

Tag: Dance

# Cultures Dance their way into Austin

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Arts and Culture, Hidden Texas, Sports & Entertainment

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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 Guelaguetza,” Yepez said. “No one is doing Guelaguetza 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.”

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**

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### **Infographic Created By: Kaylee Nemec**

“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 its 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.”

# The History of Flamenco

15th Century

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

Practiced by illiterate cultures.



Flamenco was started by the Andalusian society.



Dance captures the struggle, depression, pride, and hope of the difficult time.

Gypsies were put into ghettos by the Spanish, where they retained their purity of dance and music.

Late Eighteenth to Mid-Nineteenth Centuries

18th Century

1782

Flamenco becomes more professional and technical.

Flamenco is tied to the six string guitar.

The Gypsies gained freedom and their dances were adopted by the Spanish population.



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

1869-1910

19th Century

- Flamenco is popular in music cafes (cafés cantantes).
- Dancers were the main public attraction.
- Guitars accompanied dancers.
- Dance was seen as an art and it spread more throughout Spain.

Flamenco and Gypsies became popular in Europe and Russia.



1892-1956

The "Theatrical" period

# Flamenco Today

1950s

Traditional Flamenco was reintroduced. The dance became "alive" again. Everyone celebrated the dance, not only artists.

1930s-1940s

Flamenco was slowing down due to the civil war and destruction within the country.

Flamenco became mixed with other cultural dances and portrayed picturesque scenes.

By the 1920s...

Flamenco in cafes was not very popular. The dances were moving to choreography and solo guitarists.

## Flamenco Facts & Language

### Musical Characteristics:

Harmony

Melody: Descending - higher notes to lower notes, forte to piano.

Compás: Meter or Rhythm or Music. Similar to jazz or blues. Performers "feel" the rhythm.

### Flamenco Songs Have Two Categories:

- 1) Cante gitano (Gypsy songs)
- 2) Cante andaluz (Andalucian songs)



Flamenco dresses and skirts represent the Spanish culture and identity. Red, black, and white are the most common colors. Many outfits are polka dotted or bright colors.

### Forms of Flamenco Expression:

Toque - flamenco guitar

Cante - flamenco singing

Baile - flamenco dance

Jaleo - means "hell raising" and involves clapping of the hands, foot stomping, and shouts of encouragement.

Palos - Music Styles. Important to understand cultural and musical context.

"Zapateado"

Tap dance style of footwork.

"Palos"

Category of songs.

Flamenco is synonymous with the word "Gypsy."



Graceful hand position.



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[http://www.flamenco-guitars.com/master\\_grade\\_guitar\\_woods.html](http://www.flamenco-guitars.com/master_grade_guitar_woods.html)

Infographic Created By: Kaylee Nemeč

# Bharata Natyam Mudras (Hand Gestures)



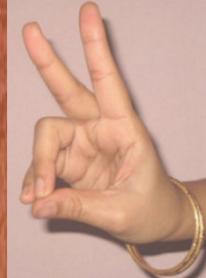
Pataaka



Tripataaka



Ardhapataaka



Kartarimukha



Mayura



Ardhachandra



Aarala



Shukatunda



Mushti



Shikhara



Kapitta



Katakaamukha



Suchi



Chandrakalaa



Padmakosha



Sarpashirsha



Mrigashirsa



Simhamukha



Kangula



Alapadma



Chatura



Bhramara



Meanings of Bharata Natyam Hand Gestures

Photos and Cutlines By: Kaylee Nemeo



Dr. Ana Maria Tekina-eirú Maynard performs a solo routine, demonstrating a portion of the next exercise.

Photos and Cutlines By: Nick Castillo



Videos filmed and produced by: Sara Eunice Martinez: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=en5fkzMcs7c>

