance and share some of their Hispanic culture/dance with us.



The theater that we performed in that night was over 100 years old. Back in the day, Elvis Presley, Marilyn Monroe, and the Von Trapp family performed there. Now the theater is largely renovated.

### **Sat, Feb 17**

For our final day of performances, we visited a senior living home near Thousand Oaks, California. It was gratifying to get to know them. One lady in attendance was 100 years old :). We celebrated life with them by dancing Charleston, Verbunk, and listening to folk tunes by MS.





That night, we performed at the Fred Kalvi theater. At the VIP reception, we met with consulates from Hungary and other government officials. The show went really well and we were blessed with a large stage.

**Sun, Feb 18**

For our travel day back to Provo, we listened to power point presentations by incredible presenters like Abby and Dawson, Bailey Tucker, Levi, Carly and Tana, Madeline, many more, and Jeanette. It was heart warming to compliment everyone and get to know everyone better. What a memorable trip 🌞



# Individual Memories and Quotes

**Tues, Feb 13**

The sweetest old man came up to Liz and me and thanked us for doing the behind the scenes work :)

- Valeria

I met some amazing alumni before the show while I was doing merch and it was so awesome to see their love for folk dance before the show :)

- Tana

I found out my dad's MTC companion came to the show! It's a small world!

- Levi

A random old lady said "I think I need knee replacement after just watching you guys tonight!"

- Isaac

Got a blessing from Levi and Isaac because Braden and I were feeling sick– God is good!

- Jade

Makeila made some super funny jokes yesterday and we were laughing a lot! I just think she's the best, and I love how positive and helpful everyone on the team is.

- Carly

One of the hotel employees saw our warmups and looked us up– he got so excited! I got to speak to him in Spanish for a few minutes!

- Anthony

After the show Tana and I went out to help with merchandise and we saw a group of 4 middle-aged men doing the 4 man butterfly and doing some pull-backs. We went to say hi and mentioned that we loved watching them dance! They said they were inspired by the show and wanted to folk dance again!

- Jillian

This morning, Dallin and I walked along Newport Beach, picked up trash, and sang to strangers. Good morning. After the show, I took pictures with SO many people. A woman from Ukraine said that we were very authentic and reminded her of home. That was very sweet!

- Amy

I loved going to the beach this morning and getting yummy pastries on the boardwalk. After the show, I got to meet lots of alumni and got to reconnect with Matthew (an alumni from '08) who now works as a choreographer for Disneyland and he was so complimentary of the show. Such an amazing audience!

- Bailey

Started the morning by going to the beach with some of the team. It was incredible! The water, sand, and waves were rejuvenating. We took pictures and we were all smiles.

- Tanner

There was a cute little family at the beach surrounded by seagulls because they were feeding them bread. The kids were giggling so hard. There were easily 30+ seagulls. I loved seeing the pure joy on their faces. The show went pretty well considering all the changes :)

- Dallin

The show was very chaotic. But one of my favorite parts of it was that the team worked really hard to be supportive and helpful in all capacities. I think that it really brought the team together.

- Janelle

I loved meeting with the audience after the show. A cute little girl came up to me and said "I want to grow up and be just like you."

- Clara

Jade and Braden were sick, so we had to restructure the show, lots of laughs! Just feeling grateful for a fun team :)

- Makeila

Islamic prayer to start the show. "Music and dances are beautiful. All things beautiful come from God." Great opening show. Folk Dance alumni in the audience: Sarah, Morgan, and Family 2007, Matt, Thomas, 2008 traditions, Matthew, 2007, Javier Masego, 2010, percussionist, and his three daughters, Melanie, Marshall, and parents, 1995. Braeden and Jade were so sick. Spent the afternoon re-blocking the entire show. SoCal Folkdance Federation danced in Square prior to our show. Many came. A woman sent a message to Ed Austin, our former Director "went to the Folk dance show last night. It was outstanding. I was so impressed and actually exhausted at the end of the program."

- Jeanette

### **Wed, Feb 14**

Not very often that a driver puts down his thoughts. I love driving the performing arts groups around. I love the music, the smiles, the costumes, and of course the best young people in the world. Nothing can compare to the energy that you bring, to the excitement for the art of dance! From the bottom of an old man's heart, thank you for being a "light unto the world."

- Michael Sullivan (the best bus driver)

Our Escondido performance was attended by Wanda Cluff Frances who danced in the original group in 1958! She lost her husband recently and her children decided to take her to a folk dance show on Valentine's because her anniversary is in February. She shared that they only used to have one costume!

- Stacy Christensen

Dear Folk Dancers, Thank you so much for your inspiring, fun and wonderful show. Your energy and grace, harmony and beauty was amazing! My Mom was so excited to enjoy your show and relive in part her years of dancing with the group 67 years ago. After your show she was retelling many of the fun and silly times from her days. Dancing has been a fun part of her life ever since. When near the end of the show you sang the Irish Blessing Song, our eyes filled

with tears and our hearts burst with joy. As I said, we lost our 87 year old Dad to cancer last summer, and this is our first Valentine's Day without him. The Irish Blessing was my father's favorite toast message that we would repeat together at all family gatherings. We still repeat it to remember him, and we deeply felt the love of our father from you all and from our Father in Heaven as you sang that blessing last evening. Thank you for including that number in the performance. It was like a God wink from Dad. God bless you in all of your performances as the road rises up to meet your footsteps going forward with love and joy. Love always,

- Brother Jimmy Frandsen

I spoke to a little boy from the outreach and he said he was so happy we came. He tap dances and loves it, but was considering dropping his competition team until he saw the folk dance team. He said that now he knows where he wants to go to college! Also, the tomato soup brought me back to life after freezing in the house :)

- Liz

My skirt and ribbons fell off during Hopak... right in front and center. Oh well! That was unfortunate. Hannah Kooyman and her family came and were so supportive! I also met a woman from Ukraine who was so gracious. She said she was crying during Hopak :)

- Bailey

When we went out to meet people after the show everyone was so nice! We met a lady from Ukraine who loved Hopak! We also went outside and explored the park by the theatre for a while. It was awesome to get some sun :) While Anthony and I were posing with a lady for a picture, a guy said "Hey it's a ham sandwich with ham in the middle" and roasted the lady.

- Carly

First off, not a bad show considering I was coming off of a bug! Grateful for it! During Hopak though I saw the little Filipino lady that made us lunch passed out in the front row... Kinda crazy... and by passed out I mean she fainted and not just asleep haha.

- Jade

I found a family after the show that was in my ward when I was a toddler. Their son was one of my best friends. I had no idea they were coming! Kinda fun!

- Levi

Getting to perform for all the kids at the outreach was so fun, especially because it was a school for the performing arts. These kids are involved in this world every day. It was fun to see them inspired and have them come up to us after the show, talking to adults is intimidating!

- Madeline

I got to impromptu speak at the outreach! It was so fun, and the kids seemed to really open up as I tried to involve them more. They loved the last two dances! The theater was gorgeous and freezing, but it was fun to talk to the audience members afterwards. A cute old man came up and told me that all my costume changes were so impressive and the multicolored beaded dress I wore looked great on me. I have no idea what he was talking about since I have no costume changes!

- Christina

I loved seeing my best friend's parents yesterday! They are folk alumni and I danced with they daughter on Legends. They always came to our shows and tours so it was lovely seeing them! I've enjoyed meeting several audience members from different cultures. We as IFDE members celebrate and honor our brothers and sisters no matter where they are from.

- Efrain

I met Hannah's Hungarian neighbors and felt so special when they complimented our Kolotaszegi dance.

- Janelle

At lunch I got to know our bus driver Mike a bit better. He's lived a really eventful life. He's even worked in tech for theatre.

- Renee

The theatre was FREEZING! We were all wearing sweatshirts the whole time. But it was beautiful and very spacious. My favorite part was lunch time. The food was prepared by the sweetest Filipino lady and it tasted SO good. I think she loved the show as much as we loved the food because she was raving about it to us after we finished. Wonderful times in Escondido :)

- Dallin

I interacted with some older couple after the show and they said that it was one of their favorite shows they had ever seen! They wanted to get up there and dance with us!

- Jillian

900 in the audience. Beautiful large theater. Big stage. Very cold! Great performance. Lauren Pipesato, former dancer in 2012, was there. Colton's cousin. What a fun connection. Lauren brought her young women's group. So fun to see her. Met Wanda Clough, 89, who danced in the first Folkdance group in 1956 with Mary B Jensen she loved the show. She used to dance the Russian hopak when she danced, and Polish and Hungarian. She said they had one costume and they wore it for everything. A three-tiered skirt. Met David Odenwalder. Dance with Folk Dance in 1973. He still folk dances locally and teaches Folk Dance. So fun to meet him and learn that he is still involved. Actively in Folkdance. Our Filipino salad lady loved our show. "When you performed each culture everyone else represented so authentically." Folkdance alumni in the audience: Danae and Winston Elton, who danced in 1995 their daughter Cheyenne danced in Folk dance Traditionz and living legends. My favorite moments on this year show: Remy's swagger in the opener, Tana, the new Canadian step dance, the Filipino suite, Nate's cowboy transition, Pushpanjali beginning with the balance on one leg, two parts in Dulandle: when the three women walk to the back, and the exit. Those two moments are special because they communicate tradition so beautifully. In Syracovy, the "2", in Charleston, Arthur's bass solo, and an Irish blessing, the mirror and door moment with Abby and Makeila.

- Jeanette

### **Thurs, Feb 15**

Yesterday was crazy! We got to the venue and realized how crazy the show was going to be with our dressing rooms being downstairs! We took a walk to the USS Midway which was so cool—this city is beautiful. We ended up having a great show and made all of our changes even with the stairs. I am so proud of everyone, I love this team!!

- Carly

I was happy to find in the audience two senior couple missionaries that I knew from my mission in San Antonio! It's amazing to see the connections we are making at these shows!

- Levi

So glad no one tripped while running up and down the stairs! Tana was so positive the whole time saying that "the Lord will provide and protect us." One sweet woman on her way out said, "That was better than Shen Yun!"

- Jillian

My new family came to the show and absolutely loved it! My sister-in-law made cookies that were so cute and folk dance themed! It was a crazy show but we did it! Grateful for the Christian leader who prayed for us before the show!

- Jade

Last night, some of us went and played at a park close to the hotel. Even though we had just performed an exhausting show, we got a new burst of energy and had a really good time just messing around on the park equipment. We also passed by a pirate ship and took pictures in front of it!

- David

Tanner and I were walking down the street and a lady with a dog was mid-crosswalk when her dog decided to go potty. The walk signal turned red, the lady wasn't about to leave the mess on the road, so she picked it up with a bag while the cars waited for her to be done so they could move. It was really funny to watch, but honestly it took a lot of integrity on the lady's part. It was also cool to get to know Tanner a little bit better on this walk. The show was insane because there was no space to change, but it was honestly blessed from on high, because not many people missed their quick changes. It was definitely the cleanest show yet, for me at least. What a great day in San Diego!

- Dallin

After the show, me and Emily went out into the lobby to talk to people and so many of them came up to us to say how much they loved the band. We also met a Ukrainian woman who loved the band's Ukrainian number. We also met a family from Slovakia! They loved the show



and even said that they could understand the Slovakian words that me and Madeline sing in Verbunk. So cool!

- Ellie

I met a couple from Ukraine that were so happy to have seen “My Ukraine” and Hopak. I also met a very cute lady who recognized that I had been playing a viola, not a violin. She has been the first one from the audience to recognize the viola so far on tour. This venue had the best, most interactive, and vocal audience so far even though it was pretty empty. My favorite show yet!

- Christina

A woman named Gruelde waved me over last night after our show. She said that hearing the accordion was her favorite part of the show because it reminded her of how her uncle used to sit outside their house and play. She said he used to say that it was a special instrument because you can feel it in your whole body. She said it was so special to be able to hear the accordion and that it reminded her of home.

- Emily

100 year old, beautiful theater right in the city. Not much side wing space and the run behind was outdoors. I wasn't sure how we would do the costume changes. All dressing rooms were downstairs. We only put emergency costume changes on the very small side spaces. As the show started, I was nervous about whether the students would make all the changes. By some miracle and lots of, running backstage somehow the students did it! I was elated. The audience was so enthusiastic and responsive. They appreciated all the small details and nuances in the show. Shayla Bott, our department chair was in the audience. First time for her to see our touring production. She was very complementary, standing ovation immediately! I met a Slovakian lady who loved our Slovakian in pieces, and understood the singing :- ) so many enthusiastic comments after. Close to 600 in the audience. What a great show! Matthew Neal, former folk, dancer and co-organizer, was with us all day. So fun to reconnect. In the prayer by the pastor, he said “music and dance is a joy of life“ “it shows love and adoration for God, the Father.”

- Jeanette

**Fri, Feb 16**

Before the show I met a pastor that didn't seem to be very excited to be there. She seems skeptical. But after the show, I went to find her and she was so happy about the show. She seems like a completely different person. She asked me to sign her program and take a picture with her. It's cool how the spirit of our show can really forge connections.

- Levi

I met some cool people before and after the show. A man who danced on IFT a year after Jeanette, another man who danced with Jeanette, (he used to do toe touches!), and a lady from Basque, France!

- Anthony

It was special visiting with the old folks this morning at the retirement home. One woman was there because she had a neck surgery and was working on gaining her strength back. She loved watching us singing and dance, and said that "it lightened all our spirits."

- Jillian

One man after the show said "I wish I recorded that Indonesian dance so I could show it to my business colleagues! It would be a great object lesson to show how in sync and practice we need to be."

- Jillian

I loved visiting the rest home today. We danced Verbank and I almost hit my head on the ceiling sprinklers. Afterwards I met a lady named rosemary, which is the same name as my grandma. Also, there was a 100 year old lady! Wow!

- Amy

Yesterday, Stacey got the hotel management to open the pool until midnight. We had both the hot tub and the pool all to ourselves. We chatted played telephone and cheered on Valeria who was working out at the indoor gym.

- The Pool Crew

Last night in Ontario, the band went out to talk to the audience, and we got to talk to so many awesome people who loved our music. One cool moment for me was meeting the woman who directs JustServe here in Southern California. She told me that she plays the violin and I inspired her to start playing again! She really loved the music and took a cute selfie with me and Christina.

- Ellie

A random man kissed my hand! :-)

- Christina

After the show we were brought leftovers from the VIP event and a group of students crowded around it on the stage like scavengers ha ha. Also, this place had a beautiful ceiling. Amy, Tori Allen and I had a great time dancing in the dressing room while getting ready :-)

- Jade

High school auditorium. Fun workshop with the high school folklore group. Taught four easy dances. Demonstrated percussive dances. Did Q&A. The dancers came that night in their traditional dresses to usher for our concert. What a great way to include the students. Show. Such an enthusiastic and appreciative audience. Standing ovation! They left with big smiles on their faces. One little girl was wearing her tap shoes to the concert and she was just dancing in the lobby after the show. The pre-VIP reception was highly successful, gathering city councilman and women, senators, religious leaders, etc. Love this outreach and inclusion. The band played background music and dancers came in costume. People loved this close-up interaction. Met several alumni folk dancers tonight. Gay who danced in 1987 through 89 is from China he was our Hopak star. Did the most amazing toe touches and double tour. He met his wife on a tour to Japan. She was the MC. Also met Katy haddock who danced in 2015 and 2016 and Matthew Neely who danced in 1990.

- Jeanette

## **Sat, Feb 17**

Fred Cavali performing arts center in Thousand Oaks, California. An amazing theater. 1700 seats, beautiful theater. Very strict personnel. Security check was much more thorough and

lengthy than the airport. VIP reception included many consulates of different countries and also leaders of different religious faith. I love the diversity and inclusion this fosters. Great show. Standing ovation. Alumni folk dancers, Steve Bradley, and Greg Maine, 1987 to 90. Directors of Kayamanan Filipino Folkdance Company. "The show was exceptional, this is the first time that we have seen an international dance company. The quality and production level is at its highest. The traditional clothing is beautiful and is such a treasure." About 500 in the audience.

- Jeanette

After our last show, I met a couple ex-folk dancers. They mentioned that they did the pole dance, as well as the Hopak, and seeing it again made them feel young.

- Isaac

Had a great time meeting the consulate and diplomats. Great show! So thankful for this tour.

- Bailey

Met the Hungarian consulate. She was very nice and so was her husband from Singapore. She did say that our costumes were much more sparkly than the traditional color Kolotaszegi costumes, which is interesting. An exchange student from Spain named Sarah said the show was "meh" but she loved the narrative. Ha ha. Kenzie lost her AirPod on the bus, but then it turned up under a tech box after the show! Crazy!

- Jade

This has been one of my favorite weeks ever! I'm so grateful for this team and for all of the people we've met and perform for this week. Our stage yesterday was huge and so fun to dance on. We also walked around the garden of the world, and it was beautiful :-)

- Carly

The sweetest women talk to me at the retirement home. They really loved us coming to perform for them and felt really touched by us. And they touched me.

- Janelle

My sister thought that the men discowale looked like quail and the Saman dancers looked like bouncing potatoes. Also, I met the Hungarian consulate. She was impressed with our costumes and excited for our show. :-)

- Clara

# **Summer Tour**

**Mexico & Southern States**

**American & “Journey: Reflection” Sets**

**April 27th-May 22nd, 2024**

# Personnel List

## **Tour Manager:**

Stacey Christensen

## **Artistic Director:**

Jeanette Geslison

## **Dancers:**

Tori Allen  
McKenzie Bellon  
Brielle Bowden  
Tana Bybee  
Abby Collins  
Amy Hawkes  
Jillian Iverson  
Jade Madison  
Makeila Morgan  
Clara Smilanick  
Tori Stone  
Bailey Tucker  
Carly Wanlass  
Janelle Wilson

Tanner Birtcher  
David Chandler  
Dawson Collins  
Remington Comp  
Nate Cox  
Braden Duke  
Colton Fields  
Crozier Fitzgerald  
Levi Hancock  
Dallin Lyon  
Matthew Peterson  
Isaac Schaat  
Efrain Villalobos  
Anthony Xanthos

## **Tech Crew:**

Erin Bjorn  
Walter Iverson  
Tiffany Parker  
Valeria Peynado  
Elizabeth Padgett  
Hannah Tran

## **Musicians:**

Director: Mark Geslison  
Ellie Geslison  
Christina Iverson  
Austin Johnson

Arthur Prusso  
Emily Wall  
Tyler Anderson  
Madeline Charles

# Tour Stats

## Tour 2024 Audience Totals

Notated by Jeanette Geslison

### Festival Vallarta Azteca, Mexico

April 28 opening 1,000

April 29 parade 2,000 Los arcos del Malecon 800

April 30 Free day

May 1 Tomatlan parade 2,000 show 1,000

May 2 TV spot? Los arcos del Malecon 600

May 3 School outreach 776, Ixtapa 600

May 4 San Sebastián del Oeste 300

May 5 Festival church 400 Cultural Center Closing ceremonies and performance 1,000

Total: 10,500 plus TV spot plus Facebook livestream

### Southern States

Greensboro middle school 100

Carolina Theater 382

Beaufort elementary school 500

Theater workshop High School 40

Beaufort show 394

Nolensville, TN

Outreach disabled High School students 25

Show 300

Alabaster, AL

Thompson Intermediate school outreach 500

Show 350

Tallahassee

Youth outreach 150

Show 340



# Tour Itinerary

**Saturday, April 27th**

**Depart from BYU. Travel to Puerto Vallarta**

**Hotel: Hotel Rosita**

6:30 AM Meet at RB, load cars/van with gear

7:00 AM Depart to SLC airport (50 min/46.1 miles)

11:10 AM Depart for Puerto Vallarta - Delta #DL1948 (3 hours 35 min)

-----TIME CHANGE - Mountain to Central-----

2:45 PM Arrive at Puerto Vallarta Airport

3:30 PM Depart for Hotel Rosita (20 min / 8 km)

4:00 PM Lunch on arrival at hotel

5:00 PM Mexican night at Rancho Don Tato \*Musicians bring instruments for Mexican party night\*

11:30 PM Back to hotel

**Sunday, April 28th**

**Puerto Vallarta**

8:00 AM Breakfast – at Hotel Rosita

8:30 AM Give kits in the lobby of the Hotel Rosita

9:45 AM Walk to Hotel Pescador (5 mins/ 300 m)

10:00 AM Beach Volleyball at the Hotel Pescador - (BYU has 2 teams)

2:00 PM Lunch

5:30 PM Parade – Dancing with our musicians, carrying the flag and group banner.

7:00 PM Inauguration (festival opening ceremonies) bring flag and banner. One couple with flag and banner stay in a semicircle as part of ceremony. Performance (10 min)

7:30 PM Depart for Hotel Rosita after performance.

Dinner – Hotel Rosita

**Monday, April 29th**

**Puerto Vallarta**

7:00 AM Breakfast – at Hotel Rosita

8:00 AM Group photo at the Arcos Del Malecon

9:30 AM Baila Conmigo (dance with me)

Each group has five minutes to demonstrate one song and then dance with public \*bring water\*

11:00 AM Ceremony with authorities in the City Hall and Inauguration of Exhibition of International Dolls in cultural costumes. \*Take 4 Gifts\*

1:00 PM Lunch – for directors \*meet in Hotel Rosita lobby

2:00 PM Lunch – at Hotel Rosita

6:00 PM Depart to Los Arcos Del Malecón

7:00 PM Performance (30 min) Check order of presentation.

8:00 PM Dinner – at Hotel Rosita after completion of the presentation.

**Tuesday, April 30th**

**Puerto Vallarta**

8:00 AM Breakfast – at Hotel Rosita

FREE DAY

9:00 PM Dinner – at Hotel Rosita after presentation.

**Wednesday, May 1st**

**Puerto Vallarta**

8:00 AM Breakfast – at hotel

10:00 AM Photographic Rally “Explore Puerto Vallarta”

2:00 PM Lunch at hotel

3:00 PM Depart for Tomatlan (2.5 hrs) \*Bring water\* Bring flag and banner

6:00 PM Inauguration Parade in Tomatlan – Banner and flag

7:00 PM Inauguration (1 couple with flag and banner in semicircle, authorities invited to the stage for inauguration), Performance (30 min) U.S. and Jalisco

Group may leave for dinner after performance

8:00 PM Dinner

Depart for Puerto Vallarta (2.5 hrs)

**Thursday, May 2nd**

**Puerto Vallarta**

8:00 AM Breakfast at the hotel

9:00 AM Depart to Sowing Peace event.

10:00 AM Sowing Peace (1 couple in traditional costume,  
1 couple in uniform to plant tree, and Director). Bring Flag.

1:00 PM Lunch – for directors \*bring 1 gift for organization\*

2:00 PM Lunch – at Hotel Rosita

6:00 PM Depart for Los Arcos del Malecon

Performance

TBD Back to hotel  
Dinner – at hotel

### Friday, May 3rd

Puerto Vallarta

8:00 AM Breakfast at the hotel  
9:00 AM Depart for middle school #78  
TBD Performance (30 min)  
Interact with students  
Have lunch  
Return to hotel  
2:00 PM Lunch – at Hotel Rosita  
5:30 PM Depart for Ixtapa (30 min drive)  
TBD Performance (45 min) with Germany and CDMX  
Dinner  
Back to hotel

### Saturday, May 4th

Puerto Vallarta

8:00 AM Breakfast – at Hotel Rosita  
12:00 PM Depart for San Sebastian del Oeste (2 hrs.)  
2:30 PM Lunch  
Free time in San Sebastian  
7:00 PM Performance (60 mins) U.S. and Veracruz  
Dinner  
Back to Puerto Vallarta (2 hrs.)

### Sunday, May 5th

Puerto Vallarta

8:00 AM Breakfast – at hotel  
9:30 AM Depart to Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints  
10:00 AM Sacrament Meeting  
1:30 PM Religious ceremony “The Dancers of the World For Peace” wear traditional clothes, each group will sing a song, each group will watch the performance before.  
2:00 PM Lunch – at Hotel Rosita  
Lunch – for Directors  
5:00 PM Depart for Closing Ceremony at “La Lija” Cultural Center

7:00 PM Closing ceremony  
Dinner  
Back to hotel

**Monday, May 6th**

**Depart Puerto Vallarta. SLC??**

8:00 AM Breakfast – at hotel

FREE TIME

12:00 PM Check out and go to airport

3:55 PM Flight departs for SLC (3 hrs. 41 min)

----- TIME CHANGE - Central to Mountain -----

5:30 PM TECH meets at RB in Provo

6:00 PM TECH Depart for SLC airport (50 min)

7:35 PM MEXICO Group - arrive in SLC. Get through customs.

Meet Production van to swap out American costumes

Check in, meet rest of group, transfer American luggage to BYU team to take to Provo. Keep clogging shoes and black outfit.

11:25 PM Flight departs for Atlanta — Delta Flt. DL0510 (3 hrs. 38 min)

**Tuesday, May 7th**

**Arrive in Raleigh, NC**

**Hotel: Springhill Suites by Marriott Greensboro Airport**

**Venue: N/A**

----- TIME CHANGE - Mountain to Eastern -----

5:03 AM Arrive in Atlanta Airport

Breakfast Per Diem in airport

8:35AM Depart from Atlanta Delta Flt# DL2633

10:45 AM Depart toward Golden Corral Buffet & Grill (15 mins/ 9.2 miles)

11:15 PM Lunch at Golden Corral Buffet & Grill

1:00 PM Depart to Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints for rehearsal. (1hr 45 mins)

3:00 PM Arrive at church – Rehearsal run-through

6:00 PM Depart for dinner

8:00 PM Depart to Springhill Suites by Marriott Greensboro Airport (30 mins/ 2 miles)

8:30 PM Check into hotel

**Wednesday, May 8th**

**Greensboro, NC**

**Hotel: Springhill Suites by Marriott Greensboro Airport**  
**Venue: Carolina Theatre of Greensboro**

6- 8 AM Breakfast at Hotel  
9:00 AM Meet in lobby for departure to North Forsyth High School (30 mins/ 25 miles)  
9:15AM Depart for Outreach at North Forsyth High School  
10:30 AM Outreach  
12:00 PM Depart for Carolina Theatre (40 min/ 36 mi)  
12:45 PM Group Lunch at Carolina Theatre  
1:00 PM Load in at Carolina Theatre  
4:30 PM Group Dinner at Carolina Theatre  
7:00 PM Performance #1  
9:30 PM Depart for SpringHill Suites by Marriott Greensboro Airport (20 mins/ 12 miles)  
10:00 PM Check into hotel

**Thursday, May 9th**

**Travel to Charleston, SC**

**Hotel: Embassy Suites Charleston Historic**  
**Venue: N/A**

6:00 AM Breakfast at hotel  
7:45AM Meet in lobby for departure  
8:00AM Depart for Buc-ee's (2.45 hrs/ 150 mi)  
11:00 AM Break in Florence at Buc-ee's  
11:30 AM Depart for Charleston's Magnolia Plantation (2 hrs 10 mins/ 133 mi)  
Group Lunch at Magnolia Plantation upon arrival  
2:20 PM Tour Magnolia Plantation including Train Ride, Botanical Gardens and Slavery to Freedom tour.  
5:00 PM Depart for Embassy Suites Charleston Historic Hotel (30 mins/ 30 mins)  
5:45 PM Check into hotel  
6:00 PM Free time for the evening  
Dinner Per Diem

**Friday, May 10th**

**Beaufort, SC**

**Hotel: Premier Best Western Savannah Airport**

**Venue: Battery Creek High School**

7:30 AM Breakfast at Hotel  
7:45 AM Meet in lobby for departure  
8:00 AM Depart for Riverview Elementary (1.5 hrs / 72mi)  
10:00 AM Outreach with Riverview Elementary School at least 30 mins before 1<sup>st</sup> group heads to lunch @ 10:30. 45 mins duration  
11:00 AM Depart for Cypress Wetlands (8 mins/ 4 miles)  
11:10 AM Free time at Cypress Wetlands for 40 mins  
11:50 AM Depart to Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (7 mins, 3.6 miles)  
12:00 PM Group Lunch at Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints  
12:45 PM Depart for Battery Creek High School (10 mins/ 5 miles)  
1:00 PM Load-in  
4:30 PM Group Dinner at Battery Creek High School – in the cafeteria.  
TBD VIP reception. Musicians, costumed dancers (a few) Director.  
7:00 PM Performance #2  
9:30 PM Depart for Premiere Best Western Savannah Airport (1hr 15 mins/ 44.7 miles)  
10:45 PM Check into hotel and go to bed

**Saturday, May 11th**

**Atlanta, GA**

**Hotel: Tru by Hilton Atlanta NW Kennesaw**

**Venue: N/A**

8:00 AM Breakfast at Hotel  
8:45 AM Meet in lobby for departure  
9:00 AM Depart for H&H Soul Food Restaurant (2.5 hrs/ 166 miles)  
11:45 AM Group Lunch and break in Macon at H&H Soul Food Restaurant  
12:45 PM Meet for departure, bathroom breaks  
1:00 PM Depart for Tru by Hilton Atlanta NW Kennesaw Hotel, (1 hr 40 mins/ 107 miles)  
2:45 PM Check into hotel  
FREE TIME  
Dinner Per Diem  
5:00 PM Depart to Church of Jesus Christ (15 min/ 7 miles)  
5:15 PM Arrive at church and prep for joint workshop

6:00 PM African dance instruction with Uhuru Dancers + Drummers.  
8:00 PM Depart for Tru by Hilton Atlanta NW Kennesaw Hotel.  
8:15 PM Free time

**Sunday, May 12th**

**Nashville, TN**

**Hotel: Holiday Express Inn Nashville Downtown Conf. Ctr**  
**Venue: N/A**

6:00 AM Breakfast at Hotel  
8:15 AM Meet in lobby packed and dressed for church  
8:30 AM Depart to Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (15 mins/ 9.4 miles)  
9:00 AM Sacrament Meeting only  
10:30 AM Depart for Buc-ee's (40 mins/ 35 miles)  
11:30 PM Lunch at Buc-ee's  
12:30 PM Depart for Holiday Express Inn Nashville Downtown Conf. Ctr (3 hrs/ 186 mi)  
-----TIME CHANGE (Eastern to Central)-----  
3:00 PM Check into hotel, get settled  
FREE TIME  
Dinner per diem in Nashville  
6:00 PM Depart for Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, (29 mins/ 20 miles)  
7:00 PM Private Devotional with Tony Martin song-writer in Nashville.  
8:30 PM Depart to Holiday Express Inn Nashville Downtown Conf. Ctr (29 mins/ 20 miles)  
9:00 PM Arrive at hotel  
FREE TIME

**Monday, May 13th**

**Nolensville, TN**

**Hotel: Springhill Suites by Marriott Franklin Cool Springs**  
**Venue: Nolensville High School**

8:00 AM Breakfast at Hotel  
9:15 AM FREE TIME to explore Nashville  
\*\*\* Bring luggage to lobby to hold before 11AM checkout time.  
We will load bus at 12PM  
Lunch per diem  
12:00 PM Meet to load bus  
12:15 PM Depart for Nolensville High (45 mins/ 23.6 miles)

1:00 PM Load-in Nolensville High School  
Outreach with Nolensville HS or local Elementary School  
4:30 PM Dinner at venue  
7:00 PM Performance #3  
9:45 PM Depart for SpringHill Suites by Marriott Franklin Cool Springs (25 mins/ 12 miles)  
10:15 PM Check into hotel and go to bed

**Tuesday, May 14th**

**Birmingham, AL**

**Hotel: La Quinta Inn Suites Birmingham Hoover**  
**Venue: Thompson High School**

6:00 AM Breakfast at Hotel  
7:15 AM Meet in lobby for departure  
7:30 AM Depart for WBRC Fox 6 News (3 hours/ 180 miles)  
10:30 AM Arrive at WBRC Fox 6 Studios.  
10:50 AM Report to studio offices  
11:15 AM On-Air Television segment.  
11:45 AM Depart studios for Thompson High School (35 mins/ 25 miles)  
12:20 PM Group Lunch at venue  
1:00 PM Load in  
TBD Outreach with Thompson High School special education class.  
4:30 PM Group Dinner at venue  
7:00 PM Performance #4  
9:45 PM Depart La Quinta Inn Suites Birmingham Hoover (20 mins/ 14 miles)  
10:10 PM Check into hotel and go to bed

**Wednesday, May 15th**

**Travel to Montgomery, AL**

**Hotel: Holiday Inn Express Tallahassee**  
**Venue: N/A**

6:00 AM Breakfast at Hotel  
7:30 AM Meet in lobby for departure  
7:45AM Depart for Legacy Museum (1 hr 15 mins/ 80 miles)  
9:00 AM Legacy Museum Tour  
11:45 AM Depart for Odessa's Blessings for lunch(10 min/ 2.1 mi)  
12:00 PM Group Lunch at Odessa's Blessing



1:00 PM Depart for Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (3 hrs 45 min/ 217 mi)

-----TIME CHANGE Central to Eastern Time-----

6:00 PM Group Dinner at Church Building prepared by Alumni

7:00 PM Stake-wide youth activity at Church Building

8:30 PM Depart for Holiday Inn Express Tallahassee(15 mins/ 9 miles)

9:00 PM Check into hotel and go to bed

**Thursday, May 16th**

**Tallahassee, FL**

**Hotel: Holiday Inn Express Tallahassee**

**Venue: Lawton Chiles High School**

6:00 AM Breakfast at Hotel

10:45 AM Meet in lobby for departure

11:00 AM Depart for Church near Tallahassee, FL Temple (5 min / 2 miles)

11:10 AM 30 mins of free time to take pictures, see temple grounds, etc.

11:45 PM Depart to Lunch location near Thai Kitchen Cuisine, Village Pizza & Pasta, Tijuana Flats, Peppers Mexican Grill & Cantina (5 mins 1.2 miles)

12:00 PM Lunch Per Deim

1:45 PM Depart for Lawton Chiles High School (10 min/ 4 miles)

2:00 PM Arrive at Lawton Chiles High School \* LATE LOAD-IN

2:15 PM Load-in

4:30 PM Group Dinner at venue

7:00 PM Performance #5

9:45 PM Depart Holiday Inn Express Tallahassee (15 mins/ 6 miles)

10:15 PM Check into hotel and go to bed

**Friday, May 17th**

**Okefenokee, GA**

**Hotel: DoubleTree by Hilton Jacksonville Riverfront**

**Venue: N/A**

8:00 AM Breakfast at Hotel

8:45 AM Meet in lobby for departure

9:00 AM Depart for Okefenokee Swamp (3 hours/177 miles)

12:00 PM Arrive at Okefenokee Swamp (bathroom break)

12:15 PM Group Lunch at Swamp Cafe

1:30 PM Swamp tours and nature walks

4:00 PM Swamp tours end  
4:45 PM Meet for departure, bathroom breaks  
5:00 PM Depart for DoubleTree by Hilton Jacksonville Riverfront (1 hr 30 mins/ 55 miles)  
6:45 PM Dinner Per Diem  
FREE TIME for the night

**Saturday, May 18th**

**Orlando, FL**

**Hotel: Drury Plaza Hotel Orlando – Disney Springs Area**  
**Venue: N/A**

9:00 AM Breakfast at Hotel  
9:45 AM Meet in lobby for departure  
10:00 AM Depart for Daytona Beach Breakers Oceanfront Park (1.5 hrs / 91 miles)  
11:30 AM Free time at Daytona Beach  
12:00 PM Lunch Per Diem  
3:00 PM Depart for Drury Plaza Hotel Orlando Disney Springs Area (1.5hr/ 75 miles)  
4:30 PM Arrive at hotel and check-in – Get dressed for dinner.  
6:30 PM Depart to Top Secret Dinner Location (15 mins/ 8 miles)  
7:30 PM Group Dinner  
9:30 PM Depart Dinner location for Drury Plaza Hotel Orlando Disney Springs Area (15 mins/ 7 mins)  
9:45 PM Check into hotel and go to bed

**Sunday, May 19th**

**Orlando, FL**

**Hotel: Drury Plaza Hotel Orlando – Disney Springs Area**  
**Venue: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints**

7:15 AM Breakfast at Hotel  
8:00 AM Meet in lobby for departure  
8:15AM Depart for Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints,  
9:00 AM Sacrament service  
10:15 AM Depart Church for Drury Hotel (20 mins / 9 miles)  
12:30 PM Lunch per diem  
Free Time  
4:00 PM Depart hotel for Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (20 mins /10 miles)  
4:30 PM Arrive at Church for Devotional

5:00 PM Devotional for area Youth and YSA-  
6:30 PM Depart to Drury Hotel (20 mins/ 10 minutes)  
7:00 PM FREE TIME Remainder of day  
Dinner per diem

**Monday, May 20th** **Orlando, FL**

**Hotel: Drury Plaza Hotel Orlando – Disney Springs Area**  
**Venue: N/A**

8:00 AM Breakfast at Hotel  
DISNEY DAY  
9:00 AM Park opens  
9:00 PM Park closes

**Tuesday, May 21st** **Orlando, FL**

**Hotel: Drury Plaza Hotel Orlando – Disney Springs Area**  
**Venue: N/A**

6:30 AM Breakfast at Hotel  
DISNEY DAY  
9:00 AM Park opens  
9:00 PM Park closes

**Wednesday, May 22nd** **Travel home to BYU**

8:00AM Breakfast at hotel  
8:30 AM Meet in lobby for departure  
10:00 AM Depart for airport (32 mins/ 27 miles)  
10:30 AM Arrive at airport and check in  
11:30 AM Lunch Per Diem  
1:50 PM Flight departs  
-----TIME CHANGE Eastern to Mountain Time-----  
4:55 PM Land in SLC  
5:30 PM Depart back to BYU

## Daily Details

### Tour Photos & Videos by Nick Sales:

<https://byu.box.com/s/jxvo46xrplli25sbusokhqmbkja7ov75>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TG4KocOpPKY>

#### Saturday, April 27th

We left early in the morning for the Salt Lake City airport. The weather was cold and rainy. We were thankful to land in sunny clear skies, Puerto Vallarta. We arrived at Hotel Rosita. The view of the beach from Hotel Rosita was incredible. The weather was warm the whole trip.



That night, we went to a welcoming party at Rancho Don Tato. It was unbelievable! The venue was in a beautiful location with a dancing floor and colorful, vibrant decorations. We watched all the countries (Serbia, Honduras, Mexico, Germany, and Romania) perform a short dance that represents them and then partied the rest of the night. Some of the Mexican festivities included games, (drinking games in which we didn't partake :)), music, dancing horses, cowboy lassoing, piñatas, and more games. It was

such an amazing welcome and we were overjoyed to spend time with each other.

#### Sunday, April 28th



In the morning, we walked over to hotel pescador where we played at the beach almost the whole day. It was especially fun to play 4 v 4 beach volleyball against other countries' teams. One of our teams took 3rd overall! We continued to play at the beach and then returned to the hotel to swim in the pool.



Later in the evening, we walked to our spot for the parade. The parade was energizing. We danced and sang classic songs like “you are my sunshine” and “oh susanna”. It was touching to see little children lined up smiling and dancing as the groups passed by. Especially at the end of the parade, we were blessed to entertain a large crowd of hundreds lined up along the road. We then performed a few short numbers for the opening ceremony like Texas Fandango,

Traveler, Western Wildfire, and Showdown clogging.

### **Monday, April 29th**

We started the morning with a massive group photo along the beach walk. We then walked to a public square where each country gave a 5 minute demonstration of a dance to the public and then the public replicated it.



A few students then went with Jeanette to city hall for an Inauguration of Exhibition of International Dolls in cultural costumes.



That night, we danced at los arcos del malecon , a 30 minute presentation of our american set. It was a beautiful night with the beach less than 100 ft from the stage and a firework show from the pirate ship passing by.

## **Tuesday, April 30th**

Today we had some free time. The majority of us went on a boat trip to playa las animas. The water was magical! It was warm and the waves were calm. We played soccer, volleyball, and bought ice cream sandwiches at a shop nearby. There was also a swing with a gorgeous view of the ocean. After our beachday, we returned to the hotel and rested.



## **Wednesday, May 1st**

This morning, we had an intense photo scavenger hunt put on by the festival. We ran, literally ‘ran’ through Puerto Vallarta with Carlos Cardenas and Nick Sales to take creative pictures of us around historical landmarks throughout town. It was quite an adventure.

In the afternoon, we departed for the town of Tomatlan on a 2.5 hour bus ride. I believe a lot of prayers were answered today as we made it to the host place in one piece without too many sick people. We then paraded through the small town. The people were beautiful and receptive again. We then gave a 30 minute show at the venue. The venue was in the middle of a lovely

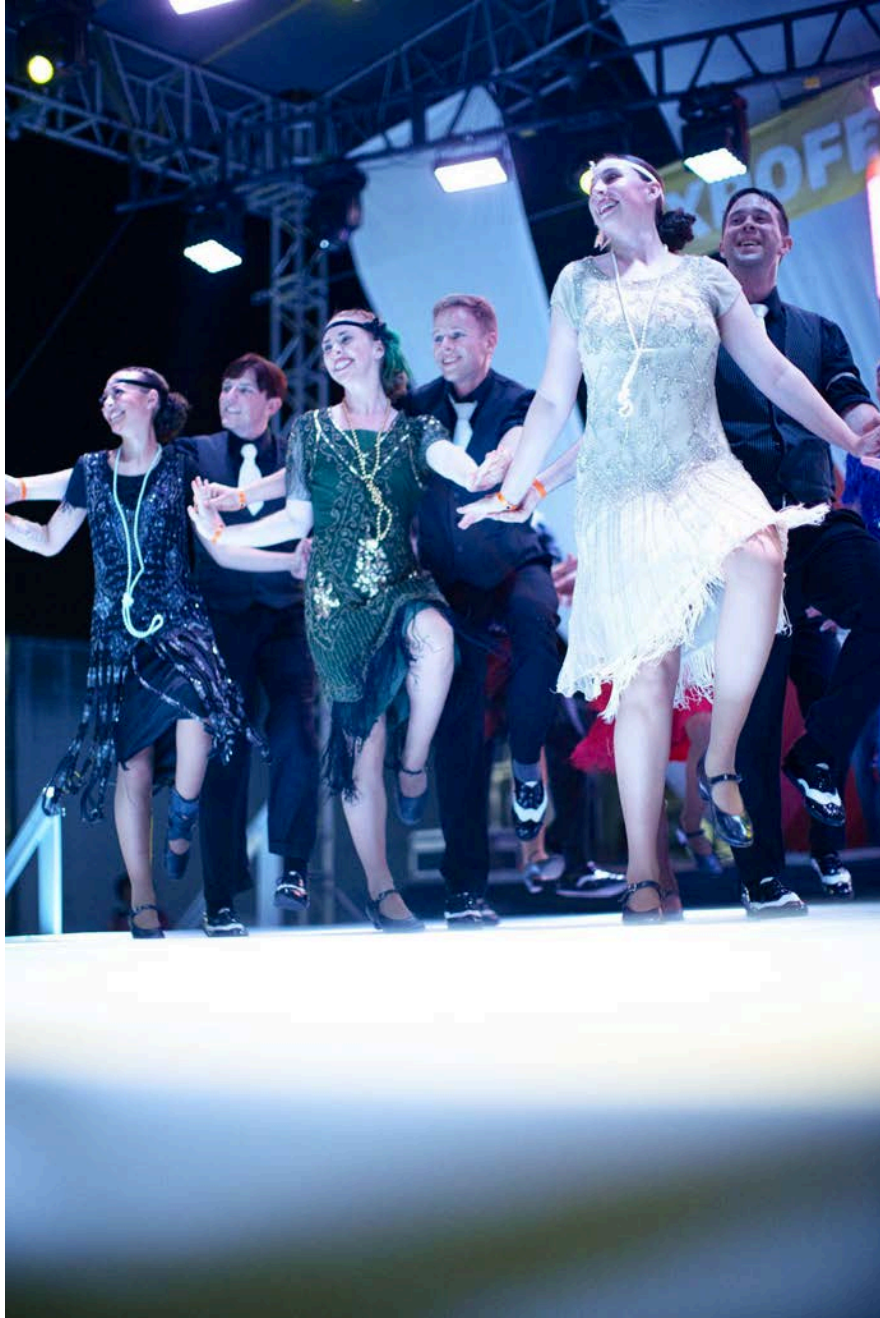
fair. There were loud fireworks before the show. Nick Sales also gave us a hype pep talk before the show. Dancing for the audience members felt humbling and riveting as we represented our own culture.













### Thursday, May 2nd

In the morning, a few dancers went to plant a tree with the other dance groups in celebration of the festival and being united as one

group. They were able to make connections with dancers from around the world and develop deep bonds.

At the end of the day, we performed along the beach at los arcos del malecon.

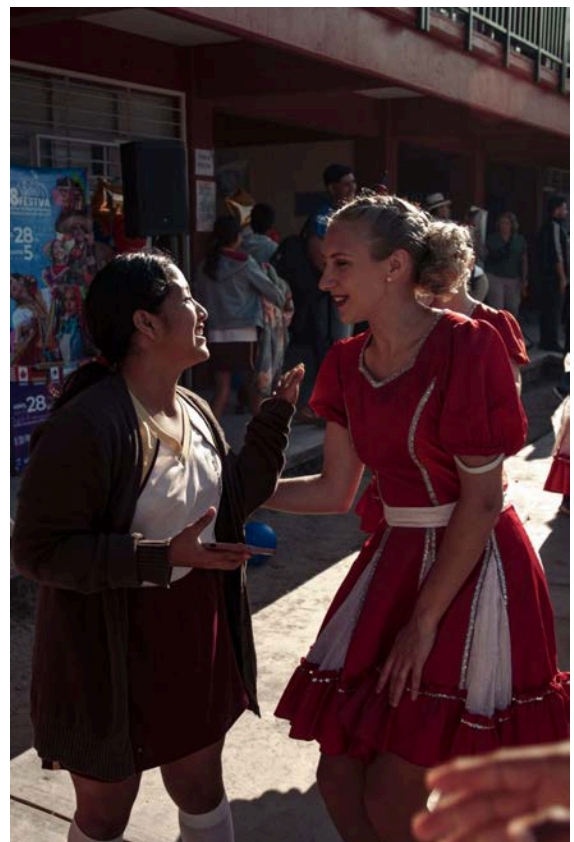


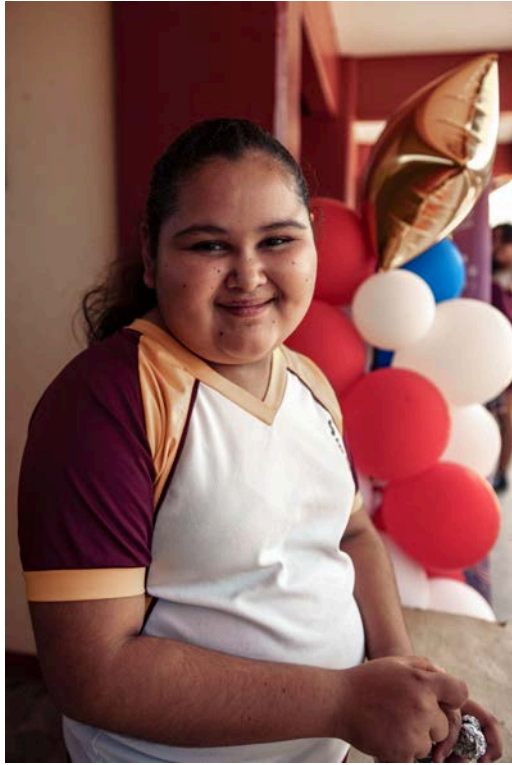
## Friday, May 3rd

This may have been the best day of the whole trip. It was a heartwarming day as hundreds of middle schoolers welcomed us in for an outreach performance. We thought we were giving them a treat by performing for them but in reality they gave us the ultimate treat by their goodness. We felt inspired and uplifted by their pure spirits. After the performance, they conducted interviews with us to practice their english. Also, they prepared presentations on the food and cultures of each state in Mexico. We learned that Mexico has a rich history full of wonderful food and dance. Check out this video made by Nick Sales of this wonderful day.

At the end of the day, we traveled to Ixtapa where we performed with a short show with the Germans and CDMX. It was the Germans last day performing in Mexico so we bid warm farewells with them. We also had incredible tacos that night made by the locals.

[https://youtu.be/Q4DZELiNCXQ?si=8DI\\_C60W0M47P2\\_m](https://youtu.be/Q4DZELiNCXQ?si=8DI_C60W0M47P2_m)





**Saturday, May 4th**

This morning we got a bus for a two hour bus ride to San Sebastian del oeste. This beautiful small town was founded by silver miners in 1605 after miners discovered gold and silver nearby.

It was colonized by the Spanish. The town is in a narrow valley surrounded by mountains. It was gorgeous.

We explored the city and had the chance to perform with a youth group from Veracruz, Mexico. The stage was rather small and old but the vibrant decorations hanging over



the stage and gazebo where the bands performed made up for it. The singing by the Veracruz men was impeccable. The locals were welcoming and friendly.

### Sunday, May 5th

This morning, we attended a branch at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. It was a fast and testimony meeting. Of course, we did not fast as we had two shows today. We heard wonderful testimonies from locals and Dallin Llyon.



After the sacrament meeting, we returned to Puerto Vallarta to attend a Catholic mass with all the other performing groups at the festival. It was unifying to be together as one and worship God together.

After Catholic Mass, we returned to the hotel and prepared to leave for the closing ceremonies of the festival at La Lija, cultural center. The closing ceremonies were a long showcase of each country's dance. It was so fun to see each country's dances and costumes. In particular, the groups from Sinalora, Aguas Calientes, Honduras, Veracruz, and Jalisco. After the closing ceremonies, we returned home and slept well.



### **Monday, May 6th**

We departed for SLC! Farewell to Carlos and our other festival guide. It was sad to leave Puerto Vallarta but such an incredible experience to represent BYU folk dance, the Church of Jesus Christ, and BYU. Once we arrived in slc, it was heartwarming to see family and friends briefly before we departed for the southern states portion of our tour.

### **Tuesday, May 7th**

Departed for Greensborough, North Carolina! We were amazed by how green North Carolina is. Trees were everywhere along the highway. We were introduced to our wonderful bus driver Mike. After driving on the highway for some time, we immediately stopped at the Golden Corral buffet and grill haha.

We then went to a local Church of Jesus Christ building and did a rehearsal of our show journey. After our rehearsal, we departed for the local Marriott hotel.

### **Wednesday, May 8th**

Today was our first show in the southern states! We performed at the Carolina Theatre of Greensboro. It was quite beautiful.

In the morning, we had an outreach with the Mineral Springs Middle School. The highlight of this outreach was hearing from multiple team members share their story to



IFDE. Another highlight was getting to know the youth, especially the youth in the english learning group.





## Thursday, May 9th

Incredible first start to the southern states tour than no other place but Buc-ees. We enjoyed yummy barbeque food and unique merchandise for the largest gas station in America. We then departed for Charleston's Magnolia Plantation. We had the blessing to walk around the beautiful gardens. Because of the weather, we received a tour indoors. The tour was



awesome. We then embarked to the hotel where the team members in the Charleston



Charleston styled dance. The best part about filming the dance was of course the location, but also the random people who walked by to watch us dancing.



## Friday, May 10th

We spent the morning at Riverview Elementary in South Carolina. The kids were ecstatic to have us perform. They danced to Saman with us. We embraced, laughed, and clapped together. After the outreach, we went to Cyprus wetlands to see some alligators and birds! Then, we got



ready for our show at Battery Creek High School. The people in attendance were so friendly.

### **Saturday, May 11th**

Today we spent a lot of time traveling to Atlanta, Georgia. The highlight of the day was participating in a dance workshop with Uhuru African dancers.

### **Sunday, May 12th**

We went to church this Mother's Day. The ward we visited had a confirmation and wonderful talks given by Sister Ortiz, a young girl, and an older gentleman. The best part of church was reflecting on moms. After church, we drove to Tennessee and stopped at Buc-ees. We then finished driving to Nashville Tennessee where we went to Hattie Bs for dinner and walked along the downtown area where all the bars are. That evening, we had an incredible devotional with Tony Martin, a Nashville songwriter. He talked about his work and how to persevere through doubts and questions in career. The wonderful host family who organized this devotional have 11 kids! We then returned to Nashville and walked around more bars and along the downtown area.

### **Monday, May 13th**

We had some more time to explore Nashville this morning. The hometown of Clara and Nate where they served their missions. We then departed for Nolensville High School and had our third performance of the southern states tour. We also participated in an outreach with the special needs youth group.





## **Tuesday, May 14th**

This morning we woke up bright and early to depart for the WBRC Fox News studio of Alabama for Braden/Jade and Dawson/Abby to perform for local news. They did an incredible job despite the music being barely audible. The rest of the group visited a beautiful overlook of Alabama and the site of an iron mine. We then traveled to Thompson High School to get ready for the show. While some set up the stage, others went to an outreach at an elementary school. The group A had to be creative and come up with interesting blocking to accommodate the lack of performers. Overall the kids loved the numbers Charleston, saman, Tongan, clogging, and Indian. The venue's stage was huge and well kept! We had no issues setting up. The show was 11.5/10 according to Jeanette. The crowd was also incredibly kind and we had huge cheers and applause.





**Wednesday, May 15th**

This day we spent learning about slavery and the civil rights movement at the legacy museum in Montgomery, Alabama. It was a humbling experience and needed time to learn and reflect.



We then ate lunch at a beautiful southern home/restaurant named Odessa's blessing. It had the typical southern food. Delicious! We then departed to Tallahassee for an outreach with the youth of the local stake and YSAs. There was a great turnout of folks and we performed dances, taught two folk dances, and ended with beautiful testimonies from current team members.



### **Thursday, May 16th**

Last show of tour! Last show for seniors! This was the highlight of the day as we left everything on stage at Lawton Chiles High School stage. It was emotional and energizing to perform our last show of summer tour. Many tears of sadness and joy were shared on stage after hopak.







**Friday, May 17th**

We spent today at the swamps in Georgia and then exploring Jacksonville, Florida. The swamps were gorgeous. The swamps we visited were over 440,000 acres long. We saw alligators, turtles, birds, and beautiful trees with Spanish moss. We then arrived in Jacksonville and walked along the incredible boardwalks. We saw dolphins. We then watched a final video made by Nick Sales before he went home. We then supported mountain strings in the lobby of the hotel as they played songs at an open mic.



**Saturday, May 18th**

Departure for Orlando! We spent most of the day traveling. Some people started playing games like “contact”. It was such a great time to connect with one another. Upon arrival

in Orlando, we were met with a surprise from Stacey! We were all treated to a pirate show/dinner! It was so entertaining. Right up our alley as there was an aerialist and some acrobatics!

### **Sunday, May 19th**

Church in Orlando! We attended a building that has both English and Portuguese wards. It was once again so fun to connect with members and hear the messages shared from a returned missionary and a member of the stake presidency.



### **Monday, May 20th**

First day at Disney! We spent the day at EPCOT. The highlights of the park were probably the guardians of galaxy ride, soarin over the world, flowers, and the food. The park is internationally themed so different sections of the park correspond to specific countries like France, China, Italy, and America. The show at the end of day was spectacular with fireworks, song, and water jets.

### **Tuesday, May 21st**

Last day in Disney World! We spent it in Hollywood studios. It was such a great day riding the rides like rise of the resistance, tower of terror, Mickey and Minnie runaway railroad. And even some of the shows like Indiana and Frozen. There was plenty of dancing in lines, meeting new friends, and playing games while in lines. Most of the team then watched the Fantasmic show to end our time at Disney.

### **Wednesday, May 22nd**

Today we returned to Utah!

## Individual Memories and Quotes- Mexico

### 4.28.24

The first official day was so fun and a great start to the festival. It was so fun to be at the beach cheering our volleyball team on and getting to interact with other groups. It really set such a fun vibe for the week. It has been so beautiful to get to dance right by the beautiful ocean!

- Clara Smilanick

### 4.29.24

On Monday night, while the team was scrambling to find a missing costume suitcase, I removed myself from the group because I began to get overwhelmed. Right at that moment, the Romanian accordion player looked at me and then played a Michael Jackson song. We sang together and it was truly a tender mercy. So special having that moment with my “Romanian grandpa” (I call him that now).

- Bailey Tucker

Monday night, Makeila and I were talking to two little girls from the team from Hidalgo. One of the girls asked me how I knew how to speak Spanish and I told them I learned it in Spain! The one little girl then asked so sincerely, “They speak spanish in Spain?” Makeila and I laughed a little as the other girl said “Duh! Of course they speak spanish in Spain!” It was the most adorable thing and brought so much laughter and joy to the evening.

- Jillian Iverson

### 5.2.24

At Los Arcos, a little boy beckoned to me as I was waiting off stage right (during Charleston). When I walked over, he said to me in broken English, “you dance beautifully!” It was fun talking to him in Spanish. Also the Romanian who plays the accordion taught me (and some others) how to say “good job” in Romanian– I think it was “Foarte Bine!”

- Anthony Xanthos

I had a bit of a frantic episode and may have broken into tears on Wednesday night. Tana and Amy were tools in the hands of God and helped me feel seen and validated by sitting with me. On Thursday morning, Makeila gave me the most comforting hug of my life and Jill shared

some things with me that ended up being exactly what I needed to hear. I'm so grateful for the empathy and love shared on this team especially in times of embarrassment and frustration.

- Dallin Lyon

### 5.3.24

I have been having the best time here in Mexico! It has been a beautiful sight to see my team dance for those of my Mexican culture. I feel like both of my worlds collided and the purpose of our team has been fulfilled. We honor our world around us by dancing their traditional folk dances. Now, we get to meet and perform for them! I appreciate IFDE speaking Spanish and doing their best to communicate with the locals and other dance groups! Mexico is the definition of joy and happiness, and that is exactly what I feel when I am here!

- Efrain Villalobos

It's been about a week on tour at the festival and it has been so much fun. From the parades, the performances, the beautiful city, and fun activities like beach days and visiting the marketplace, it's all brought me so much joy and put a smile on my face. I've never been to Mexico until now and the culture here is so vibrant. Although I feel a little homesick every now and then, I am welcomed by the people in Mexico and my teammates have supported me and lifted my spirits. I miss my loved ones back home but I'm so happy to have this experience.

- Tori Allen

Puerto Vallarta is so beautiful! There have been such kind people here and such lovely scenery! My heart is just so full of love for the people I have met! The kind dancers from Serbia and Romania; the Canadian group is pretty cool, too! I've also had such a fun time meeting so many kids! They were so sweet and excited at the school today and it filled my soul!

- Janelle Wilson

A child stole my hat because I can't speak Spanish and I played some volleyball with the kids. It was a good day. :)

- Anonymous

Today was so fun! Got to meet a lot of cute kids and signed more autographs than I have ever before. I also ate a beetle that they gave me and it wasn't that bad lol. We also swam in the pool and harmonized under water, it was very fun. A great day!

- Ellie Geslison

Today some cute kids interviewed me at the elementary school about how I like Mexico, the food, and the school. The same little boy who interviewed me later brought me to his table where he was presenting about a Mexican state and gave me some horchata he made himself. So darling!

- Madeline Charles

Tour has been so fun so far! The funniest thing that happened to me was getting a bloody nose from a dancer from Michoacan. We were doing a handstand competition and he fell and kicked me in the nose haha. Anyways it all turned out for the best because we started talking and became friends!

- Christina Iverson

I have loved being here in Mexico and performing with IFDE! I was a missionary in a different part of the country, but being back has been bittersweet. My mission experience was difficult, but I also loved it, just like I love the people, food, and culture/language here! Representing American culture through song and dance has been so fun. It's also been a cool experience because I'm a Spanish translation major, and I've had some opportunities to be an interpreter!

- Austin Johnson

Mexico has been an especially rewarding experience! From trying new and delicious fruits to planting trees as remembrances of peace and connection, we had ample opportunities to learn to love Puerto Vallarta. Whenever I visit other countries, I'm reminded of God's love and concern in each individual life of the people we come across. I'm grateful to share a bit of that love in an organized way in dance.

- Isaac Schaat

A few good moments from Mexico :)

- Hugging all of the little children
- Ziplining with IFDE peeps
- The opening part which was absolutely lit
- Swimming with the Germans and getting to know them
- Ice cream sandwiches at the cove
- Feeling validated and supported when I was homesick

I'm loving it here!

- Jade Madison Duke

Carlos took Jillian and I to a News Station where we were interviewed and also performed our duet. We went with the Romanian couple and had a great time talking with them.

- Nate Cox

Today was so fun! It was so cool to go to the middle school this morning. I love performing for the kids. I was able to be interviewed by this boy which was fun. We also were able to hear presentations from the students on the Mexican history projects. They were so excited and eager to talk to us and share their culture/traditions. I was really proud of them because I could see how nervous they were to present to us. I definitely wouldn't have been able to do that at their age!

- Christina Iverson

Performing for the middle school children was such an enlightening and motivating experience! One middle school boy was wearing a BYU sweatshirt so we talked with him to learn his story. He got the sweatshirt from his mom and basically wore it everyday. We told him what it meant to us and the church and he seemed so proud to represent us. He told us that he would continue wearing it. :)

- Jillian Iverson

#### **5.4.24**

I met this kid, maybe 8-9, he was all dressed up in his full Mexico garb. I talked to him for a few, and learned that his name is Luis Jesus. We talked for a while, and then we performed that night. Luis Jesus was front row, and called out "Remy!" We high-fived after the show, and are great friends now.

- Remy Comp

This tour has been such a unique experience for me. I have never experienced another culture so different from my own. I loved performing at the middle school. The children were so full of excitement and gratitude. I tried to use my sign language background to talk to the deaf kids at the school. I learned that their Spanish sign language is so different from ASL, so we struggled to communicate at first. With some help, I ended up learning some of their signs. It was so cool! I have such a soft spot in my heart for the Deaf. :) I'm so grateful for the time I've had to experience Mexico!

- Amy Hawkes

Flashback to Mexico on Sunday we went to the small branch nearby. We packed into a small bus and most of us were standing really close together. It was so hot but it made a great memory. Austin translated the meeting for us non-Spanish speakers. It was so cool to hear the faithful testimonies of the members there. Dallin also gave a sweet testimony about a tender

mercy that allows him to see his brother for the first time in four years while we are on tour in Alabama for me, I had a huge tender at church because I got to see my brother and sister-in-law who were on vacation in Puerto Vallarta. We didn't get to see each other at all during their trip and they flew out right after church. We didn't even plan to see each other at church, but we did. It was awesome, we went to the Cathedral with the Irish blessing and one of the dancers next to me from Chihuahua cried because it was so tender and sweet. Also, I was so impressed by the religious devotion of those dancers from Chihuahua. They seem to have so much faith. :)

- Amy Hawkes

## Individual Memories and Quotes- Southern States

### 5.8.24

We had our first performance in North Carolina at the BEAUTIFUL theater. After the show, a member introduced me to a Ukrainian family. The parents are from Ukraine and got baptized 30 years ago this week because they were inspired by a BYU folk dance show! They LOVED it and told us we did the Hopak justice! Such a cool experience seeing how our shows touch people far away and have an impact we may never know.

- Clara Jamison

Today a few people were sick for the day. One was unable to perform. It was a little nerve racking that we would have to re-block the show, but thanks to the tender mercies of the Lord, all are now feeling better!

- Anonymous

The performance in NC was a #mess. I felt good about the dances, but logistically, it was a nightmare. During Hungarian, I was on stage left practicing verbunk with Amy, and I realized I had to be on stage right in like 15 seconds to be cameraman at the end of Hungarian. So I run out late with the camera and take the photo awkwardly, like too long after the song had ended, then I go off stage and realize my hat is on stage left. So I did all of verbunk without a hat, then ran offstage for the first 8 counts or so of Syracovy to get my hat, which took way too long to find. When I got back onstage, though, someone in the audience cheered for me, so that was cute. Also, because Efrain was sick, I did the quick turns for him in Hopak, but as I'm turning, I'm realizing maybe I'm going a little too fast, because I feel the snot making its way out of my now. I tried so hard to keep it in, but to no avail; it did flu out and landed on the stage. After the show, I ran into my homie, Alicia, who served in Texas with me, so that was incredible. Honestly probably one of my favorite shows. It was just too comical to forget.



- Dallin Lyon

Yesterday was a HOOT! Haha I haven't laughed that hard about my mistakes in a long time... in Charleston I decided to skip the entire snapping part and just go straight to the heel walks... however, I was the only one who was embarrassed, I could actually hear some laughter in the audience haha! Also, Amy's ribbon fell and was sitting at the front of the stage so I decided to "slyly" grab it after mine and Clara's solo, however on the way back my shoes squeaked and I just dragged the ribbons across the floor instead of actually picking them up! We were all laughing about that one. Also, one of my students from EFY 3 years ago was in the audience as a sister missionary and said that it was a miracle for her to be there. The missionaries were so grateful!

- Jillian Iverson

There were a ton of miracles that brought the show together when we got to the venue. All appeared fine and normal, but it didn't take long for the science to give us a hint of what would come. I guess Mark Ohran decided to change some things with the way the moving lights get set up. This wouldn't have been an issue, but he didn't tell anybody to his credit. The team was in Mexico at the time and he was going to China with the YAS and the changes should have theoretically made the job easier however, none of us are professional lighting people and Aaron was still getting used to the way things went together with the system. This meant that our quickest and easiest load actually took nearly 3 times as long as it should have the miracle was that Remy was able to figure out what the changes were and we were able to get the lights up and running. The problem is that the time we got by the time we got these lights ready the team needed to block so the students his job it was to focus. The lights couldn't help with that miracle. Aaron was able to step in and fix it up afterwards. They were doing sound check and setting up the PA system, but we were able to get it all ready to go, however, due to all of the setbacks from before things got rushed, and then the doors opened, miraculously we were only a couple minutes late and all appeared fine as soon as the show started however they realize that the narration was missing. I still have no idea why but Jeanette was able to step in and read them so that worked out OK. Oberek was good except for some mix up with the music playing in the earpieces for the band and the stage monitors, I know the band was flipping, but they played well from my perspective. I think the audience viewpoint was also fine, but pulling that miracle issues getting the PA system to point the balcony as well as the orchestra some struggles with the band microphones and a random queue for the house lights turning on during the show it was good so after a stressful night, things worked out fine due to a ton of miracles happening oh so a couple last notes someone forgot to bring the piano battery charger, but the RSM was able to check their office and found a good replacement for the show. He doesn't

know why it was on the desk, where it came from or who put it there, but it was, and it saved our bacon! God is good.

- Anonymous

#### 5.9.24

I had so much fun at the outreach yesterday. I love meeting the kids, especially a boy that was a little more shy named Eduardo. I remember how inspiring these assemblies were for me in elementary or middle school so it was really fun to be able to give back in the same way.

- Christina Iverson

Sebastian Mexico a few days ago we met a trio from Veracruz. They were awesome musicians and we got to know them pretty well. It turns out the older man knew my sister. He met her at a festival in France 10 years ago when she was in mountain strings. It was so cool to make that connection and get to know people. :)

- Ellie Geslison

We had a crazy show last night. Obeck was on in the monitors and maybe a different track in our ears, but we were a solid line of music ahead. Luckily, we kept it together, but there was a stressful start to the show. My parents drove all the way down from Green to Greensboro from Northern Virginia and it was really special to get to see them and show them the cool show. I've been working on for the past six months, they took the girls out to get cookies after the show and we saw an entire mouse colony in the darkness. I'm so grateful for the opportunity to share the show with my family.

- Emily

I love going to church on Sunday. It just feels like home hearing the testimonies and the members were so inspiring now we're in the states and I'm so grateful for the small things, safe water, good food, air condition bus etc. here's to a fun couple weeks in the states!

- Bailey Tucker

I met the most lovely ladies in the lobby pre-show. The names were Madi and Angela and they were BYU alumni. They made sure to see me after and hug me as if I was one of their own. They were so proud of me and excited for my future adventure in Disney World they want to make sure to be a driving force when it comes to advertising for our shows in the future. They loved everything we did. :)

- Jade Madison Duke

Wow, my heart is so full. Mexico was amazing and the south has been lovely so far. The show last night had some audio issues and I almost slid off Remy's neck so that was exciting lol but afterwards I met the couple from Ukraine. I also met a young woman who moved here from Ukraine recently and she said she felt at home while watching Hopak. Big big love.

- Janelle Wilson

#### **5.10.24**

Some of us went walking around Charleston and met a guy named way from China when he learned that we were BYU students and members of the church. He was so excited he loves the church, but he isn't a member yet he even has two book of Mormons in his car, one in Chinese and one in English. We invited him to the show and he drove 2 1/2 hours to see us. He said we represented the church well and he felt like he should've paid \$250 to see the show not \$25. We didn't outreach were performed almost half of journey in costume at an elementary school. The kids tried to copy us in Salmon and it was so cute. We did an outreach at a high school where I met a senior named jet and we became friends jet came to the show and loved it, a kindergarten girl from the elementary school named Audrey came to the show and said that took perseverance. My dresser separated right before Philippines so Kenzie gave me her after bunco and I barely made it. Fickling. Tana got sick during the show and I had to take her place in Charleston. I have never in her spot before, so it should have been terrible, however, I had Kenzie solo earlier that week so that was a miracle on stage. My partners guided me and told me where to go next it was a really spiritual experience because I felt the Lord helping me. It felt like the Holy Ghost was there through the whispering voices is my partners I love seeing what God can help me do when I put my trust in Him, he is good.

- Amy Hawkes

#### **5.13.24**

This store has been incredible. The people in Mexico in the south have made such an impact on me. There is something so special about being completely immersed in different cultures. You were able to see how similar we really are last week. We performed for a group of junior high students I was able to talk with the teacher and some of her students before, and after the show, she said that most of her students were from different countries Spanish-speaking and they only been in the states for a few months. She said that she was very happy we came because the students don't really get much exposure to different cultures and experiences outside of school and home, this was extra special to me because I'm minoring and teaching English students of other languages which is the exact position this teacher holds. It really showed me that there are so many children and youth who are ready to learn and need education. There

have been so many moments so far on this tour where God has shown me I'm exactly where I need to be. I'm so grateful for my teammates, family and directors. I'm grateful for the people I've met even if it was just a short time and I'm grateful that they've helped me open my eyes to see how beautiful this world is.

- Carly Wanlass

South Carolina at the elementary school outreach I came out in my tongue and costume and one of the kid yelled India ha ha a small group of us met a man named way on the street in Charleston. He loves the church isn't a member yet and has so many good things to say about the latter-day Saints he ended up coming to our show the next evening, which was so cool. The magnolia plantation and Gardens was so fun. Our tour got canceled because of the rain and lightning, but it was still fun to learn about the journey of slavery to freedom and Georgia. We had a workshop with the Uhuru dancers and we learned dances from guinea West Africa. It was interesting to follow the musicians. The sequence and phrases weren't preset. It was a really fun experience, we had a private devotional with Tony Martin. Enjoyed learning about Tony and his story. He inspired me to find as much as possible and better understand my own risk tolerance when choosing a career path. I got to sleep in today. yay!

- Makeila

A dancer from 2011 to 2014 attended the concert tonight. She said that everything was at a very high-level overall better than everything during her era. This was in Nolensville, Tennessee.

- Anonymous

The outreach with a special needs class today was so fun, my partner Josh had lots of energy and love to jump around the whole time. I gave him my BYU dance shirt and he liked it. It was so sweet to spend time with them all!

- Brielle Bowden

Doing the outreach with the special education students was such a highlight for me. My sweet little friend named Jack had a hard time speaking, but had a huge heart. He would jump up and down with excitement whenever he danced and was always excited to copy our movements Jack had a speech impediment, but was able to feel things very well Would stretch out his hands palms and touch the palm of your hand to communicate his joy. It was a very special experience for me learning to communicate through touch.

- Jillian Iverson

Oreo sour patch cookies WHAT?!?!

- Arthur

The people out here are so kind and loving and thoughtful. We met with Tony Martin for a fireside and I was just in so much people couldn't stop laughing and he was just so inspiring in many ways.

- Janelle Wilson

Confirm that Arthur's sour patch Oreos were disgusting two out of 10. Nashville was my favorite city so far I got to go through the country music Hall of Fame and Museum. We also got to explore Broadway and look at all the Honkytonk. I was thriving being surrounded by country music, my memory from Nashville was our devotional with country music songwriter. Tony Martin has written many of the country songs. I grew up, listening to. It was so fun to hear from him. I was fangirling so hard.

- Bailey Tucker

#### **5.14.24**

Fun little broadcast in Birmingham grateful to have my awesome husband by my side. I hope our little dancing interview segments spurs some interest for a show tonight. I'm so excited to see my family who are carpooling up four hours for the shindig. I love talking to the children at the outreaches, they are always so bright and loving on the broadcast, Jeanette introduced us as Jaden and Brade lol.

- Jade Madison Duke

Yesterday at our showing in Nashville, I talked to this cute old man. He told me that he travels for work and has seen plays and performances and productions all over the world and that our show was one of the best he's ever seen. It was also his birthday and he turned 80 years old!

- Christina Iverson

Stacy's husband Chad took the tour bus to get a new portable battery for the keyboard. He saved the day for a show. I love performing for the people of Tennessee especially near Nashville the music hub.

- Madeline Charles

This morning we went to the monument at the peace and Justice memorial center, and the legacy Museum in Montgomery Alabama. The experience walking through both centers, invoke some strong emotions even though parts of the walk-through brought tears to my eyes. I'm grateful that we got to go and learn about those aspects of our nations history some of

which are still felt today it helped me gain a deeper appreciation and greater love for God's children.

- Anonymous

Our performance in alabaster was 11.5 out of 10 says Jeanette. The energy from the audience was moving and we were so amazed by the big beautiful stage. The high school was also so beautiful and spacious before the show. I chatted with a few sweet girls who came with their mom for a girls night the girls all participate in a show choir in Huntsville and they were so excited to see what we had prepared. They were so excited after the show. The girls told me that they wanted to dance at BYU and that they were going to keep dancing because they felt so inspired by our performance.

- Jillian Iverson

#### 5.15.24

My family loved the performance in alabaster. This was the first time my grandparents had seen me dance since I've been in college. They were impressed with our dexterity and even cried at some points. A kid asked me if this is my first time in Alabama, but I said I'm from here to which he exclaimed "your southern I'm southern!" it was so funny ha ha. At the legacy Museum and peace monument my pride was chipped as I saw the horrific installations. Braeden and I were so engrossed in the movie that we missed loading the bus at Odessa's blessing I helped a woman get lemonade and another lady find a chair they were grateful and I said how nice if only the whole world was like this! I was just happy to serve.

- Jade Madison Duke

People are so incredible. The kindness that we have been shown has been so immense also, we went to some memorials and museums. My heart is so full and so hurt at the same time for and in behalf of those who were treated so horrific. I hope that we do these performances and outreaches that we can spread love and kindness, and the light of Christ.

- Janelle Wilson

Last night was our last performance of our tour, which we did Tallahassee Florida. We had a great audience, and they seem to have really lifted. The show mountain strings went out to the lobby after a group, and several people came up to the band and told us how much they loved it and how great we sounded, so nice and couldn't stop complimenting us where we were and an older man with a thick cowboy accent and a cowboy hat kept saying how much he enjoyed it. It has been so fun to perform here in the south and get to interact with wonderful people here I'm so grateful we got to come here, it was my last performance last night although it was

bittersweet it was also a beautiful experience yesterday especially seeing some fellow members of the team in tears during Hopak I'm so grateful for the experiences I've had performing with this amazing group.

- Austin Johnson

We finished our last journey show last night and man. It was a good one despite the way, the backstage area and hallway absolutely reeked of alcohol for breeze and sweaty feet just before the show we found out that Christina had gotten into the mayo clinic, which is so exciting. It was a great show. I have loved to play with Mountain strings and to be a part of the journey shows It's been an incredible one that I could never have imagined that I'd be having college and that has challenged me to grow in ways I'd never never imagined either my favorite part of this particular show intermission. An old woman stood up and approached the stage. She bobbed along with the music grinning it made me realize how powerful music can be to connect with people and transcend boundaries. I'll always think of that woman when we played, this in the future I'm so sad this season of performances come to an end. I'm going to deeply miss our seniors, but I am so grateful to have gotten to know them and share with them such a unique experience.

- Emily Wall

My last performance as a folk dancer for BYU, the waterworks flowed as we performed our final Hopak as it occurred to me how special it is to perform the Ukrainian Hopak and dance with such incredible hard-working and wholesome people. My favorite experience is always watching the Ukrainian ribbons, flow and sway as we glide through the dance, the colors and vibrancy of the ribbons and costumes bring magic to the stage, although it wasn't ever performed, it was the most meaningful. I am incredibly humbled to know and perform with such talented and Christ seeking individuals.

- Jillian Iverson

Peace out Folkdance. It's been real. It's been fun. It's been real fun.

- Jade Madison Duke

Yesterday I got to see my sister's family who I haven't seen in a year. They have a new baby girl and it was so precious to meet her. I'm so grateful for the opportunities this tour has given me to see my family in the south.

- Amy Hawkes

The devotional was a highlight for me mountain strings played if you could hide to co-op, which is one of my favorite hymns and reminded me that Christ like perspectives are valuable

and special. The youth in the audience seemed so touched afterwards, as I spoke to a family from Puerto Rico, they testified of the spirit and light they saw and felt it was a very sweet experience.

- Jillian Iverson

Disney was so fun!

- Anonymous

One of my favorite parts of tour was when we did an outreach activity with the Special Needs students in Nolensville High School just outside of Nashville, Tennessee. This experience reminded me much of my high school experience in a class that organized many activities and events similar to this outreach where we would interact with special needs kids and teach them new skills. Each one of the students had the biggest smile on their face, and you could tell that they loved to get up and get moving. We gifted many of our blue BYU dance shirts to them, and they absolutely loved them. Many students hugged the shirts as soon as they got them. Participating in such a great service activity as a team definitely boosted group morale and cheered us up before our show that night.

- Levi Hancock

### **Tour 2024 feedback**

**Notated by Jeanette Geslison**

#### **Mexico**

“This is the best performance I have seen here in Tomatlan.”

- City official

“Your performance is so stellar. Your group is so tight and excellent. You make me proud to represent our CIOFF sector.”

- Christian Hidalgo (CIOFF International president)

“We want to see you perform another hour. You are so good. Our staff has been texting during your performance that we want you to keep playing”

- Carlos (guide)

Big smiles. Much excitement and energy.



“Celebrate diversity. We promote mutual understanding across cultures. Culture is peace. Culture is the future.”

- Christian Hildalgo

“These students just glow on stage. They are so excellent. I’m so proud of them.”

- Mark Callister, BYU School of Communications

“I cried when you sang.”

- Josue (Sonora dancer)

“Our singer cried when she heard your song.”

- Paul, director Romanian group.

“We learned so much from watching you perform. You perform with your whole body, from your feet all the way up through your body and out through your face. Your students are so beautiful.”

“People are talking about how excellent you are. The applause is louder for your group. I have noticed. People notice.”

- Director of Aguascalientes Folklorico group.

“Your group is a favorite because of the way you were always so friendly with everyone. The groups energy was something that people wanted to see. The dances you perform reflect the kind of amazing people you are.”

- Carlos, Festival guide.

## **Southern States**

“We are so grateful you came. These students come from many different countries and some don’t speak English. The only cultural events they experience are here at school. They really enjoyed it because they were quiet and paying attention.”

- Teacher, Mineral springs Middle School, Winston-Salem, NC

“I thoroughly enjoyed it. It was amazing.”

- Teacher

Carolina Theater, Greensboro, NC

Alumni present:

- Paul Ownby
- Marcy Mockett
- Lynn Rowley 1985
- Nate and Morgan Olsen with 4 children
- Courtney Carter with 7 children
- Rebecca (1993-94)

“You did the Hopak justice.”

- Ukrainian couple (They were baptized 30 years ago because they were inspired by seeing a folk dance show).

You are Amazing  
Incredible  
So professional  
Outstanding

“The music makes it so good. The dancing was so good, but the music makes it amazing. The music was what pushed it over the top.”

You students represent the church so well. They shine their light on stage. They are amazing. They perform with their whole heart.

I wanted to kneel down and worship them at the end. I only paid \$25, and I should have paid \$250.

- Wei

A high school student came after attending the workshop. She said she would only stay for 15 min and she stayed the whole show.

A kindergartener from the morning elementary school outreach came with his mom. A third grader came all by himself. One of the children said: “that takes perseverance.”

“It was so joyful. You make magic. You spread so much joy.”

- Lisa Clancy

“It was electric. Everyone was beaming around me. The students are such great ambassadors. You can tell that they just love each other on and off stage.”

- Stake President counselor.

The students met a man in Charleston and invited him to the performance the next day in Beaufort and he came.

People drove 2-3 hours to see the show in Beaufort.

“I have traveled all over the world and seen so many productions and performances. This show is the best I have seen.”

- 80 year old man, Nolensville

“I love the live music and how you have integrated it into the show.”

“Phenomenal performance.”

“It was so fantastic. Every number was my favorite. You have such a great group. The dancers are so strong. It was so inspiring. We need more of this connection to the community.”

Nolensville Alumni:

- Katie Allred 1996
- Natalie Van Wagoner 2017-19
- Tori Ringer 2014-17
- Leandra Lowe
- Tina Campbell (2008 SPAC)
- Rachel Brems Sneddon’s parents (They were randomly visiting Nashville and saw in the Alumni Newsletter that we were there. She told me that it felt like a “meant to be” coincidence and that she feels that this was her Mother’s Day gift from Rachel in heaven.)

Alabaster (Birmingham) Alumni:

- Jeff Fuller alumni 1995-97
- Jade’s mom

The audience showed so much love.

“It was phenomenal.” “Amazing.” “Every number was so good.” “I loved all of it.”

Standing ovation after Saman.

Immediate standing ovation.

“Thank you for the beautiful dance and music tonight. It was a joy.”

- James Halgren

“The show was exceptional.”

“The show was so well put together. It was so good. That Saman dance was my favorite. It takes “Siegfried Follies” to the next level.”

- School musical directive Dave. Irish dance trained by the McTaggart School, and dance teacher.

Immediate standing ovation.

People drove 2-3 hours to see the show.

Tallahassee Alumni:

- Leanne (1996)