

SchoolTime Study Guide



Ballet Folklórico “Quetzalli” de Veracruz

Monday, May 3, 2010 at 11 a.m.

Zellerbach Hall, University of California, Berkeley

Welcome to *SchoolTime*!

Your class will attend a performance of **Ballet Folklórico “Quetzalli” de Veracruz** on **Monday, May 3 at 11am.**

For the past 20 years, “Quetzalli” has been one of Mexico’s most popular cultural exports, providing audiences worldwide with a “heady rush of tapping heels, dazzling costumes and insistent rhythms!” (*Kansas City Star*). Quetzalli’s programs offer a riveting mix of culture and folklore enfolded within the regional dances of old Mexico, particularly the company’s home state of Veracruz. The dancers are accompanied by Mexican traditional music performed by the acclaimed ensemble, Tlen-Huicani.

Using This Study Guide

You can use these materials to engage your students and enrich their Cal Performances field trip. Before attending the performance, we encourage you to:

- **Copy** the student Resource Sheet on **pages 2 & 3** and give it to your students several days before the show.
- **Discuss** the information on **pages 4-7** About the Performance & Artists with your students.
- **Read** to your students from About the Art Form on page 8 and About the Mexico on page 12.
- **Engage** your students in two or more activities on **pages 19-22**.
- **Reflect** with your students by asking them guiding questions, found on **pages 2, 4, 8, & 12**.
- **Immerse** students further into the art form by using the Glossary and Resource sections on **pages 16 & 18**.

At the performance:

Your students can actively participate during the performance by:

- **Observing** how the dancers tell a story and express ideas and emotions through their movements
- **Listening carefully** to the melodies, harmonies and rhythms of the music
- **Thinking about** the culture and history expressed through the dance and music
- **Marveling** at the skill of the dancers and musicians
- **Reflecting** on the sounds, sights, and performance skills you experience at the theater

We look forward to seeing you at *SchoolTime*!

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1 Theater Etiquette

Be prepared and arrive early.

Ideally you should arrive at the theater 30 to 45 minutes before the show. Allow for travel time and parking, and plan to be in your seats at least 15 minutes before the performance begins.

Be aware and remain quiet.

The theater is a “live” space—you can hear the performers easily, but they can also hear you, and you can hear other audience members, too! Even the smallest sounds, like rustling papers and whispering, can be heard throughout the theater, so it’s best to stay quiet so that everyone can enjoy the performance without distractions. The international sign for “Quiet Please” is to silently raise your index finger to your lips.

Show appreciation by applauding.

Applause is the best way to show your enthusiasm and appreciation. Performers return their appreciation for your attention by bowing to the audience at the end of the show. It is always appropriate to applaud at the end of a performance, and it is customary to continue clapping until the curtain comes down or the house lights come up.

Participate by responding to the action on stage.

Sometimes during a performance, you may respond by laughing, crying or sighing. By all means, feel free to do so! Appreciation can be shown in many different ways, depending upon the art form. For instance, an audience attending a string quartet performance will sit very quietly, while the audience at a gospel concert may be inspired to participate by clapping and shouting.

Concentrate to help the performers.

These artists use concentration to focus their energy while on stage. If the audience is focused while watching the performance, they feel supported and are able to do their best work. They can feel that you are with them!

Please note:

Backpacks and lunches are not permitted in the theater. Bags are provided for lobby storage in the event that you bring these with you. There is absolutely no food or drink permitted in the seating areas. Recording devices of any kind, including cameras, cannot be used during performances. Please remember to turn off your cell phone.



2 Student Resource Sheet

Ballet Folklórico de Veracruz

Questions to Think About:

- What are some examples of Mexico's regional dances?
- Name the different types of song in traditional Mexican music
- What influence did the Spanish have in Mexico?



What You'll See

For their 25th Anniversary tour, Ballet Folklórico "Quetzalli" de Veracruz performs dances from different regions in Mexico. These include a "cowboy dance" from Baja California Norte, a couples dance from Guerrero, a lively dance called the Fandango from Veracruz set to the popular song "La Bamba," and dances from ancient Mexico. Accompanied by the musicians of Tlen-Huicani, the performers recreate the festive atmosphere of a Mexican fiesta on the Zellerbach Hall stage.

Ballet Folklórico "Quetzalli" de Veracruz

Established in 1985 and now led by Hugo Betancourt, "Quetzalli" has become one of Mexico's most popular dance companies. The company comes from the Mexican state of Veracruz, a region with a strong Afro-Caribbean influence and a lively musical traditions. The dancers' vibrant costumes have earned them the nickname "Quetzalli" after Mexico's brightly colored quetzal bird. According to Betancourt, one of the company's goals is to remind Mexican audiences that "they come from a great culture, and they should feel very proud of their roots."

Mexican Folk Dance

Mexico's ethnic roots, colorful history and rich cultural heritage can be clearly seen in its "Ballet Folklórico" or folk dance tradition.

Ancient Dances: The ancient Aztec, Mayan and Toltec peoples all used dance in their religious rituals and community celebrations. Ancient musical instruments and songs played a strong role in the development of traditional Mexican folk music.

European Influence: When the Spanish came to Mexico in the 1500s, they introduced European dances, songs, musical instruments like the violin and guitar and costumes like those worn for Flamenco dance. Later, Spanish colonists and European immigrants brought dances like the waltz, polka, ballet and the Schottische.

Regional Styles: Each region of Mexico has its own dances, which often reflect the area's natural characteristics, climate and traditions.

Below are some examples of Mexico's regional dances:

- The Jarabe Tapatía, Mexico's national dance is from Guadalajara, the capital of Jalisco. As this vibrant courtship dance involves a hat, Americans call it "the Mexican Hat Dance." The dance includes mariachi music, large sombreros and traditional "charro" or cowboy outfits.
- From Michoacan, "La Danza de los Viejitos," or "The Dance of the Old Men," features young men and boys humorously imitating old men. Dancers hobble around on canes, then unexpectedly leap up to delight the audience with their vigorous dancing.
- In the La Danza del Venado, or "the Dance of the Deer," from Guerrero, dancers imitate the graceful movements of a deer. Guerrero's Yaqui people performed this dance as part of a ritual for a successful deer hunt.
- Veracruz's Son Jarocho folk dance is performed by a couple on a wooden platform, or "huapango," that acts as a sounding board for the dancers' vigorous stamping. This courtship dance fuses regional dances and the Spanish flamenco and gave rise to the internationally famous song "La Bamba."

Styles and Influences of Traditional Mexican Music

Corridos – Mexican corridos evolved from Spanish ballads and highlighted love stories and local legends, but also addressed concerns like injustice and death.

Ranchera (country song)– Also influenced by the Spanish ballad, this favorite song form commonly features a 3/4 or 4/4 rhythm and themes of love, sorrow, violence, patriotism and nature.

Polkas– German and Czech immigrants popularized this lively Central European dance and music (as well as the waltz and instruments like the accordion). The norteña (northern) style of Mexican music exhibits this influence.

Pirekuas– Lilted love songs sung in Spanish and Purepecha, the native language of Michoacan.

Sones (the common name given to folk melodies)– A unique mixture of folk traditions from Spain, Mexico, and Africa, the *son* is found in regions including Veracruz, Michoacan, Huasteca mountains, Jalisco and Chiapas, each of which has its own flavor and instrumentation. Musical elements in *sones* can imitate or reflect sounds found in nature, while the lyrics tell of the region's plants, animals and people.

Mexico's Geography and Nature

Sharing a common border on its north with the U.S., Mexico is bounded on the west and south by the Pacific Ocean, to the east by the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea, and on the southeast by the countries of Guatemala and Brazil.

Northern Mexican deserts have plant and animal species that can survive the harsh, hot environment. The rain forests and coastal wetlands of eastern Mexico are home to thousands of tropical plant species and elusive animals like jaguars and quetzal birds. On Mexico's west coast, gray whales swim thousands of miles each year from Alaska to breed in the waters of Baja California.

Mexico's History

The Olmec people established Mexico's first complex society around 1200 B.C.E. Later, the Mayan, Toltec and Aztec civilizations built great cities and pyramids, created beautiful works of art and studied the stars and planets to determine when to plant crops and hold ceremonies.

In the early 1500s, the Spanish arrived in Mexico bringing with them diseases like smallpox, which killed many of the Aztec people. Spaniards also seized and destroyed the Aztec capital, Tenochtilán. The Spanish ruled Mexico until 1821 when the Treaty of Córdoba was signed recognizing Mexico's independence.

3 About the Performance & Artists

Ballet Folklórico “Quetzalli” de Veracruz

Guiding Questions:

- ♦ What types of dances does Ballet Folklórico “Quetzalli” de Veracruz perform?
- ♦ Which regions in Mexico are the dances from?
- ♦ Why is Ballet Folklórico de Veracruz nicknamed “Quetzalli”?
- ♦ Why is it important to Quetzalli that they perform to Mexican communities in the U.S.?



About the Artists

Ballet Folklórico “Quetzalli” de Veracruz is celebrating twenty-five years as one of Mexico’s leading folk music and dance troupes. As one of the country’s most cherished cultural ambassadors, the company has brought the richness and vitality of Mexican culture, folklore and traditions to all corners of the world.

Quetzalli (pronounced kett-SAH-lee) embarks on its anniversary U.S. tour joined by the group Tlen-Huicani of Veracruz, legendary interpreters of the folk music of Mexico and Latin America.

Quetzalli’s Beginnings

Ballet Folklórico “Quetzalli” de Veracruz was founded by Hugo Betancourt, who was immersed in Mexico’s folk music and dance at an early age. His uncle Humberto Betancourt, a well-known musician and composer, instilled in Hugo a passion for Mexico’s cultural traditions. He went on to study folk dance under Maestro Alejandro Gómez Solís, in the Ballet Folklórico Veracruz, and later joined Ballet Folklórico Tonanzintla.

In 1985, with Rosalinda Pérez and Manuel Vázquez, Betancourt created “Quetzalli” with the mission of researching, practicing

and promoting Mexican folk dances. Their brightly colored costumes have earned the group its Aztec nickname “Quetzalli” after the quetzal, a treasured multicolored bird. Today, the troupe has grown from eight to 45 dancers and 10 musicians (17 participate in this tour).

The artists of Quetzalli come from the state of Veracruz, a region in Mexico with strong Afro-Caribbean influences and a vibrant musical tradition. In 1986, the Secretary of Tourism and Economic Development named Ballet Folklórico “Quetzalli” de Veracruz official representatives for the State, and the company has since crisscrossed the globe from Japan to the United Arab Emirates, Peru to France.

Tlen-Huicani

Named Best Folk Music Group by Mexico’s Union of Music and Theater Critics, Tlen-Huicani is led by veteran musician and harp virtuoso, Maestro Alberto de la Rosa, a respected musician and musicologist

who founded the group in 1973. De la Rosa has received multiple national and international awards for his achievements and contributions toward popularizing the folklore of Mexico and Veracruz. In addition to accompanying Quetzalli’s dances, Tlen-Huicani will perform their own musical selections.

A Piece of the Mexican Homeland

According to Betancourt, one of Quetzalli’s most important undertakings is bringing a piece of their homeland to Mexican communities in the U.S. “We want Mexican audiences to remember that they come from a great culture, and they should feel very proud of their roots.” From the Mexican communities enthusiastic response, Quetzalli has succeeded in that mission. “Often we have Mexican people in the audience, people who left the country 10 or 15 years ago and haven’t been able to go back since, and when they see our show they burst into nostalgic tears.”



About the *SchoolTime* Performance

The performance will include pieces from the following repertoire:

ANCIENT MEXICO— DANZAS DE CONCHEROS

Paso de Camino (Pass in the Road)

Aguila Blanca (White Eagle)

Ozomatli

Xipe

GUERRERO

Tierra De Revolucion (Land of Revolution)

El Becerrero (The Calf)

La Gallina (The Hen)

BAJA CALIFORNIA NORTE

La Loba Del Mal (The bad wolf)

Arrieando Vacas (Rounding up the cows)

Sopa de Pelícanos (pelican soup)

VERACRUZ, HUASTECA (INDIGENA)

Procesion de la Virgen

Danza de Chules

Fandanguito

VERACRUZ, SOTAVENTO (JAROCHO)

El Jaqueton (the braggart)

El Trompo (the spinning top)

La Bruja (the witch)

La Bamba (traditional)

MUSICAL INTERLUDE—TLEN-HUICANI

The Performers

Dancers

Citlalli Roldan

Maria Acitlalli Muñoz

Jacqueline Dorantes

Nancy M. Gomez

Diana Luz Gonzalez

Amairany Cortes

Saul Ceballos

Uriel de J. Martinez

Carlos A. Soto

Jose Miguel Montano

Carlos Gonzalez

Victor Velasquez

Musicians

Alberto de la Rosa—*harp, requinto, vocals*

Raul Monge—*percussion, jarana, vocals*

Ruben Melgarejo—*bass, violin, vocals*

Miguel Lopez Sanchez—*guitar, vocals*

About the Dances

“Quetzalli” presents dances from different regions of Mexico, including Guerrero, Baja California Norte and Quetzalli’s home state of Veracruz. With their brilliant costumes, joyous music and passion for the richness of their culture, Quetzalli guarantees to recreate the lively ambiance of Veracruz fiestas on stage.



ANCIENT MEXICO—Danza de Concheros

A faithfully preserved Mexican tradition, the “danza de concheros” or “danza de conquista” is only one of numerous ceremonies that make up a complex ritual. It originates from the Spanish conquest and was used to help spread Christianity. The song’s title is derived from the accompanying guitars made from armadillo shells (*concha* means shell), and the dance begins with the shout, “He is God!” Legend has it that during the most ferocious part of the battle between the Spaniards and the indigenous Chichimecas, a cross appeared in the sky followed by the figure of the apostle James. These dances are still performed in places considered sacred by the indigenous populations, such as the Cathedral in Mexico City (built over an ancient temple) and in front of the Mayan pyramids.

GUERRERO

The state of Guerrero lies along the West Coast of Mexico and includes the colorful mountain town of Taxco and the tourist capital, Acapulco. Quetzalli performs dances from the region known as *tierra caliente*, (hot land) in the eastern part of the state, plus parts of Michoacan and Morelos. The region is known for its *sones* (songs influenced by folk traditions from Spain, Mexico and Africa) and *gustos* (songs played at half-tempo). Musicians play violins, guitars, a drum with a snare or rasp and sometimes a harp. Dances are performed by couples to demonstrate the flirtatious relationship between men and women. The costumes are colorful, reflecting the region’s vibrancy and natural beauty. The dances also invoke the natural world with names like “The Calf,” “The Hen,” etc.

BAJA CALIFORNIA NORTE

The *baile del calabaceado* or “cowboy dance” comes from the area of the Baja peninsula, which borders southern California. Created in the late 50s when the *norteña* (northern) style of Mexican music gained popularity, the dancers mimic movements of the cowboys including jumps, turns and kicks intended to create a cloud of dust underneath their boots.

VERACRUZ—Huasteco Region (Indigenous)

Encompassing several states, this region is the home of the Huastec culture which dates back to the early part of the first millennium. Although Spanish conquerors introduced Christianity to the indigenous cultures in the 1500s, religious ceremonies still retain elements of native American culture. An example seen in one dance is the procession of the Virgin of Guadalupe – often celebrated on December 12th, the day of the Virgin. After her statue or picture is paraded around the town, she takes her place on a pedestal to preside over the festivities. The participants pay tribute to the “Queen of the Americas” with rhythmic movements expressing worship and contrition.

SOTAVENTO—Fandango Jarocho

The rhythm of the *son* is central to celebrations for the Jarocho people of Veracruz communities like Tlacotalpan and Boca del Rio. Son can be heard at birthdays, weddings and events like the *Adoration of the Virgin of the Candelaria* (in February); the *Fiesta of the Crosses* (May), and *Las Posadas* or *La Rama* (December). Old and young alike wear white clothing and sandals and prepare to dance the Fandango. A strong Spanish influence is evident in the music, the dance steps, and in the dress. Originally the conquering Spaniards used the term, *jarocho*, (from an Arabic word meaning “filth” or “dirty”) to describe the native, multi-ethnic population living around the port city of Veracruz and the coastal plain region. Over the years the term has come to be recognized as a source of pride for the people of Sotavento whose ancestry is a mix of European, African and indigenous peoples.

The lively music is led by the harp, the characteristic instrument of the region. You might recognize *La Bamba*, also known as *el himno veracruzano*, (anthem of Veracruz). This is one of the world’s oldest and most recognized melodies. Its origin dates back at least 300 years and incorporates the use of the bright ribbons which the dancers delicately maneuver into a bow—using only their feet!

4 About the Art Form

Guiding Questions:

- ♦ What are *danzas*?
- ♦ How did Spanish colonists and European immigrants influence Mexican folk dance and music?
- ♦ Describe some well-known dances from Mexico.
- ♦ What are some different styles of traditional Mexican music?

Mexico's ethnic roots, colorful history and rich cultural heritage are most clearly illustrated in the country's folk dances. "Ballet Folklórico," or Mexican folk dancing is a carefully preserved tradition passed down from generation to generation over the past five centuries. While some dances are popular throughout Mexico, each of the country's 31 states has its own style. Some of these styles have risen to worldwide fame and have come to symbolize Mexico itself.

Indigenous Influence

Mexico's indigenous dances, referred to as *danzas*, can be traced back to its Mesoamerican civilizations which flourished for 3,000 years prior to the arrival of the first Europeans. The Aztecs, Maya and Toltecs all used dance in religious rituals and community celebrations as a way to appease and honor their gods and to express their beliefs and traditions. A great number of ancient instruments have been found all over Mexico. These whistles, flutes, drums (made of metal, wood and clay), bells, rattles and scrapers that accompanied indigenous dances and songs remain a large part of what defines traditional Mexican folk music. Today, all over Mexico, early dances like the *Dance of the Deer* are still commonly performed.



European Influence

Ballet Folklórico evolved after the Spanish arrived in Mexico during the early 1500s. Spaniards introduced some of the popular European dances of their day, as well as new musical instruments and types of song. In particular, the Spanish flamenco dance made an impact on Mexican folk dance. Its influence can be seen in Ballet Folklórico's tradition of brightly colored clothing and heavy use of



Spanish folk guitar. The Spanish colonists and later European immigrants also brought dances such as the waltz, the polka, ballet and the schottische to Mexico, each of which has lent something to Mexican folk dancing.

Regional Styles

Each region of Mexico has its own dances that reflect the area's natural characteristics, climate and traditions. Some examples are:

Jacinto Region

Mexico's national dance, the *Jarabe Tapatía*, comes from Jacinto's capital, Guadalajara. Derived from European dances such as flamenco, this vibrant courtship dance involves the use of a hat, earning its American name "the Mexican Hat Dance." The *Jarabe Tapatía's* mariachi music, its large sombreros and traditional *charro*, or cowboy, costumes have come to be worldwide symbols of Mexican culture.

Michoacan Region

La Danza de los Viejitos, or "The Dance of the Old Men," is one of Mexico's oldest folk dances, predating the Spanish conquest. In this humorous dance from the state of Michoacan, young men and boys caricature old men. Wearing masks, carrying canes and dressed in traditional clothes (sombreros, long woolen vests, embroidered pants and scarf) they hobble around stiff and unsteady, until they leap up unexpectedly to delight the audience with their vigorous dancing. This dance is believed to have once been a tribute to the Aztec god of fire Huehueteotl, also called the Old God or Grandfather Fire.

Guerrero

Guerrero is home to one of Mexico's most famous folk dances, *La Danza del Venado*, or "The Dance of the Deer," in which dancers imitate the graceful movements of a deer. It originates from the Guerrero region's Yaqui people, who relied on the deer for food and performed the dance in hopes of being blessed with a successful hunt.



Veracruz

Veracruz lays claim to the folk dance *Son Jarocho*. This courtship dance is performed by a couple on a special wooden platform, or *huapango*, which acts as a sounding board for their vigorous stamping. It is a fusion of regional and flamenco dances and gave rise to the internationally famous song *La Bamba*.

Mexican Folk Music

Present-day Mexican music incorporates features from hundreds of years ago, particularly in the percussion instruments used to accompany dance. Little is known about the actual compositions, but music played a major cultural and religious role in the rituals and celebrations of indigenous peoples.

The Aztecs, for example, had a *Cuicacalli*, or *House of Song*. Children were required to attend this school for musical education from the age of twelve.

Cultural Influences

After the Spanish colonization of Mexico in the 1500s, traditional songs and melodies from regions such as Jalisco, Veracruz, Oaxaca and Tehuantepec evolved from Spanish and Indian elements. The Spanish conquistadors brought their music (which was itself infused with Arab, African and various European flavors), plus instruments like the guitar, harp and violin. Africans enslaved in Mexico during the Spanish colonial period also introduced their musical rhythms and instruments.

Additional musical influences came from the Caribbean Islands, South American countries, the southern states of the United States, and European countries such as Germany and France, all places that played a role in Mexico's history.

Styles of Traditional Mexican Music

Corridos – Spanish ballads took new shape and character in Mexico as *corridos*. These songs highlighted love stories and local legends, but also addressed concerns like injustice and death. Many of the *corridos* from long ago remain popular today.

Ranchera (country song) – Also evolved from the Spanish ballad, the ranchera is a song most often in 3/4 or 4/4 rhythm featuring themes of love, sorrow, violence, patriotism and nature. It is probably the most popular of all Mexican styles of music on both sides of the border.

Polkas – German and Czech immigrants popularized this lively Central European dance and music (as well as the waltz and instruments like the accordion) when many came to Mexico in the late 19th century. The influence of this music is seen most clearly in the *norteña* (northern) style of Mexican music.

Pirekuas – These lilting love songs sung in Spanish and Purepecha, the native language of Michoacan, are identified with the Purepecha people, who claim to never have been conquered by either the Aztecs or the Spaniards.

Sones (the common name given to folk melodies) – A unique mixture of folk traditions from Spain, Mexico, and Africa, the *son* is found in many regions, including Veracruz, Michoacan, Huasteca mountains, Jalisco and Chiapas. Each regional *son* has a distinct flavor and instrumentation. The *son* from Jalisco is called the *son jalisciense*, the *son jarocho* or *veracruzano* is from the region around the Gulf port of Veracruz, and the *son huasteco* is from northeastern Mexico.

Because these songs originated in rural areas, many of the musical elements imitate or reflect sounds found in nature, while the lyrics tell of the region's plants, animals and people. Many sones are about animals whose actions reflect human experience or emotion. For example, instead of singing about a person's feelings of loss, the *son* may tell of the lonely bird.

Lyrics can also be highly suggestive, often using imagery involving the courtship of farm animals to describe the relations of men and women. Dancers mirror the *sones'* lyrics, depicting the farmyard pursuits in their movements.



Musical Instruments

Arpa Jarocho: a wooden harp with 32-36 strings wrapped around metal pegs, which allow the harp to be tuned using a key. From Veracruz, Mexico, it is central in the performance of the *son*.

Jarana: a small eight-string guitar from Veracruz with strings arranged in a variety of configurations. It is played almost like a percussion instrument with an accented pattern that mimics the staccato footwork of the dancers.

Requinto: a small guitar with four to five thick nylon strings. It plays single notes and is often used to provide melody and counterpoint.

Pandero: A tambourine made with wood and skin with metal rattles on the sides.

Quijada: Most often heard in jarocho groups, this is a jawbone of a horse or donkey that the musician strikes with a hand to achieve a rattling sound. Its teeth are also scraped with a stick to add a percussive accompaniment.

5 About Mexico

Adapted from the National Geographic website

Guiding Questions:

- ♦ Who were some of Mexico's earliest people and what were some of their achievements?
- ♦ Describe Mexico's different natural environments.
- ♦ Why is Veracruz made up of people from different cultures?

Geography & Topography

Sharing a common border throughout its northern length with the United States, Mexico is bounded on the west and south by the Pacific Ocean, to the east by the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea, and on the southeast by the countries of Guatemala and Belize.

A land of extremes, Mexico has high mountains and deep canyons in the center of the country, sweeping deserts in the north, and dense rain forests in the south and east. Mountains cover much of the land; between the Sierra Madre Oriental mountain range in the west and the Sierra Madre Occidental in the east lie small mountain ranges on the Central Plateau. These areas are rich with valuable metals like silver and copper.

The Yucatán Peninsula juts into the Gulf of Mexico from Mexico's southeastern tip. It was once the home of the Mayan civilization, an ancient culture whose spectacular buildings

provide evidence of its impressive cities and strong agricultural productivity dating back thousands of years.

Nature

Few nations on earth support as many plant and animal species as Mexico. Located partway between the Equator and the Arctic Circle, it is a refuge for animals fleeing the extreme cold in the north and intense heat in the south.

Northern Mexican deserts are full of plant and animal species that have found ways to survive the harsh environment. The rain forests and coastal wetlands of eastern Mexico are home to thousands of tropical plant species and elusive animals like jaguars and quetzal birds. On Mexico's west coast, gray whales swim thousands of miles each year from Alaska to breed in the waters of Baja California.



Olmec head



Spanish style Cathedral in Mexico City



Mexican artist Frida Kahlo



History

The Olmec people, Mexico's first complex society, emerged in the southeastern part of the country around 1200 B.C.E. They were followed by the Maya, the Toltec and the Aztec peoples. These ancient societies built cities and pyramids that were marvels of architectural design, created remarkable works of art, and even studied the stars and planets to determine when to plant crops and hold ceremonies.

In the early 1500s, the Spanish arrived in Mexico. Their colonization of the land introduced diseases like smallpox which killed many of the Aztec people. The Spaniards also seized and destroyed the Aztec capital, Tenochtilán. The Spanish ruled Mexico until 1821 when the Treaty of Córdoba was signed that recognized Mexico's independence.

Government and Economy

A country both of great problems and great potential, Mexico is rich in natural resources including oil, silver, copper and agricultural products. However, political and economic failings have kept much of the population in poverty. The Mexico-United States border is the largest economic divide on earth. For many Mexicans, the chance for a better life lies in the more prosperous United States. Hundreds of thousands of Mexicans come to the U.S. each year, legally and illegally, in search of work.

People and Culture

Mexico is the product of a rich Indian heritage, three centuries of Spanish rule, and a shared border with the United States. Today, most Mexicans are *mestizos*, which means they have a mix of Indian and Spanish blood.

Throughout its history, Mexico has been home to great artists. Archeologists have found evidence of murals, sculptures, and jewelry made by the Mayan and other Mesoamerican cultures. Modern Mexican artists include painters like Frida Kahlo and José María Velasco, muralists like Diego Rivera, photographers such as Manuel Alvarez Bravo and Graciela Iturbide, and sculptors like Francisco Zuniga.

Since the 1930s, *indigenismo*, or pride of Indian heritage, has been a unifying theme of the country. The government strongly supports preserving and fostering traditional craftsmanship. Additionally, Mexico's National Institute of Fine Arts sponsors the National Symphony Orchestra, the Ballet Folklórico and the Modern and Classical Ballet, all of which promote Mexican culture nationally and internationally.

Veracruz

Ballet Folklórico "Quetzalli" de Veracruz and their musical partner Tlen-Huicani share the lively art forms and culture of Veracruz. Located between the Gulf of Mexico and the eastern Sierra Madre Mountains, Veracruz is the Mexican Republic's Veracruz is the oldest city on the Gulf of Mexico and its largest port. Its capitol is Xalapa. The climate of the region ranges from very hot on the coast to quite cool in the higher altitudes.

The production of the state includes areas for agriculture, forestation, cattle grazing, hunting, mining, and various industries. Some of its main products are crude oil, petrochemicals, cocoa, sugar cane, cotton, wheat, silver, iron, copper, wood products and textiles.

Veracruz Culture

The state of Veracruz received its name from Hernando Cortés, the Spanish conquistador who landed at the beach of Chalchihueca on the Gulf of Mexico on April 22, 1519. There he founded the Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz (the rich village of the border of the Cross.)

Because of its importance as Mexico's principle Caribbean and Atlantic sea port, Veracruz has always attracted a mixture of cultures, particularly native Mexican, Spanish and African. During the colonial period, African slaves were brought to work in the fields and shipyards. Since Mexico's independence from Spain in 1821, other groups of immigrants, such as Italians and Cubans, have made Veracruz their home.

Veracruz is known for its fandangos, which are dance festivals held several times throughout the year, often on religious or secular holidays. The most famous fandango is on the Candelaria holiday, celebrated on February 2nd of each year to mark the end of the Christmas festivities.

Mexico Fun Facts

Official Name: Estados Unidos Mexicanos (United Mexican States)

Form of Government: Republic of federated states

Capital: Mexico City

Area: 758,449 square miles

Population: 106,202,903

Languages: Spanish, various Mayan, Nahuatl and other regional languages

Religion: Roman Catholic – 89%, Protestant – 6%, other – 5%

Currency: Mexican peso

Major mountain range: Sierra Madre

Major rivers: Rio Grande, Yaqui

Natural resources: petroleum, silver, copper, gold, lead, zinc, natural gas, timber

Government leader: President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa; the president is both the chief of state and head of government

6 Glossary

Ballad– a song, often with instrumentation, that tells a story using poetic lyrics

Ballet–a classical dance form characterized by grace and precision of movement and by elaborate formal gestures, steps and poses

Ballet Folklórico– a traditional style of Mexican dance that evolved from Mesoamerican and European dance traditions and regional folk culture

Composer– someone who creates music

Composition– the way in which different sounds are put together using instruments and/or voices to create music

Costumes – a set of clothes characteristic of a particular country, period, or people and which may be appropriate for a particular occasion or season

Counterpoint– the use of two or more melodies at the same time in a piece of music

Danzas– traditional dances created by the indigenous peoples of Mexico

Fandango– a lively folk couple-dance usually in triple meter, traditionally accompanied by guitars and castanets or hand-clapping

Fiesta – a festival or religious holiday, especially a saint's day celebrated in Spanish-speaking countries

Flamenco– a style of music and dance from Andalusia, Spain characterized by its lively and improvisational manner of incorporating clapping, singing and stomping into dance movements

Flute– a high-pitched woodwind instrument consisting of a slender tube closed at one end with keys and finger holes on the side and an opening near the closed end across which the breath is blown

Folk dance–movements reflecting the culture, traditions and beliefs of a group of people and passed from generation to generation

Folklore – traditional stories, beliefs and legends passed from generation to generation usually in spoken as opposed to written form

Folk music– traditional songs of a group of people reflecting their culture, history and beliefs

Half-tempo– when the rhythm's speed is shortened to create a slower movement

Instrumentation– the different types of musical instruments used to perform a piece of music

Lyrics– the words to a song

Mariachi – a musical group that performs regional music from Mexico, instruments typically include violins, trumpets, an acoustic guitar, a vihuela (a high-pitched, five-string guitar), a guitarrón (a large acoustic bass) and, on occasion, a harp.

Melody– arrangement of musical notes to create a distinct sound that is pleasant to the ear

Musicologist– a person who studies music

Note–a symbol representing the duration and musical pitch of a sound

Percussion instruments–musical instruments like drums, tambourines or rattles that are sounded by striking, shaking, plucking or scraping their surfaces.

Polka– ballroom dance for couples in 2/4 time created by Bohemian peasants

Rhythm – the patterns of time and beats in music

Schottische– a round dance in 2/4 time that originated in Germany

Sones– folk music from Mexico that has distinct regional varieties

Staccato– composed of abrupt, disconnected parts or sounds, very short musical notes

Troupe– a group of people who tour and perform together, such as the dancers and musicians of "Quetzalli"

Virtuoso– a person with masterly skill or technique in the arts

Waltz– a ballroom dance in triple time with a strong accent on the first beat

7 Learning Activities

World Cultures (Grades 2-6)

Celebrations in Pictures

- Using books, or pictures and descriptions, share some Mexican celebrations with your class. A list of Mexican holidays can be found online at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holidays_and_celebrations_in_Mexico.
- Choose a holiday that Mexico shares with the United States, for example, Christmas or Mother's Day. Or, choose holidays that have common features but are distinct events, like Halloween and the Day of the Dead, or Mexican and American Independence Days. Discuss how the celebrations are similar in the two countries and the ways they differ. Encourage students to compare the history, traditions, legends, culture, art, music and food associated with each holiday.
- Direct students to draw pictures of the two celebrations side by side on a large sheet of paper or on two separate sheets. Students can share their drawings with the class and describe the choices they made.

Social Studies (Grades 3-12)

Research Project: Regions of Mexico

- Post a large map of Mexico on the wall. Divide students into groups and give each group a region of Mexico (like Chiapas, Veracruz or Jalisco) to research. Students may include some or all of the following in their investigation about the region:
 - geography & topography
 - environments and native species
 - historical landmarks,
 - history
 - population
 - performing and visual arts
 - economy
 - celebrations
- Give students markers, crayons, magazines, scissors, glue sticks and any other art supplies to create a collage representing the qualities of their region. (They may draw or paste pictures directly onto the area where their region is located on the large map or on their own sheets and later attach these to the map.)
- Have each group give a short presentation about their region. *Extra credit:* Perform a dance, or sing a song (remember the description of *sones*) from the region.

Dance (Grades K-6)

La Bamba Line Dance

Have students make two lines about 6 feet apart. Students should face each other: boys in one line, girls in the other. To the traditional folk version of the Veracruz anthem, *La Bamba*, guide students through the following simple steps, counting in sets of eight.

1. Take four steps forward toward your partner in the line opposite (R-L-R-L for four counts), take four steps back (R-L-R-L for four counts),
2. Repeat
3. Complete two full turns in place to the right (for eight counts)
4. Move towards your partner and pass left shoulder to left shoulder so that the lines exchange places.
5. Take four steps forward toward your partner in the line opposite, take four steps back
6. Complete two full turns in place to the right (for eight counts)
7. In place, clap in time to the music for eight counts.
8. Repeat sequence 1-7 until the music ends.

Cooperation challenge: Tying a Bow

In the Veracruz folk dance *La Bamba*, men and women dancing in pairs work together to tie a long strip of red material into a bow using only their feet. Invite your students to try this cooperation challenge!

- Have students get into pairs and give each pair a long, narrow strip of cloth or ribbon.
- Give the partner teams one minute to work together to tie the cloth into a bow using both pairs of hands. When they finish they should hold the bow between them.
- Ask them to untie the bow and lay the strip of cloth on the floor.
- Ask them to make their hands into fists and (without using their fingers) now work together to tie the bow. Give them two minutes to complete this.
- After untying the bows, lay them on the floor once more and this time invite students to tie the bow together using only their feet. Give them three minutes for this challenge. If any pair is able to complete the bow, they may be ready to join a Ballet Folklorico group!

Literacy (Grades 3-12)

Ballet Folklorico Poem

- Show the class clips from the internet of Ballet Folklorico de Veracruz in performance. [See the resource section on page 18].
- In groups of five or six ask them to brainstorm words describing what they saw and heard.
- Ask them to work together to create a short free form, rhyming or haiku poem.
- Share the groups' poems.

Additional Resources

Ballet Folklórico Quetzalli de Veracruz

<http://www.artsaxis.com/athome/ballet.html>

Performances

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ept-zCBcaxQ>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lm1Zd7F1kc8&feature=related>

History & Culture

http://www.mondaviarts.com/education/education_pdfs/ballet_folklorico.pdf

<http://www.facts-about-mexico.com/mexican-music.html>

Music & Dances

Listen to a *La Bamaba*:

<http://www.songsforteaching.com/daria/LaBamba.mp3>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BpB1sMHbkT0>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6u3HQcFelbl>

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=16049758>

Community Resources

La Pena Cultural Center

3105 Shattuck Avenue

Berkeley, CA 94705 USA

510-849-2568

www.lapena.org

The Mexican Museum

Fort Mason Center

Building D

San Francisco, CA 94123

(415) 202-9700

www.mexicanmuseum.org

Mission Cultural Center

2868 Mission Street

San Francisco, CA 94110

(415) 821.1155

www.missionculturalcenter.org

8 California State Standards

Dance Grades K-12

1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

Processing, analyzing, and responding to sensory information through the language and skills unique to dance

Students perceive and respond, using the elements of dance. They demonstrate movement skills, process sensory information, and describe movement, using the vocabulary of dance.

2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Creating, performing and participating in dance

Students apply choreographic principles, processes, and skills to create and communicate meaning through the improvisation, composition, and performance of dance.

3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

Understanding the historical contributions and cultural dimensions of dance

Students analyze the function and development of dance in past and present cultures throughout the world, noting human diversity as it relates to dance and dancers.

4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

Responding to, analyzing, and making judgments about works of dance

Students critically assess and derive meaning from works of dance, performance of dancers, and original works according to the elements of dance and aesthetic qualities.

5.0 CONNECTIONS, RELATIONSHIPS, APPLICATIONS

Connecting and applying what is learned in dance to learning in other art forms and subject areas and to careers

Students apply what they learn in dance to learning across subject areas. They develop competencies and creative skills in problem solving, communication, and management of time and resources that contribute to lifelong learning and career skills. They also learn about careers in and related to dance.

Music Grades K-12

1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

Processing, Analyzing, and Responding to Sensory Information Through the Language and Skills Unique to Music

Students read, notate, listen to, analyze, and describe music and other aural information, using the terminology of music.

2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Creating, Performing, and Participating in Music

Students apply vocal and instrumental musical skills in performing a varied repertoire of music. They compose and arrange music and improvise melodies, variations, and accompaniments, using digital/electronic technology when appropriate.

3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

Understanding the Historical Contributions and Cultural Dimensions of Music

Students analyze the role of music in past and present cultures throughout the world, noting cultural diversity as it relates to music, musicians, and composers.

Role of Music

3.1 Describe the social functions of a variety of musical forms from various cultures and time periods (e.g., folk songs, dances).

Diversity of Music

3.2 Identify different or similar uses of musical element sin music from diverse cultures.

3.4 Describe the influence of various cultures and historical events on musical forms and styles.

4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

Responding to, Analyzing and Making Judgments about Works of Music

Students critically asses and derive meaning from works of music and the performance of



About Cal Performances and *SchoolTime*

The mission of Cal Performances is to inspire, nurture and sustain a lifelong appreciation for the performing arts. Cal Performances, the performing arts presenter of the University of California, Berkeley, fulfills this mission by presenting, producing and commissioning outstanding artists, both renowned and emerging, to serve the University and the broader public through performances and education and community programs. In 2005/06 Cal Performances celebrated 100 years on the UC Berkeley Campus.

Our *SchoolTime* program cultivates an early appreciation for and understanding of the performing arts amongst our youngest audiences, with hour-long, daytime performances by the same world-class artists who perform as part of the main season. *SchoolTime* has become an integral part of the academic year for teachers and students throughout the Bay Area.

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This Cal Performances *SchoolTime* Study Guide was written, edited and designed by Laura Abrams, Rica Anderson and Nicole Anthony.

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