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Puerto Rican culture comes to Austin

By: Jitin Hingorani

A taste of Puerto Rican culture is coming to Austin this weekend, as the Puerto Rican Folkloric Dance Company presents "Celebrando 2002."

The performance promises soulful songs, mesmerizing music and dynamic dancing – all representing a variety of cultures.

Troupe founder Ana Maria Maynard said that variety includes "the Bomba, which is from our African heritage, as well as Saez, which is from the mountains of Puerto Rico, as well as the Danza – that is from our aristocratic heritage – so people can see the tiny island of Puerto Rico has a beautiful variety."

Along with world-renowned Plena masters, like Juan Gutierrez and Los Pleneros XXI from Puerto Rico, these local dancers are presenting "Celebrando 2002" to expose Austin to their heritage.

"If you take, for instance, New York, which is Puerto Rico Part II, or Chicago – you know, big cities – there's Puerto Ricans everywhere ... what we're trying to do is here in Texas, where there isn't that much of a big Puerto Rican community, we're trying to bring that over here," said Samuel Lopez, a Puerto Rican musician.

But don't take their movement at face value; there's a lot of history embedded in these dance steps.

"Not only does it show the traditional music and the costuming of the people, but we try to tell a story with our dances so that people feel like they're taken back into time," Maynard said.

By combining the best of both worlds into their performances, the Puerto Rican Folkloric Dance Company is making its cultural mark in Austin's entertainment community.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

"Celebrando 2002" is at the State Theater this weekend.

For show times and ticket information, call (512) 251-8122, or log on to the dance company's [official site](#).