

PACIFICO DANCE COMPANY

THURSDAY
MARCH 22 2018
9:30 AM & 11 AM



2017 > 2018
FIELD TRIP SERIES

BROADEN THE HORIZONS
OF YOUR CLASSROOM.
EXPERIENCE THE VIBRANT
WORLD OF THE ARTS
AT THE McCALLUM!



LEARNING LINKS

McCALLUM THEATRE EDUCATION
PRESENTS

PACIFICO DANCE COMPANY

WEDNESDAY
JANUARY 24 2018
9:30 AM & 11 AM

"I knew if I was
going to be doing
Mexican folk dancing ...
it was going to be theater."

> ADRIANA ASTORGA-GAINEY
FOUNDER
PACIFICO DANCE COMPANY

Connecting to Curriculum and Students' Lives!

HISTORY & CULTURE > Mexico

GEOGRAPHY > The many states within Mexico; Los Angeles, California

ARTS > Ballet, modern dance, theater, folk dance

EXPANDING THE CONCEPT OF LITERACY

What is a "text"? We invite you to consider the performances on McCallum's Field Trip Series as non-print texts available for study and investigation by your students. Anyone who has shown a filmed version of a play in their classroom, used a website as companion to a textbook, or asked students to do online research already knows that "texts" don't begin and end with textbooks, novels, and reading packets. They extend to videos, websites, games, plays, concerts, dances, radio programs, and a number of other non-print texts that students and teachers engage with on a regular basis.

We know that when we expand our definition of texts to the variety of media that we use in our everyday lives, we broaden the materials and concepts we have at our disposal in the classroom, increase student engagement, and enrich learning experiences.

Please consider how utilizing your McCallum performance as a text might align to standards established for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language.

How do we help students to use these texts as a way of shaping ideas and understanding the world?

Please use this material to help you on this journey.

NON-PRINT TEXT > any medium/text that creates meaning through sound or images or both, such as symbols, words, songs, speeches, pictures, and illustrations not in traditional print form including those seen on computers, films, and in the environment.

THE WORK OF ART

A NON-PRINT TEXT FOR STUDY

WHAT'S IT MADE OF? HOW CAN THIS WORK SERVE AS A COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS-MANDATED "TEXT" FOR STUDENT STUDY IN THE CLASSROOM?



What distinguishes art from popular entertainment? Where is the line that divides folk culture from concert hall repertoire? Don't bother looking for such boundaries in the work of Pacifico Dance Company. Instead, notice how seamlessly founder Adriana Astorga-Gainey and her troupe of dancers weave together elements of modern dance, ballet and native dances of Mexico. Even to write the name Mexico, as if it were one place rather than a multitude of places, somehow seems to mislead the reader a bit where this particular work of art is concerned. Each segment of the Los Angeles based company's presentation keys into a different area – geographically, culturally – of the expansive country and the differences between each Mexican state are striking and indelible.

From Chiapas, for example, where each person is believed to have a spiritual animal double (what would yours be?); dance is strongly indigenous yet influenced by other cultures. Pacifico offers *Valz Chipas* for evidence – an exclusively female ensemble in waltz (!) form. A second selection, *La Tortuga* (The Turtle) continues the exploration in duet form.

Chihuahua, a larger state, has been further influenced by outside cultures. The polka, chotis, and redovas, central to Chihuahuan dance, come from Central Europe originally, but take on their own Mexican character, through a natural distillation of time and acculturation. Haven't you always wondered why the accordion shows up in Austria AND Mexico?

Of course, Jalisco may provide the images and sounds you most associate with Mexican culture. Just think of the mariachis, the black charro outfits tightly tailored to muscular builds, the sombreros and the Mexican hat dance. Pacifico performs *Fiesta en Jalisco* with mariachi accompaniment in tribute to Amalia Hernandez, seminal figure in the folkloric tradition.

Choreographic "postcards" from the Michoacan and Guerrero areas round out the presentation. Viva México!



THE ARTISTS

WHO HAS *PRODUCED*
THIS TEXT FOR STUDY?

There are too many dancers in this troupe to speak of them individually, and indeed each functions so well in the ensemble that it is perhaps enough to point to the high level of their physical prowess and dedication collectively. We say dedication because you should know that these hard working dancers may also be going to school or holding down other jobs. It is a labor of love – and a calling. Each of the dancers senses that he or she is not only advancing a tradition but also sharing in Adriana Astorga-Gainey's vision as she infuses tradition with ballet and modern dance elements.

Madame Astorga-Gainey – a Los Angeles native – first encountered folkloric dance in Mexico City. Her father, a ballroom dancer, would take his daughters on summer jaunts to the Palace of Fine Arts. Transfixed by what she saw, the young Adriana exclaimed, "Daddy, this is what we want to do!" Summer classes in Mexico subsequently grounded her in the techniques and traditions, which flowered in the early years of the company she founded in January 1992. Originally called the Ballet Folklórico del Pacífico, her fledgling organization filled a gap in the Los Angeles cultural scene. Not content to merely curate traditional dance, she began inviting choreographers to create dances for her company, which mixed in modern themes and contemporary moves. Trailblazers!

"I wanted to explore some more contemporary issues and ideas and I knew that the ... traditional wasn't going to be able to do it [alone]... The only way would be to fuse the two together."

> ADRIANA ASTORGA-GAINEY
FOUNDER
PACIFICO DANCE COMPANY

CONTEXTS

WHAT INFORMATION SURROUNDS THIS TEXT FOR STUDY & COULD HELP MAKE STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT WITH IT MORE POWERFUL?

In tying this work to a locale, do we speak of Mexico or Los Angeles? Both maybe, since Pacifico Dance Company is an amalgam. Will we need to adjust our view of Los Angeles in order to think of it as a world center of dance? Consider the list of artists who have lived and worked there: Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, Martha Graham, Lester Horton, Bella Lewitsky, Alvin Ailey and Twyla Tharp. Los Angeles County counts more than one hundred

nonprofit dance companies among its cultural emissaries. It's probably no accident that Pacifico Dance Company got its start in this fertile environment.

If we push farther back in time in considering Pacifico's antecedents, we must acknowledge the substantial influence of Amalia Hernandez, which has extended far beyond the borders of her native Mexico. Founder and choreographer of Ballet Folklórico de Mexico, she trained in the modern dance field and shook the earth by combining modern ballet moves with folk dance. The school she established, moreover, provided Adriana Astorga-Gainey with her own first rigorous training.



The name Chiapas derives from the Nahuatl word for the river of Chia. Fertile with greenery and teeming with animals, this state is home to the modern descendants of the Mayans. You could call it paradise. Among its treasures are the falls at Agua Azul and the Palenquian ruins.



The working people of Chihuahua are the ones who adapted the Central European dances and music to native styles. During the Revolution (1910), exaggerated moves like leaping and jerking in fast, repetitive motion stretched these social dances into something new – a kind of satirical commentary on the former gentry.



TO GET READY FOR THE PERFORMANCE, STUDENTS COULD RESEARCH THESE:

- > MEXICO
 - > STATES IN MEXICO, ESPECIALLY CHIAPAS, CHIHUAHUA, JALISCO
 - > FOLK DANCING
 - > BALLET
 - > MODERN DANCE
-

HERE'S A 60-MINUTE LESSON IN COLLABORATION & PROBLEM-SOLVING YOU COULD TEACH TO HELP PREPARE STUDENTS FOR THIS WORK:

LINE OF INQUIRY – LOI is an essential question that generates a lesson:

How does Pacifico Dance Company use choreographic choices to morph traditional Mexican folk dance into performance art?

Show students a video clip of Mexican folkloric dance: www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-ChH8Bu6Zw

Deepen students' noticing by asking questions such as:

- > What do you notice?
- > What stands out to you about the clothing?
- > can we describe the movement?
- > What about patterns in the dance?

Show the same clip a second time. Ask students to look for patterns in the dance. Suggest they try to memorize one, as best as they can. In pairs, students try reproducing one of the patterns they noticed.

A volunteer pair demonstrates.

QUESTION

What patterns are we seeing? Teach about how dance and Mexican cultures are interwoven.

QUESTIONS

Other things besides dance that rise out of – and preserve – cultures? What could change these things? How might the cultures themselves change? What influences do you think could alter this form of dance? How could this dance continue on, and yet evolve?

At the theater we will see a version of this kind of dance which has been changed in some ways by the people who put it together. Remember to look for these changes at the show. Meanwhile, use your imagination and try to guess how Pacifico Dance Company changes these traditional dances. Write a paragraph about what you think these changes will look like. Here's a little hint from the company director, "I knew if I was going to be doing Mexican folk dancing ... it was going to be theater."

AFTER COMING TO THE THEATER, STUDENTS COULD RESEARCH THESE:

- > PACIFICO DANCE COMPANY
- > DANCE IN LOS ANGELES
- > AMALIA HERNANDEZ

HERE'S A 45/60-MINUTE LESSON YOU COULD TEACH AFTER STUDENTS HAVE EXPERIENCED THE WORK:

Have students review their paragraphs. Then write another paragraph comparing and contrasting what you thought you would see versus what you did see.

GROUP SHARE

What surprised us in the performance? What stood out? Your favorite part(s) and why?

QUESTION

Can anyone, using your body, show us a move or moment you recall from the show?

Volunteers try this. The rest of the class copies them.

QUESTION

What do you notice about those moves? When you make moves like that, what are you expressing – culturally? Emotionally?

Read a curricular story connected to Latino (ideally Mexian) culture.

QUESTION

Which parts of this story have to do with traditions? How could we retell this story giving it a more modern feel?

STUDENTS BREAK INTO SMALL GROUPS

You are a company of dancers and one of you is a choreographer. Together, you must create a dance based on the story we just read. Today you aren't actually making the dance; instead you are planning what that dance will look like. You can write down your plans, draw them, or tell the class orally about it.

Share these choreography plans. Question observers about the details of what they're seeing.

*"It can be an experience
that you come out and say,
Wow!"*

> ADRIANA ASTORGA-GAINEY
FOUNDER
PACIFICO DANCE COMPANY

WHAT'S YOUR READ OF THIS NON-PRINT TEXT?

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS - AND HOW COULD THEY BE ADAPTED AS GUIDING QUESTIONS TO SPARK STUDENT DISCUSSION?

- > What are some adjectives which describe the different sorts of energy used in the performance?
- > How are these different dances sequenced?
- > What's the effect on traditional dances of layering in these dance (ballet and modern, for example) elements?
- > What makes a certain dancer stand out for you in the performance?
- > What are some of the skills in evidence? What skills are implied?
- > What are the different groupings being used?
- > How are the dances with narrative different from those without?
- > Which was the most powerful moment for you personally? Why was it?
- > If you were, like Adriana Astorga-Gainey or the other choreographers, in the position of making artistic choices in the fashioning of this performance, would you make different choices? What would they be, and why?
- > How are the dances of other cultures (besides Mexico) represented in theatrical settings – or how could they be?
- > Are certain ways of moving more prevalent in certain pieces? How about certain ways of moving in certain cultures?
- > Compare and contrast Mexican folk dance with that of other cultures.

INTERNET

PACIFICO DANCE COMPANY'S WEBSITE
<http://pacificodance.com/website/site.html>

BALLET FOLKLORICO DE MEXICO
DE AMALIA HERNANDEZ WEBSITE
www.balletfolkloricodemexico.com.mx/

CHIAPAS
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chiapas>

JALISCO
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jalisco>

THE STATE OF CHIHUAHUA, MEXICO
www.mexconnect.com/articles/1922-the-state-of-chihuahua-mexico-resource-page



BOOKS

IN MY FAMILY/EN MI FAMILIA

By: Carmen Lomas Garza

Publisher: Children's Book Press/Bilingual edition, 2000

ISBN: 0892391634

Following the best-selling Family Pictures, *In My Family/En Mi Familia* is Carmen Lomas Garza's continuing tribute to the family and community that shaped her childhood and her life.

DOMÍTILA: A CINDERELLA TALE FROM THE MEXICAN TRADITION

By: Jewell Reinhart Coburn

Reading level: Ages 9-12

Publisher: Shen's Books, 2000

ISBN: 1885008139

Domitila is not only sweeter than a cactus bloom in early spring, she is also a talented cook and an amazing leather artist. Most of the classical elements of a Cinderella story can be found in Domitila. A gentle weaving of her mother's nurturing with strong family traditions is the secret ingredient for Domitila to rise above hardship to eventually become the Governor's bride.

MEXICO (DROPPING IN ON...)

By: Lewis K. King Parker

Reading level: Ages 9-12

Publisher: Rourke Publishing, 2003

ISBN: 1589528476

Content themes include culture, holidays, food, geographical features, religion and more.



THE STORY OF COLORS: A BILINGUAL FOLKTALE FROM THE JUNGLES OF CHIAPAS

By: Subcomandante Marcos

Reading level: Ages 9-12

Publisher: Cinco Puntos Press; Bilingual edition, 2003

ISBN: 0938317717

This wonderful folktale reveals some of the down-to-earth wisdom of the indigenous peoples of Chiapas. At the same time, it provides us with a fresh perspective on the struggles of the people there.

PEDRO AND THE PADRE: A TALE FROM JALISCO, MEXICO

Author: Verna Aardema

Reading level: Ages 4-8

Publisher: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1991

ISBN: 0803705220

When Pedro's father grows tired of his laziness, and sends him off into the world, the young man soon finds work with the local priest.

CD

POLKAS, REDOVAS Y SCHOTIS

Label: Sony Music Distribution, 2003

ASIN: B0000VD0P6

DVD

THREE MODERN DANCE CLASSICS

Studio: VAI Distribution

Released: 2002

The Mexican-American choreographer Jose' Limon demonstrates his intensely dramatic dance style in three different modern dance renditions.

“One of the nicest compliments I’ve ever gotten about the company was from a dear friend who said ‘When I went to see your show, you made me so proud to be Mexican.’”

> ADRIANA ASTORGA-GAINEY
FOUNDER
PACIFICO DANCE COMPANY

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