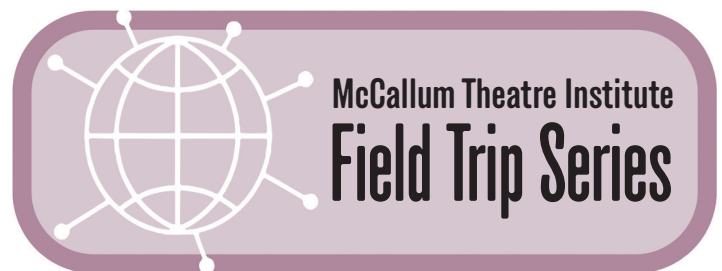


2011 > 2012 Learning Link

Ballet Folklórico De Antioquia, Colombia

Tuesday, January 31, 2012, 9:30am & 11:00am

Recommended Grades: K-12



A WORLD OF MUSIC, DANCE, THEATRE & PERFORMANCE

Learning Links presents
Ballet Folklórico de Antioquia, Columbia
Tuesday, January 31, 2012
9:30 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.

"We welcome you into our dream."

— Ballet Folklórico de Antioquia

Connecting to Curriculum and Students' Lives!

History & Geography: Colombia, South America, Latin culture, varieties of geographical feature

Arts: dance, physical theater

What is it?

What comes to mind when you hear the words Ballet Folklórico? This company of twenty dancers and nine musicians wants you to rethink that. In the performance under investigation here, an entire panorama of styles – some of them quite unexpected – roll out before our astonished eyes. From the impetuous moves of the *Mapale* (with its African influences) to the seductive rhythms of the Cumbria; from the "flinty black" beat of the Colombian coast to the indigenous melodies of the Colombian high plains; there is a diversity here which speaks to the variety of cultures and geographical features of which this teeming country is formed. Of course there are the traditional moves one associates with Latin folk dance, as well as the bright garb in primary hues. You'd expect that. But then, too, there are the lithe, supple athletes in beveled outfits reminiscent of what noble indigenous races wore, and whose movement suggests ritual. There are the costumed figures, whose antics convey stories not through words but through movement. There are celebratory dances whose saucy, exuberant maneuverings recall the pageantry of *Carneval*. Are these the same dancers each time – differently clad and engaged in such contrasting choreography? Yes, and the giveaway is the high level of artistic rigor, the precise and controlled movement, and the joyous expression which uniformly characterizes each number. What a kaleidoscope!

¡Ay, caramba!

Who Does It?

1991. That's the year that Albiero Roldan Penagos founded this company in the city of Medellin. He had the idea of highlighting through dance performance the different strands of Colombian culture. He was especially interested in exploring the connection between different geographical locations and the dance forms particular to each. Twenty years later his dreams have been realized. Today, Ballet Folklórico de Antioquia is featured on the stages of the world, recipient of international acclaim. Among its many awards is a Gold Medal from the World Folk Olympics at Dijon, France. The performance today forms part of Ballet Folklórico de Antioquia's first United States tour.

You get a sense of what a far sighted leader Senor Penagos was when you take into account the fact that Ballet Folklorico de Antioquia operates not only as a performing arts organization but as a training academy as well. Also formed in 1991, the Academy of Performing Arts focuses, as you might imagine, on the study of Colombian folk dance. Here, students are not only immersed in the native tradition – but also receive rigorous training in ballet, contemporary, and modern dance forms.

“In this show we wanted to collect some of the diversity of the folklore of Colombia with ancestral rituals, celebrations, and carnivals that are part of the Latin idiosyncrasy. These skills are in the use of the elements at work and the nuances of the color of the mountains, plains and shores of this wonder geography.” —Juan Camilo Maldonado, General Artistic Director

What Are Its Contexts?

It should come as no shock that as something so tied to a particular culture, folkloric dance – when we speak of it – must be addressed not in generalities but in specifics. There is a wealth of information on Mexican folkloric *baile* available – but it is Colombian with which we are concerned here.

Let’s start with *Cumbia*. A dance of courtship, this flavorful import from the north coast (though its greatest enthusiasts were in the Andean region) features men and women paired. The woman waves her skirt in a playful bid for the man’s attention while balancing a candle in her other hand. The man dances upstage of her, one hand propped behind his back, the other flourishing a red kerchief. The music accompanying this ritual conveys an African influence. Amusingly, this dance – now a staple of the concert hall – was once deemed too lower-class for general consumption.

The *Mapale* also treats the theme of courtship. Brought to the shores of Colombia by African slaves from Guinea, this dance features a frenetic rhythm. Want to know why? Those slaves, observing the frantic flopping about of the Mapale fish out of water, tried imitating its moves – and voila! a new dance was created.

The *Joropo* – though more usually associated with Venezuela – also figures in here. Strongly resembling a waltz musically, the dance which accompanies it also contains waltz-like hand activity, movement of the feet, and turns. Other prominent components include sweeping movements forward and backward as well as the *de rigeur* foot stomp.

Much of the music in this performance derives from the north coast – the sandy beaches of the Caribbean. Not as populated as other areas of the country, this region was not so attractive to the Spanish settlers who felt, among other things, that the area was unhealthy. As a result, African slaves, escaping, often headed for the coast, knowing they would be largely overlooked there. This, then, is why so much of the music from this region sports a distinctly African beat.

Colombia

- constitutional republic in northwestern South America.
- bordered to the east by Venezuela and Brazil; to the south by Ecuador and Peru; to the north by the Caribbean Sea; to the northwest by Panama; and to the west by the Pacific Ocean.
- shares maritime borders with Venezuela, Jamaica, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica.
- a population of over 46 million people
- the 29th largest population in the world and the second largest in South America, after Brazil.
- the third largest population of any Spanish-speaking country in the world, after Mexico and Spain.
- white, sandy beaches, hills, snow-capped mountains, unending plains, jungle, exotic and lush vegetation, archaeological sites, modern cities and peaceful colonial-style villages which seem to be suspended in time.

To get ready for the performance, students could research these:

Colombia
folkloric baile
geographical-cultural connections
African rhythms

Here's a 60 minute lesson you could teach to help prepare students for this work:

Line of Inquiry How does Ballet Folklorico de Antioquia explore connections between geographical locations and dance forms?*

(*A line of inquiry is a question that generates a lesson.)

Ask: What do we mean when we say culture?

Short discussion: What are some cultures we know of? Which cultures have we studied? What are some of the things we know about that culture?

In table groups: Choose a culture you all know a little something about. Together, come up with a way of moving that you think goes along with that culture. (One of these examples might be useful for-instance: Irish step dancing; Argentinian tango; Spanish flamenco stomping.)

Willing groups show their movement. After each silent demonstration (students who are presenting should be discouraged from explaining what they're about to show), observers describe what they've seen. No detail is too small. Have students focus on adjectives and verbs rather than on sentences laden with interpretation.

Ask: Why do you suppose this dance or way of moving is tied to this particular location (country)?

Contextual tidbit: Usually a particular dance rises out of a particular location. The tango, for example, rose out of the streets of Buenos Aires – a dance for and by poor people in the beginning. In the performance we're going to see, each of the dances comes from a particular location in Colombia. Ballet Folklorico de Antioquia is especially interested in the connection between location and dance. Let's watch this clip.

YouTube clip (if firewall on campus, download to laptop the night before?):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JdnSqDv0dxY>

(Just cut and paste in your browser – and the clip will come up. The first dance is the better one to present. It takes around 6 and ½ minutes; you may want to show just a part?)

Pairs: turn to a neighbor and together make a list on paper of all of the adjectives and verbs you can come up with to describe what you saw and heard.

Share these in the whole group.

Ask: What kinds of things will you be looking for in the performance?

After coming to the theater, students could research these:

ballet
Ballet Folklorico de Antioquia
Spanish slave trade

Here's a 45-60 minute lesson you could teach after students have experienced the work:

Discussion: Have students take a look back at the performance. Which moments stood out, and why? How did the dancers use their bodies? How would you describe their movement? What were the different numbers – and how did they contrast? What clues did you get as to geographical genesis of a particular dance?

In table groups: Come up with several moves you recall from the performance. Try putting them in the order in which they occurred in performance.

These are then shared with the whole class. Observers describe what they see – in adjectives and verbs.

Ask: What does seeing these moves again help us remember about the performance? How did the dancers interact? What additional information did they offer to help you understand the dances? What emotions were expressed by the dancers? What makes you say that?

Individuals: Write a paragraph on one thing you found especially interesting about the performance – or if you prefer, draw the moment in the performance you remember the most strongly.

“The magic of live music and interaction with the dancers where everyone is part of the scene...motivates the public to feel like standing up and becoming part of the show.” — Juan Pablo Acosta, Music Director

What do YOU think?

How would you answer these questions --- and how could these questions be adapted for student use?

How did the dancers (and choreographers) use the stage space?

How did they use different levels --- and with what effect?

How were the costumes designed? What colors predominated? In which ways did the costumes become an active part of the performance?

How did the dancers use their bodies? Which physical movements specifically defined a given dance? How would you describe posture & stance?

How did they create characters?

If there were contemporary elements, what were they & where did they show up?

How were theatrical elements like conflict and resolution used?

What role did humor play in this presentation?

How was tempo explored in this performance?

What verbal comments were made – and how did these assist in your understanding of the work?

What period(s) and culture(s) did the music suggest? How did musicians and dancers interact? How did music and movement affect each other?

How was lighting a contributing feature?

What kind of rhythm (or other effect) was created through the sequencing of numbers?

What are some themes treated in this piece?

What value lies in finding connections between geographical location and indigenous dance?

Internet

Ballet Folklorico de Antioquia

<http://www.bfda.org/es/>

May be helpful. Warning: not all images may be suitable for younger students.

Cumbia

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cumbia>

Colombian music

HYPERLINK "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_of_Colombia"http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_of_Colombia

Colombian music and dance

<http://www.gowealthy.com/gowealthy/wcms/en/home/articles/entertainment/art/Music-of-Colombia-1212485179044.html>

Comprehensive article with some good Colombian contextual articles.

Official Republic of Columbia website

<http://colombia-espanol.tripod.com/>

More on Columbia

<http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Colombia.html>

Books

A Kid's Guide to Latino History: More than 50 Activities

By Valerie Petrillo

Reading level: Ages 9-12

Publisher: Chicago Review Press (August 1, 2009)

ISBN-10: ISBN-10: 1556527713

History and hands-on activities introduce children to the Latino cultures that are shaping our society. The book addresses a broad historical scope. The more than 50 activities, games, and crafts help to bring Latin American cultures to life. Children can learn how to dance the merengue.

Meet Our New Student From Colombia (A Robbie Reader)

By: Rebecca Thatcher Murcia

Reading level: Ages 9-12

Publisher: Mitchell Lane Publishers (August 1, 2008)

ISBN-10: 1584156503

A new student from Colombia is joining Carol's third-grade class and everyone is curious. It is beautiful, with colonial cities, the Amazon rain forest, and the drama of the Andes mountains.

Biblioburro: A True Story from Colombia

By: Jeanette Winter

Reading level: Ages 4-8

Publisher: Beach Lane Books; 1 edition (June 8, 2010)

ISBN-10: 9781416997788

A Colombian schoolteacher with a passion for reading, he had so many books in his house that he decided to take them to children high up in the mountains where no libraries existed. With the help of two burros, Soriano made the mountainous trek each weekend to spread literacy where it was desperately needed.

Colombia (South America Today)

By: LeeAnne Gelletly

Reading level: Ages 9-12

Publisher: Mason Crest Publishers (September 2007)

ISBN-10: 9781422207024

CDs

Great Colombian Cumbias: The 70's

Release Date: 2011

Label: Sony U.S. Latin

ASIN: B004Z0QYM4

The Essential Guide To Colombian Music

Release Date: 2008

Label: Tropisounds Corp.

ASIN: B0010N0KVE

"We mean to be the best cultural ambassadors for our country."

— Ballet Folklórico de Antioquia