

Cultures Dance their way into Austin

May. 04 Comments Off

By: Nick Castillo, Sara Eunice Martinez, Kaylee Nemece



Bright dresses and choreographed dance moves captured the stage at the Austin Earth Day Festival on Saturday.

The Mueller Lake Park event highlighted multiple social dance styles, including flamenco, ballet folklórico, square dancing and tango.

Oaxaca: Arte en Movimiento, was one of the dance groups at the event. It presented a traditional Mexican dance from Oaxaca. Edgar Yepez dance instructor at Oaxaca, said the dance represents Mexican heritage.

“It’s a Mexican tradition,” Yepez said. “It’s a Mexican folklore.”

Arte en Movimiento’s goal is to be a growing space for culture and art, while promoting diversity, opportunity and cultural expression. Yepez said they’ve been around for a year and have seen their program grow tremendously from four participants to 40. He credits the growth to style of dance.

“The main difference in the style of dance is Guelagueta,” Yepez said. “No one is doing Guelagueta in Austin. That’s the main difference between other kinds of dance.”

Oaxaca showcases the vibrant social dance culture in the city.

But Austin isn’t always as kind to professional dance. Austin’s professional dance culture has the same issues as other major cities. According to Caroline Clark, who is working on her Ph.D. about Austin dance, said the only dancers who make a salary are ballet dancers. There’s also limited space. But she added that “that’s true everywhere.”

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While professional dance has its troubles in the city, Clark said the most important thing about Austin's dance culture is its growth.

Origins of Dance Cultures



Infographic Created By: Kaylee Nemece

"The most important thing to know about Austin dance is that as Austin's population grows, the diversity of dance forms that one can do here increases," Clark said. "There are many kinds of dance here, from African forms to Hispanic forms to European folk forms to Asian forms. And, don't forget the big Native American powwow that takes place every November. And, the very influential Texas dance hall tradition."

Some of the biggest reasons for social dance's popularity in Austin is it's fun atmosphere. Mickey Jacobs, a senior tango instructor at Esquina Tango Cultural Society of Austin, said people attend tango classes at Esquina for the relaxed environment.

"We laugh a lot," Jacobs said. "It's a very open, and welcoming community. That's really what esquina is known for and that's what brings people back. It's not intimidating ... We make it easy to take that first step."

Jacobs said Esquina offers a wide variety of classes. The main focus is Argentine tango, which places emphasis on the dance partners' connection. Jacob's performed a tango routine with fellow instructor Orazio Loayza at Saturday's festival, which displayed the dance's heavy reliance on a duo's embrace, and it additionally showed the technical side of the dance.

"It's a couples dance first and foremost so learning to have the conversation, if you will, between the follower and the leader, but instead of a verbal conversation, it's a conversation with your body," Jacobs said. "It's a very sensual dance. It's all about responding to each other's body movement ... It all goes back to an embrace. The dance position is called the abrazo, which means embrace, and that's where everything originates."

Jacobs added that Esquina isn't the only place in Austin teaching tango. She said the tango culture in Austin, much like the city's overall dance community, is alive and well.

"There's a very vibrant community," Jacobs said. "There are a few 100 people, who regularly dance tango. There are definitely people around town, who are great, that serve people all around Austin ... There are good teachers throughout the city, and a very vibrant active community."



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15th Century

Dance developed as the Moors, Jews, and Gitanos were persecuted. Moors and Jews were expelled by the Spanish Inquisition in 1492.



Flamenco was started by the Andalusian society.



Late Eighteenth to Mid-Nineteenth Centuries

Flamenco becomes more professional and technical.

Unaccompanied singing (cante). A cry or chant accompanied the rhythm of a cane or staff hitting on the ground.

Traditional Flamenco

Later songs were accompanied by

1960 1

flamenco guitar (toque), rhythmic hand clapping (palmas), rhythmic foot stomping (zapateado) and dance (baile).

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- Dancers were the main pu
- Guitars accompanied danc
- Dance was seen as an art

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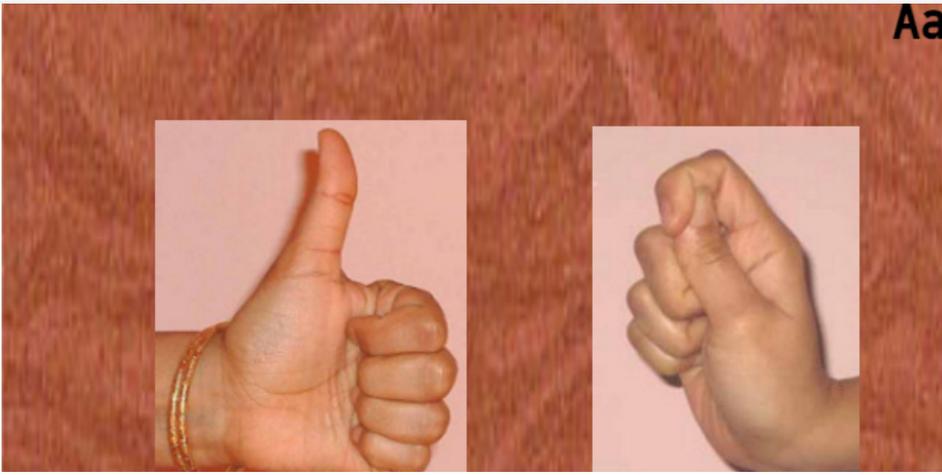


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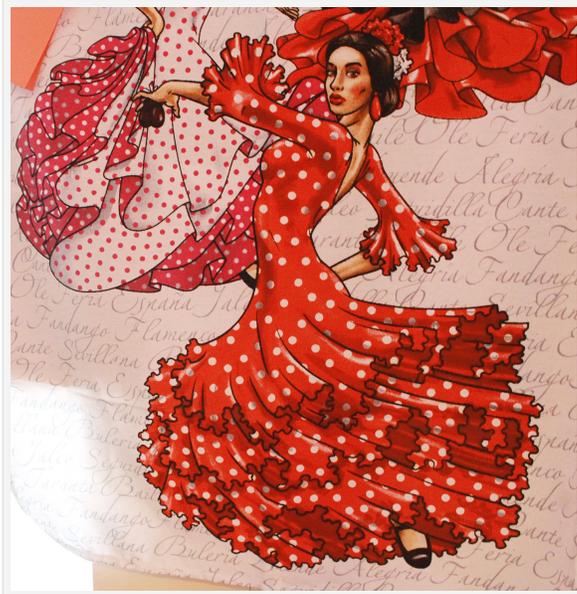
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Meanings of Bharata Natyam Hand Gestures

Photos and Cutlines By: Kaylee Nemece



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Puerto Rican Folkloric Dance



Flamencura Music and Dance Studio



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