



ArtSmarts

2005-2006 Wells Fargo School Matinee Series

Ballet Folklorico “Quetzalli” de Veracruz

April 28, 2006 11:00am
Jackson Hall, Mondavi Center

Dear Teacher,

We hope you find this CueSheet helpful in preparing your students for the school matinee presentation of **Ballet Folklorico “Quetzalli” de Veracruz**. This guide, which is intended to be used in conjunction with the Ethnic Dance curriculum guide, provides information about Ballet Folklorico “Quetzalli” de Veracruz, a history of Mexican music and dance, plus a brief country profile. Also included in the guide is a review of audience etiquette.

Mondavi Center gratefully acknowledges the institutional donors supporting the Arts Education Program during the 2005-2006 Season of Performing Arts:



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BALLET FOLKLORICO “QUETZALLI” DE VERACRUZ



"...a heady rush of tapping heels, dazzling costumes and insistent rhythms."

-- Kansas City Star

Founded in 1985 by Maestro Hugo Betancourt, **Ballet Folklórico "Quetzalli"** (pronounced “kets-AH-lee”) **de Veracruz** has crisscrossed the globe exciting audiences of all ages. Their visual fiesta of culture and folklore features many regional dances of old Mexico—in particular, their home state of Veracruz (birthplace of "La Bamba"). The music, performed live on authentic stringed instruments, punctuates the meticulous movement, colorful costumes, and perfect pulse established by the dancers. Earning standing ovations from Cuba to Malaysia, Quetzalli proves it is one of Mexico's most popular exports!

Founder **Hugo Betancourt** was born in the northern region of Veracruz, known as *La Huasteca*, and was exposed to folk music and dance at an early age. He studied folkloric dance under Maestro Alejandro Gomez Solis in the Ballet Folklórico “Veracruz,” sponsored by the department of popular education. He toured the United States on several occasions with that group and with Ballet Folklórico “Tonanzintla”. In 1985, along with Rosalinda Perez and Manuel Vasquez, Betancourt formed “Quetzalli” and began to put together a repertoire and to collect costumes and resources. Under Betancourt’s direction, “Quetzalli” has grown from 8 members to a

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company of more than 45 dancers and 10 musicians. He has served on the board for the National Association for Grupos Folkloricos (USA) and coordinated their international conferences on two occasions in Xalapa.

Ballet Folklorico “Quetzalli” makes its home in Xalapa, the state capital of Veracruz, where the company operates a school and training program for young dancers. They have performed traditional folkloric dances internationally and have served as the official representatives for the Secretary of Tourism and Economic Development for the State of Veracruz since 1986. Over the years, “Quetzalli” has toured across Mexico, the United States, Canada, South America, Asia, Europe, and the Caribbean. They have performed at the Carnaval of Veracruz every year since 1991 and have taken their famous *comparsa xalapena* to the Carnaval of Havana in Cuba.

The brightly colored costumes of Ballet Folklorico “Quetzalli” de Veracruz earned the group its Aztec nickname, “Quetzalli”, after the treasured multicolored bird, the *quetzal*.

For more information on Ballet Folklorico “Quetzalli” de Veracruz, please visit:

www.sroartists.com/artists/balletfolklorico/studyguide/edubf_studyguide.doc

http://www.virginiaartsfest.com/downloads/sails/2005/BalletFolklorico/Veracruz_all_pages.pdf



SAMPLE PROGRAM

Ballet Folklorico “Quetzalli” de Veracruz’s school matinee presentation will include pieces from this repertoire.

TABASCO

This tropical area is of Olmec and Mayan roots. The dances of the area are characterized by the use of the marimba as well as the *tambores* (drums) and the reed flute. The dance steps demonstrate the celebration of harvest, as well as their petition and thanks to the patron saints of the local communities. Some of the most important fiestas in Tabasco include those for San Pedro, San Isidro, and the Fiesta de la Santa Cruz.

GUERRERO

The state of Guerrero lies along the West Coast of Mexico and includes the colorful mountain town of Taxco and the tourist capital of the country, Acapulco. The dances have strong South American influence, and the region is even known as the “Chilean coast” of Mexico. The antecedent to these dances is *La Zamba* of Argentina and Chile, brought to Acapulco by the trade ships that came from thousands of miles to the south. The use of handkerchiefs is also a custom native to South America, particularly of the Andean countries. The dress is very colorful, as is the region, and the names of the dances, like “The Iguana” and “The Buzzard,” reflect the close relationship to nature.

MICHOACAN

The legend exists that the Tarascans traveled from the north and populated the central part of Mexico, settling in Patzcuaro. The most representative dances of the region express the glorious past and pride of these indigenous peoples who were never conquered during the period of colonization. The music accompanying these dances begins with the violin and has different rhythms. Among the best known dances are “La Costilla,” in which the dancers move flirtatiously around a sombrero, and “Los Arrieros,” dedicated to the old cattle drivers who moved the cattle from one village to another over the stone-paved streets.

BAJA CALIFORNIA NORTE

The “Baile del Calabaceado” is a very popular manifestation of the cattlemen of this region, the northern part of the Baja peninsula which borders southern California. This dance, also known as the “cowboy dance,” was born in the late 50s as the *norteña* musical style began to gain popularity. The rhythm allows the dancers to interpret various movements of the cowboys—including jumps, turns, and kicks—all with the intention of creating a cloud of dust underneath their boots.

VERACRUZ

Totonacapan (Papantla)

The name Papantla means the land where vanilla abounds. It is the home of the Totonacan culture where the world-famous *voladores* (pole flyers) originated. The “Danza de los Guaguas” is a dance which originated with the ceremony of the voladores and honors the spirits of the four cardinal points (north, south, east, west). The steps are generally executed in the form of a cross to signify the four directions and in circles to signify the rotation of time. The costume employs the large *penachos* or solar discs, worn on the heads of the dancers to reflect the rays of the sun and honor their gods. The very stark music is performed with a reed flute and a small hand drum.

HUASTECO REGION (Indigenous)

This region encompasses several states is the home of the Huastec culture which dates back to the early part of the millennium. The Christian religion was introduced to the indigenous cultures in the 1500s by the Spanish conquerors, but the ceremonies retain elements of the Native American culture. The procession parades the Virgin of Guadalupe on a platform, or in this case her image on a banner, around the town. She then takes her place on a pedestal to preside over the festivities. The participants render their tribute to the “Queen of the Americas” with their contrite but rhythmic passes, followed by the women who perform the traditional “Danza de Cintas” or “dance of ribbons.” These are often celebrated on December 12th, the day of the Virgin.

HUASTECO REGION (Mestizo)

La Huasteca includes the northern part of Veracruz and stretches into Tamaulipas, Hidalgo, and San Luis Potosi. The character of the regional music is boisterous and normally sung in a falsetto tone. The traditional instrumentation is violin, jarana, and guitar (or *huapanguera*). The *sones* or tunes of the area are performed at special fiestas called *huapangos*, which normally last as long as bodies are able to endure. The music and dances exhibit strong indigenous influence, as do the patterns in the clothing and the more reserved and humble movements.

SOTAVENTO—Fandango Jarocho

The Jarocho people, cheerful by nature, make their day-to-day lives a continual fiesta—each street and each home is a likely place to celebrate. In February, they celebrate the Adoration of the Virgin of the Candelaria; in May, the Fiesta of the Crosses; and in December, *Las Posadas* or *La Rama*. A birthday or a wedding—all are celebrated to the rhythm of the *son*. The celebrations are still faithfully preserved in communities such as Tlacotalpan and Boca del Rio. A young child easily remembers her grandmother dressing her in a new white outfit and sandals urging, "Hurry little one, we're going to the Fandango, the fiesta is about to start!" The strong Spanish influence is evident in the music, the dance steps, and in the dress. The term *jarocho* was used to describe the native *mestizo* population living around the port city of Veracruz and the coastal plain region. The name comes from an Arabic word meaning “filth” or “dirty,” which is how the conquering Spaniards viewed the natives. But 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 music is lively and led by the harp, the characteristic instrument of the region. “La Bamba,” also known as “El Hymno Veracruzano,” (anthem of Veracruz), 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!

MEXICAN FOLKLORIC DANCE & MUSIC

Mexico has a great dance tradition with its formative roots in the ethnic groups that have become a part of its culture. We see echoes of the pre-Hispanic peoples who were indigenous to the area; the Spanish influence exerted during the conquest which was also penetrated by elements of the Arab, African, and other European cultures; and the African peoples who arrived during the Spanish colonial period as slaves, mainly in the coastal regions in the south of the country. In addition, there are the secondary influences of inhabitants from the Caribbean Islands, South American countries, the southern states of the United States, and some of the European countries which had a direct or indirect intervention in the early history of Mexico.

The *danzas* are an expressive artistic manifestation that give Mexico a particular uniqueness. They are a release of thoughts and sentiments reflecting the pre-Hispanic peoples who wished to express their rites, customs, and traditions, and are a true demonstration of the spiritual values of these ethnic groups. The state of **Veracruz** is rich in this type of folklore; from the north to the south, one may catch a glimpse of any number of *danzas* with their music and color. The Totanacapan people, in particular, contributed *danzas* of great splendor, beauty and significance.

The history of Mexican dance starts with the ancient cultures, which flourished in the country during the 3000 years preceding the arrival of the first Europeans. As early as 1500 CE, we find in the zone of Tlatilco (near what is Mexico City today) a highly refined representation of shamans (medicine men and women or those who worked with the supernatural), acrobats, musicians and dancers. In fact, a great number of pre-Columbian musical instruments have been found all over Mexico. Whistles, flutes, trumpets, ocarinas, drums (composed of metal, wood and clay), bells, rattles and scrapers all accompanied the dances and song of the religious and festive ceremonies. Today, in many regions of Mexico, we can see dances of Pre-Columbian origin such as the *Dance of the Deer*.

The Spanish arrived in Mexico in 1519 CE, and added new ingredients to the culture. Along with the language, the Spanish added new songs, new dances, and of course new musical instruments, which contributed to the diversity of expression. For example, Spanish Renaissance songs have been preserved in Mexico. These ballads took new shape and character and became the typical *corridos*.

In the music and dance of *sones* (the generic name given to folk melodies) such as those of Veracruz, we find the influence of African rhythms which were contributed by slaves who worked the sugar cane in colonial times. Thus, the famous *sones jarochos*, of which *La Bamba* is the most universally known, combine Mexican Indian, Spanish and African elements.

Each region of Mexico has its own dances, corresponding to its physical climate and traditions. For example, there is great difference between the smooth *Zandunga* of Oaxaca, in which the women wear embroidered costumes, and white lace headdresses, and the dynamic, joyful *jarabes* of the states of Jalisco, with its Charros and Chinas stamping the floor to the accompaniment of a typical mariachi band. There is also a strong contrast between the *Dance of the Quetzales* of the central state of Puebla, which derives from the ancient Aztec rites, and the vigorous dance of the northern region, neighboring the United States. These dances are popular versions of such 19th century European dances as the Polka, taken to Mexico at the time of the French Intervention.

MEXICAN FOLK MUSIC

Present-day Mexican music incorporates features going back to pre-Columbian music, mainly in relation to the percussion instruments used to accompany dances. Little is known about the music of the Indians, but it has played a major role in the dances and songs of cultural significance. The Aztecs, for example, had a *Cuicacalli*, or House of Song, in which children received a compulsory musical education from the age of twelve. Poems were always sung or declaimed with a musical accompaniment. The principal instruments used were percussion instruments, drums of terracotta, wood or tortoiseshell, rasps of notched bone or wood, various kinds of rattles and also simple flutes or conch shells, which were also used for transmitting orders during military operations. Some of these old instruments are still used, mainly on the occasion of ceremonial dances, by a few Indian tribes including the Seri, Yaqui, Huicholes and Tzotzilés. The flutes now used, made of bone, clay or reeds, differ very little from those of the pre-Hispanic period.

Today's Mexican folk music also uses more modern instruments, such as brass trumpets, guitars, violins, and harps, and in the south, marimbas. The marimba, based on West African models, consists of a series of strips of wood of different lengths with gourds as resonators. Although almost untouched by European influence, the folk music of the isolated Tarascans of Michoacan and the Yaqui and Seri Indians of Sonora is strikingly melodious.

The traditional songs and melodies of the various regions consist, for the most part, of a mingling of Spanish and Indian elements. In some cases, Moorish, African and non-Spanish European influences can be detected. As any visitor will soon discover, the Mexicans are very fond of singing and they have a wide range of songs. Notable among these are the popular ballads known as *corridos*, used for the diffusion of news, before the coming of the mass media. The wandering bards retold a variety of local gossip but also sang on historical themes like love and death. Many of the old *corridos* have remained popular to the present day. From this type of ballad,

there developed the *cancion ranchera*, a melancholy song that takes as its themes sorrow, violence, and unrequited love. The tunes are usually taken from 19th century Spanish songs and “Mexicanized” for the purpose. The songs of many regions, for example, Jalisco, Veracruz, Oaxaca and Tehuantepec, have a ring of quite unmistakable individuality.

The best known type of Mexican folk music is that of the mariachi bands, which is of Spanish origin, with the addition of French and other European features. The name is probably a corruption of the French word “marriage,” since the French troops in Mexico erroneously believed that these bands played mainly at weddings. The bands, which may be large or small, usually consists of violinists, guitar players, trumpeters and a singer. Originally, these wandering musicians were found mainly in Jalisco state and particularly in its capital, Guadalajara. Now they can be encountered in most parts of the central highlands, wearing the traditional *ranchero* costumes.

(Excerpted from *Baedeker's Mexico*, Prentice-Hall, Inc.)

MEXICO



Map from CIA Fact Book

Full Name: Estados Unidos Mexicanos (United Mexican States)

Capital City: Mexico City

Area: 756,061 square miles

Population: 106,202,903 (July 2005 estimate)

People: Mestizo (Amerindian-Spanish) 60%, Amerindian or predominantly Amerindian 30%, white 9%, other 1%

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

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

Currency: Mexican peso

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

Government Type: federal republic

Government Leaders: President Vicente Fox Quesada (since 1 December 2000); note: the president is both the chief of state and head of government

Sharing a common border throughout its northern extent 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. Roughly triangular in shape, Mexico covers an area of 756,061 square miles.

Mexico has a vast wealth of mineral resources, a limited amount of agricultural land and a rapidly growing population. More than half of the country's people live in the central core, while vast areas of the arid north and the tropical south are sparsely settled. Petroleum and tourism have come to dominate the economy, and industrialization is increasing in many parts of the country.

Internal migration has caused urban centers to grow dramatically and more than two-thirds of Mexicans now live in cities; in population, Mexico City, the capital, is the largest city in the world (though the Mexico City metropolitan area ranks third in population when compared to other metropolitan areas).

Mexico's population is composed of many ethnic groups. At the time of European arrival in the early 1500s, the country was inhabited by people who are thought to have migrated into the New World from Asia some 40,000 to 60,000 years ago by crossing a former land bridge in the Bering Strait. Centuries of isolation allowed the evolution of unique cultural traits among the many separate clusters. Highly organized civilizations occupied various regions for at least 2,000 years before European discovery.

At the time of European arrival, the greatest number of people lived in Mesa Central under the general rule of the Aztec empire; still, many separate cultural groups thrived in this region, among them speakers of the Tarastec, Otomi and Hahuatl languages. Outside of the Mesa Central were numerous other cultural groups, such as the Maya of the Yucatan and the Mixtec and Zapotec of Oaxaca. The splendid Aztec cities of the Mesa Central were marvels of architectural design, irrigation technology and social organization. Spectacular Mayan ruins in the Yucatan give evidence of widespread urbanization and intense agricultural productivity dating back to well before the birth of Christ. In many ways, the Indian civilizations of Mexico were more advanced than their Spanish conquerors.

Because of its ethnic and regional diversity, as well as the socioeconomic divisions within the population, Mexico is culturally heterogeneous. Among rural peoples there are strong regional affinities and allegiances, often referred to as *partia chica* ("small homeland"), which help to perpetuate cultural diversity. The large number of Indian languages and customs still extant, especially in the south, also accentuate cultural differences. In an attempt to unite the nation culturally, by identifying a uniquely Mexican culture, the government has supported indigenous folk arts and crafts as well as the European-inspired classical arts. Since the 1930s, *indigenismo*, or pride of Indian heritage, has been a major unifying theme of the country. The National Institute of Fine Arts sponsors the National Symphony Orchestra, the Ballet Folklórico, and the Modern and Classical Ballet, all of which perform nationally and internationally to promote Mexican culture.

Folk and popular culture also receive support through government bodies, among them the Native Institute, which seeks to preserve and stimulate traditional craftsmanship.

"Mexico." Encyclopædia Britannica. 2006. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 10 Mar. 2006
<<http://search.eb.com/eb/article-27411>>.]

VERACRUZ

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). It is located between the gulf coast of Mexico and the eastern Sierra Madre Mountains; the capital of the state is Xalapa. The climate is diverse and ranges from very hot on the coast to quite cool in the higher altitudes. The state is bordered to the north by Tamaulipas, to the west by San Luis Potosi, Hidalgo, and Puebla, and to the south by Tabasco, Chiapas, and Oaxaca. The gulf coast measures 684 kilometers (approximately 425 miles) with the most important ports being Veracruz, Tuxpan, Minatitlan and Coatzacoalcos. The production of the state is varied and includes areas for agriculture, forestation, cattle grazing, hunting, mining, and various industries. Some of the main products include crude oil, petrochemicals, cocoa, sugar cane, cotton, wheat, silver, iron, copper, wood products and textiles.

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

THINK ABOUT IT!

Talking with your teacher, friends and family about a performance after attending the theater is part of the experience. When you share what you saw and felt, you learn more about the performance. You can now compare ideas and ask questions and find out how to learn even more. Here are some questions to think about:

1) What do you think of when you hear the words “Ballet Folklorico”? Tutus and toe shoes? Do you imagine dancers in tights doing leaps and swirls? Ballet Folklorico actually means *folk dancing* or the *dancing of folks-people*. A good definition of folk music or dance is music or dance which is created for the enjoyment and expression of the performer and not for the public. Do you perform folk music? Have you ever created music or dance only for your own enjoyment?

2) One of the most common themes in folklore is what is found in one’s surroundings and in nature. Animals, plants, and the land are all part of nature and all are reflected in the dances performed by Ballet Folklorico “Quetzalli” de Veracruz. See if you can recognize different animals interpreted on the stage. How do the performers get you to imagine that you can see animals?

Vocabulary

el toro: the bull

el zopilote: the buzzard

la iguana: the iguana

los gallitos: the little roosters

zacate: hay

el buey: the ox

la bruja: the witch

3) What sort of dance did you expect to see from Mexico?

4) How would you describe the Ballet Folklorico “Quetzalli” de Veracruz performance to a friend?

5) What feelings did you have while you watched the dancing and listened to the music?

6) What did you like best and why? Was the program different from what you expected?

How?

This CueSheet was written by Anett Jessop, Graduate Researcher, Davis Humanities Institute.

ATTENDING THE THEATER

What is expected of student audiences at the matinee:

- * Enter the auditorium quietly and take seats immediately;
- * Show courtesy to the artist and other guests at all times;
- * Demonstrate appreciation for the artist's work by applauding at the appropriate times;
- * Refrain from making unnecessary noise or movements;
- * Please eat lunch before or after the performance to avoid disruption;
- * Please turn off cell phones and pagers;
- * Flash photography is strictly prohibited;
- * Relate any information acquired from the pre-matinee discussion to the new information gained from the matinee.

What you can expect of your experience in a performing arts theater:

A theater is a charged space, full of energy and anticipation. When the house lights (the lights that illuminate the audience seating) go down, the excitement level goes up! Theaters are designed so that the voices of the singers and actors and the music of the musicians can be heard. But this also means that any sound in the audience: whispering, rustling of papers, speaking and moving about, can be heard by other audience members and by the performers. Distractions like these upset everyone's concentration and can spoil a performance.

The performers on stage show respect for their art form and for the audience by doing their very best possible work. The audience shows respect for the performers by watching attentively. Applause is the best way for audience members to share their enthusiasm and to show their appreciation for the performers. Applaud at the end of a performance! Sometimes the audience will clap during a performance, such as after a featured solo. Audience members may feel like laughing if the action on stage is funny, crying if the action is sad, or sighing if something is seen or heard that is beautiful. Appreciation can be shown in many different ways, depending upon the art form and the culture(s) of the people in the audience. While the audience at a dance performance will sit quietly, other types of performance invite audience participation.