

2020/21 season | ums learning guide



ballet folklórico de méxico de amalia hernández

This Digital Arts Adventure
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**Ballet Folklórico de México
de Amalia Hernández
Digital School Day Performance**

Available Online:
Mon Mar 1 – Fri Mar 12, 2021



how to use this guide

Your class is attending...

***Ballet Folklórico de
México de Amalia
Hernández Digital
Performance!***

This guide will help you prepare for the performance.
Each section is organized around a question you
might have about the performance.

Within each section,
pay attention to the symbols
which represent the difficulty
level of the material.



grade
k-4



grade
5-7



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8. Who is performing?



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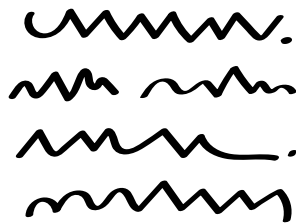
23. What is the history of Mexico?



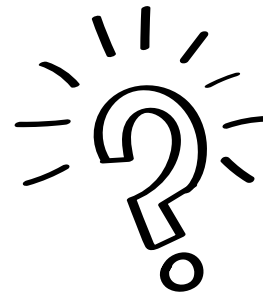
28. What does this performance have to do with Michigan?



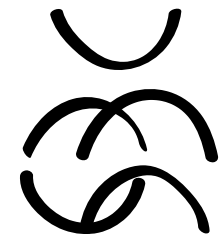
32. How does dance and music inspire people? (learning from art)



33. How can I write about dance and music?



36. How can I find out more?



37. Who made this performance possible?



what is it like being in the audience?

Hill Auditorium



While we can't be in the performance venues this year, the Ballet Folklórico de México de Amalia Hernández usually performs in Hill Auditorium. Check out interesting facts about the venue on the next page.





what is it like being in the audience?



How can audience members hear from so far up in the auditorium?

Part of the answer is in the sound system, but the hall's structural design also contributes to the good acoustics, or ability to transmit sound.

Learn about the building's architect, Albert Kahn, and the building's acoustics [in this excerpt from UMS's documentary about Hill](#).

Watch until 18:06 [5 minutes]

*stop
and think!*

Before you watch:

Were you ever in a scenario where it was hard to hear someone speaking?
What factors make it difficult to hear?





How will the theater be different when there are people present?

Here are some of the people you can expect to see at a live performance.

what is it like being in the audience?



Ushers: People who greet the buses, lead you into the building, and help you find your seat; many are retired teachers and may even have taught at your school.



Stage Crew: People who manage what happens on the stage; you probably will not see them, since they work behind the curtains, unless they move props between parts of the dance.



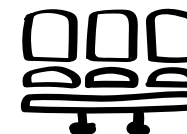
Lighting & Sound Operators: People who control the lighting and sound for the performance; you might see them working in the back of the auditorium.



Dancers: People who communicate using their bodies.



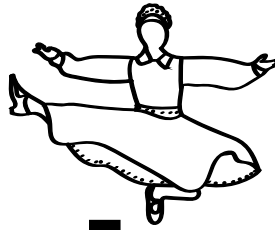
Musicians: People who communicate using their voices or instruments. Sometimes no musicians are present and we hear pre-recorded music.



Audience Members: You, your classmates, and other students and teachers from around Michigan.



who is performing?

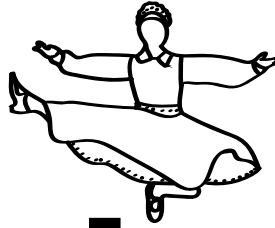


Ballet Folklórico de México de Amalia Hernández was formed in 1952 by dancer and choreographer Amalia Hernández. The company is based in Mexico City, but tours internationally, promoting and celebrating Mexican folk dance around the world. As a choreographer – someone who plans and arranges the movements you see in a dance – Hernández created dozens of dances, based on unique traditions from across Mexico. Amalia Hernández died in 2000. The company is currently directed by her grandson, Salvador López.





who is performing?

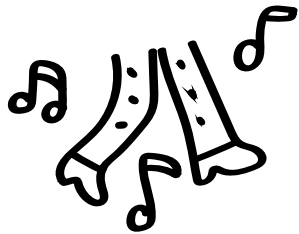
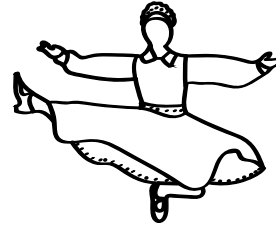


[Read about the dramatic growth of the company from eight to hundreds of dancers in this *New York Times* obituary of Amalia Hernández.](#)





who is performing?



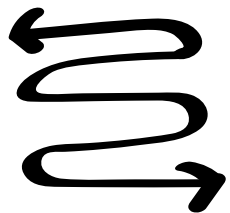
What is it like to be a dancer?



Have you ever learned a dance before? Was it hard to remember the moves?



Even if you've never learned a dance, you probably have thought like a dancer. Dancers remember different combinations of movements, just like learning the patterns of a hand game.

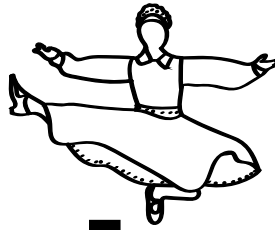


In some ways dance is like sports. Players have to learn particular moves. They think about what they do with their body in relation to other people on the field.

Dancers do the same thing, just not on a field. Dancers are athletes who train regularly to master different skills, learn new moves, and to keep up their stamina and strength. They take care of their bodies to avoid getting injured.



who is performing?



*stop
and think!*

Who else is part of this performance?

At dance performances, dancers are often the main people in the spotlight, but there are other people who contribute to the performance. Music, costumes, lighting, and sometimes set pieces can all impact the magic and unity of an entire performance.

Music

Music helps create the energy and feeling of a dance. In this School Day Performance, La Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de México (The National Symphony Orchestra of Mexico) accompanies the dancers to provide a live musical experience as well.

La Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional was founded in 1928 by composer Carlos Chávez and is the most important musical ensemble in Mexico. The orchestra has won numerous awards, including a 2002 Latin Grammy nomination for Best Classical Album. Its principal conductors have included José Pablo Moncayo, Luis Herrera de la Fuente, Sergio Cárdenas, Francisco Savín, Arturo Diemecke and, since 2007, Carlos Miguel Prieto.

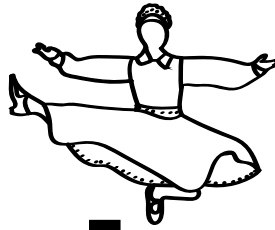
What do you notice about the music?
What images come to mind?

[Watch this video of La Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional perform *El Huapango de Moncayo*, composed by José Pablo Moncayo.](#)





who is performing?



Music

In addition to classical music, you can expect to hear some mariachi music in this performance, too. Mariachi developed in western Mexico in the early 1850s. Today it is an important tradition and source of pride in all of Mexico. Mariachi is traditionally performed at major celebrations, whether it's a wedding, a funeral, or the holidays.

Mariachi performances usually include instruments like the violin and trumpet playing the melody. Then there are a variety of stringed instruments, including the *vihuela*, which is supported by instruments like the harp, guitar, and *guitarrón*. The *vihuela* and *guitarrón* are stringed instruments that look similar to guitars, but have different strings and are tuned differently, creating unique sounds. Mariachi play their instruments and they also sing the lyrics to the songs.

[Check out what each of these instruments look and sound like in this video.](#)

At the end of the video, you can play “Guess that Instrument” to test your knowledge.

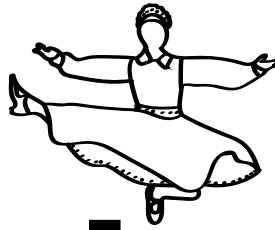


Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán, one of the most influential mariachi bands, which was initially formed in 1897.





who is performing?



Costumes

When you choose what clothing you wear, it might signal how you are feeling, the activity you are about to do, and where you grew up. In performances, clothing has meaning, too. The colors and designs can signal a type of emotion or where a dance might be performed. In this performance, you will see a variety of costumes from different regions in Mexico.

For instance, the state of Jalisco is known for dresses with bright colors. The dresses have wide skirts and ruffles that can be used to emphasize twirling dance steps.

Jalisco is also known for mariachi musicians, and these musicians have their own costumes, too. Mariachi musicians wear charro suits, which are elegant and embroidered representations of cowboy clothing.



Ballet Folklórico de México de Amalia Hernández performing a Jalisco dance in clothing inspired from the region.



La Danza del Venado



(Deer Dance) is native to the Yaqui tribe from the northern Mexican state of Sonora. The dancers reenact a dramatic deer hunt, honoring the cycle of life as well as the white-tailed deer, which provides sustenance for most of the Yaquis' needs. This tradition is particularly poignant because it has little to no European influence; the Yaqui fiercely resisted Spanish conquest.



what does dance look like?



When people dance, they communicate with their bodies. The dancers on stage are in conversation with each other and with you in the audience. When we talk, we can be loud or quiet, fast or slow, and we can choose which language and which words to use. Dancers, too, have their choice of dance languages and different ways to move to express different ideas



What choices can dancers make when they communicate with their bodies?

Instead of an alphabet or a dictionary, dancers make choices about what they communicate using their body, energy, space, and time. These four elements roughly translate to the what, how, where, and when of dance.





what does dance look like?

What:

Dancers can choose what parts of their body they use.

They can choose whether to move multiple parts at the same time, or to isolate the movement to one part of the body.

They can choose what shapes their body makes.

Let's do a fun activity!

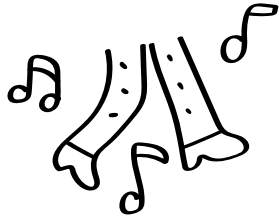
Practice: Draw a circle in the air with a finger, with your nose, and with your elbow.

Try doing all three at the same time.





what does dance look like?



How:

Dancers choose how they move their body by choosing the type of energy they use. They think about the feeling each motion conveys, picking from a range of options, like those to the right.

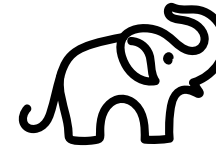


Smooth

vs.



Sharp



Heavy

vs.



Light



Tight

vs.



Relaxed



Sudden

vs.



Continuous



Bound

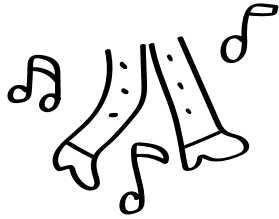
vs.



Free



what does dance look like?



[In this video of Ballet Folklórico Mexicano de Yale,](#)
[pay attention to the dancer's energy.](#) Begin at 3:09.

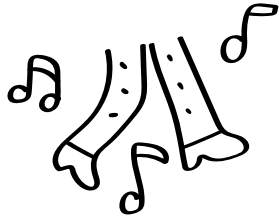


*stop
and think!*

Is the energy the same throughout?
Which of the words above would you use
to describe the energy?



what does dance look like?



Where:

Dancers choose how they interact with the space where they dance.

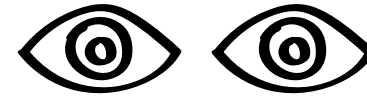
When:

Dancers choose the timing of their movements.

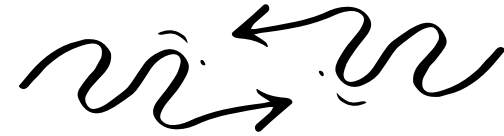
They can be fast or slow.

They can move to a steady beat or they can move erratically.

Based on their timing, they can string together different moves, like one sentence. Then they can pause and communicate a new idea.



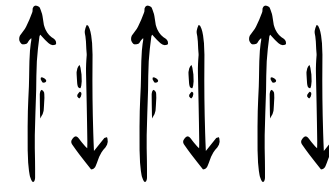
They choose where they look.



They choose where they move and the path they take to get there.



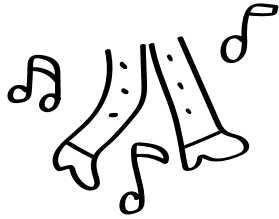
They choose the direction they orient their body (forward, backward, sideways, etc.).



They decide whether they occupy a space up high, on their toes or in the air, or down low, near or even on the ground.



what does dance look like?



[Rewatch this video of Ballet Folklórico Mexicano de Yale.](#)

Begin 3:09.

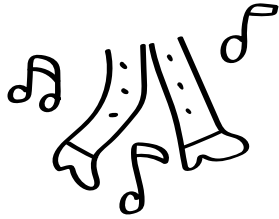


*stop
and think!*

Now, how would you describe
the dancer's timing?



what types of dance will we see?



Dance has always been a form of human communication. While people have always danced, dances have different meanings in different contexts, and the dances can look quite different. People dance to celebrate births, marriages, and funerals. People dance as a way to worship. People dance to socialize and to entertain others.

Different types of dance have evolved in different contexts. The dances you will see performed are Mexican folk dances. Folk dance is the dance of everyday people. There are a variety of Mexican folk dances that express the life and spirit of Mexican culture, drawing from different parts of the country's long history. Different parts of the country have unique styles, combining elements from indigenous and Spanish dance styles.



what types of dance will we see?

The dance company has dozens of choreographed dances, so we'll only highlight a few that you will see. As you read, think about the different purposes associated with each dance.

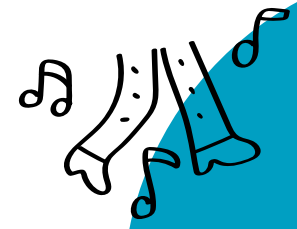
Los Mayas (Ballet): This ballet is based on several legends taken from the sacred books of Mayans: *The Popol-Vuh*, and *The Chilam Balam*. The main character is X-tabay, the beautiful goddess of hunting, who also flirts with and hunts men; another legend is that of The Three Princely Brothers, one of whom disappears mysteriously and thereby incites his other two brothers to take a terrible vengeance on the world. Finally, *The Legend of Nicté-ha*, a love story marred by tragedy, explains the existence of a beautiful white flower found in the Yucatan.



Sones Antiguos de Michoacán: This is the first folkloric ballet created by Amalia Hernández that honors that province of Michoacán, whose distinct style brings together elements of various popular musical and dance styles. This brief mosaic begins with a Michoacán jarabe, one of the



most traditional song forms of the mariachi genre, which evokes the of "jota" and "zarabanda" (Spanish dances and songs) that define the style.



what types of dance will we see?

The dance company has dozens of choreographed dances, so we'll only highlight a few that you will see. As you read, think about the different purposes associated with each dance.

Fiesta en Tlacotalpan: Tlacotalpan is a region in the state of Veracruz. They have a celebration each year on January 31st that includes music, dance, and mojigangas — larger than life figures or puppets representing living residents and legends of the village. In the midst of it, Caribbean music is played with Congas (drums), as in a mardi gras celebration parade.



La Revolución [Ballet]: The Revolution of 1910 was the cause of great social changes and produced the real integration of the Mexican nationality. This ballet is dedicated to the “soldaderas,” women who fought and had a decisive role in the Revolution by following men in the war.

To learn more about the traditions and history of Ballet Folklórico, [read this article in Dance Spirit Magazine.](#)



what is the history of mexico?



This performance celebrates the cultural heritage of Mexico, a country in Central America that borders the United States.

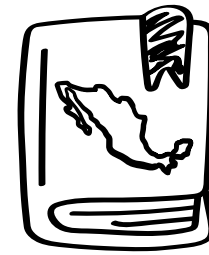
*stop
and think!*

Use the map to the right to locate where some of the Ballet Folklórico dances come from.

On [page 12](#), we learned about dances, costumes, and music from Jalisco.

On [page 21](#), we learned about *Fiesta en Tlacotalpan* from Veracruz, and *Sones Antiguos de Michoacán* from the province of Michoacan.





what is the history of mexico?

Mexico has a rich history that spans more than three millennia. First populated more than 13,000 years ago, the regions of southern and central Mexico gave birth to the rise and fall of complex indigenous civilizations. These pre-colonial societies developed written language, produced elaborate art and architecture, and created systems of political and social stratification not ever exhibited in the Western hemisphere.

Journey in the Americas: Major Civilizations of Mexico



Olmecs (c. 1600-400 BCE)

South of Mexico: The Olmecs created large cities and carved huge head sculptures. They made and traded rubber from trees. Unfortunately, there are few surviving written records.



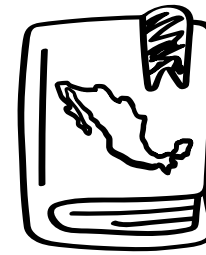
Mayans (c. 250-900 CE)

Yucatan peninsula: They made significant advancements in math, astronomy, and architecture, including creating a 365-day calendar and using the number zero.



Aztecs (c. 1300-1500)

Central Valley: The Aztecs were a political alliance of three states. They excelled at agriculture, creating elaborate systems of irrigation and reclaiming swamps.



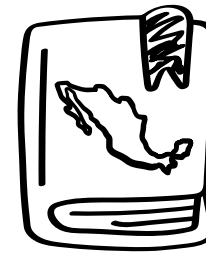
what is the history of mexico?

European Colonization of Mexico

February 1519 marked the arrival of Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés. Over the next three years Cortés expanded his alliances with local indigenous groups uniting them against the Aztecs. In May 1521, Cortés conquered Tenochtitlan (modern day Mexico City) and caused the fall of the great Aztec empire. Over the next 50 years, Spain took control of a large proportion of what is now mainland Mexico, enslaving its indigenous population. Millions of indigenous people died as a result of diseases brought in by the Spanish. [Read about how bacteria from Europe may have killed 15 million Aztec people in 1545.](#)

Catholic missionaries began to arrive in 1523, building monasteries and converting much of the population of Nueva España (New Spain) to Catholicism. Mexico was part of the Spanish empire for three centuries, administered as the Viceroyalty of New Spain.





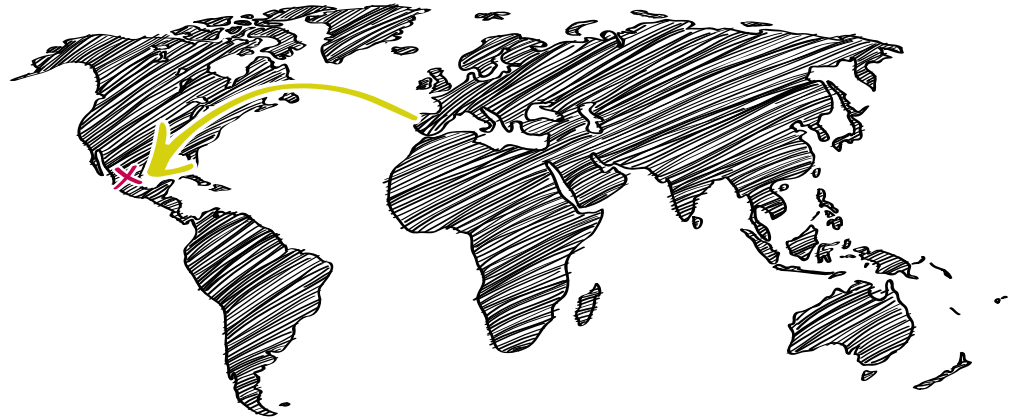
what is the history of mexico?

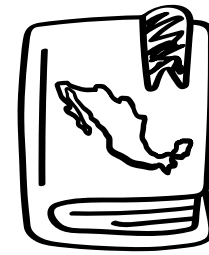
Journey from Europe: From Colony to Independence

Spain ruled Mexico, both its native and Spanish people, from afar. On September 16, 1810, Father Manuel Hidalgo called for independence from Spain. Though he failed, and Mexico did not become independent until 1821, September 16 is still celebrated as Mexico's Independence Day.

Still, the fight for Mexico's land was not over. Spain tried to retake Mexico in 1829. And the US declared war on Mexico in 1846, eventually seizing half of Mexico's land (525,000 square miles) — what would become New Mexico and California.

After 30 years of dictatorship in the late 1800s, Mexico's revolution from 1910 to 1920 resulted in the modern day government of Mexico that we know today.





what is the history of mexico?

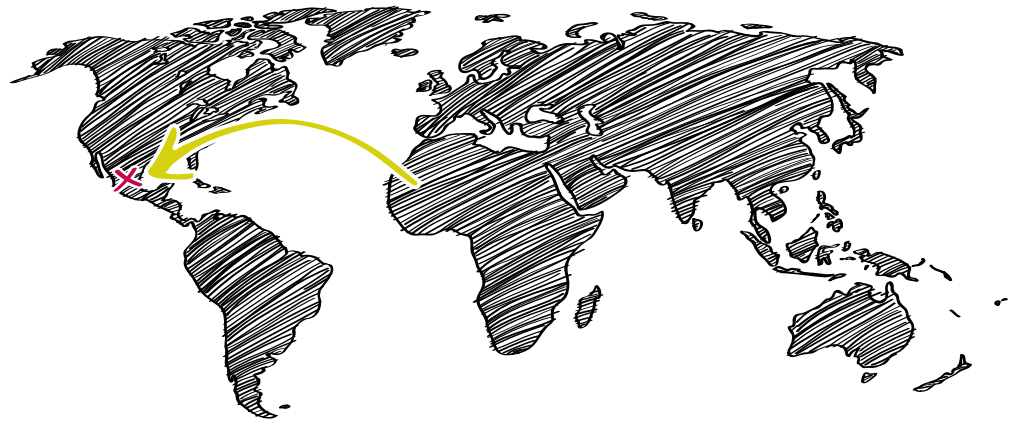
Journey from Africa: Slavery in Early Mexican History

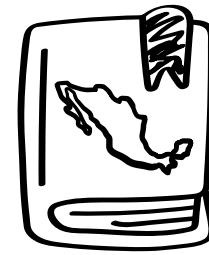
When Europeans came to Mexico, they not only brought their language and culture, but also brought human beings as slaves.

European colonizers originally used the native people of Mexico for labor projects and agriculture, but when European diseases severely depleted the native population, they turned elsewhere for cheap sources of labor. As early as the 1520s, Europeans brought slaves from African countries like modern-day Cape Verde, Guinea, and Angola.

Slavery was a violent existence, and death rates were high in silver mines and on sugar plantations. Some Black people were able to buy their freedom or escape and form their own towns. By the 17th century, the free Black population outnumbered the enslaved Black population. Slavery was abolished in Mexico in 1829, over 30 years before the US.

Some Black people even escaped from US slavery to Mexico in the 19th century. [Read a Washington Post article about some of their ancestors.](#)





what is the history of mexico?

Journey from Asia: Another Strain of Early Slavery

Europeans also used Asian slaves during the early colonial period. In the late 16th and 17th centuries, colonists brought slaves from India and Southeast Asia. At that time, Spain also had power in the Philippines, and Manila (the current capital of the Philippines) was a key slave market. Unlike slaves from Africa, slaves from Asia were often channeled into domestic labor and textile mills.

In the late 19th century, up until World War II, immigrants from China and Japan came to Mexico for contract labor. Today, Asian Mexicans make up a relatively small population, less than 1% of the total population, but their cultural impact can be seen in the design of Mexican ceramics, textiles, folding screens, and even food. Mexico City has over 1,000 Chinese-Mexican restaurants whose establishments serve a fusion of Cantonese and indigenous Mexican cuisine.

*stop
and think!*

How does the history of Mexico remind you of the history of the United States? How are our histories intertwined?





what does this performance have to do with michigan?



This performance celebrates the culture and traditions of Mexico. Here in Michigan, we have a large vibrant Mexican/Mexican American community, especially in SW Detroit. The story of Mexican immigration to Detroit is an important one in our history.

Mexicans began to migrate to Detroit in the early 1900s while Mexico was undergoing a revolution. Most people came seeking temporary work in Detroit's booming auto industry. By the end of the 1920s, Mexican communities in the Midwest became more permanent. In the Great Depression, Mexicans were scapegoats for taking "American" jobs, and many were laid off or even deported. In a large-scale deportation called the Mexican Repatriation from 1931-1933, Detroit's Mexican population went from 15,000 to only 1,200 in 1936. After the Depression, the Mexican population began to grow again.





what does this performance have to do with michigan?



During the Depression, Mexican artist Diego Rivera created a beautiful mural for the Detroit Institute of Arts. Today, murals continue to be an important way in which Mexican culture is made visible in Detroit, especially in southwestern Detroit.

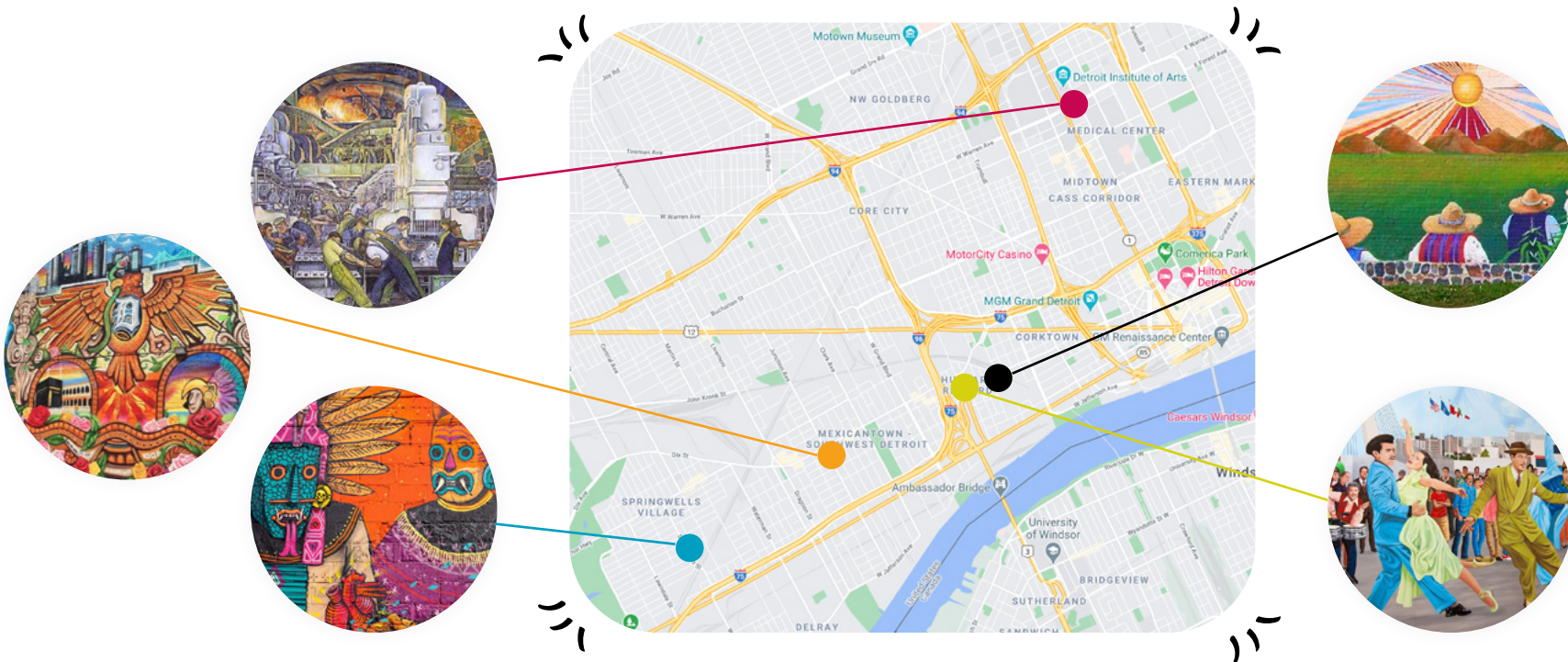
[Watch this video to learn about living muralist Elton Monroy-Duran's murals in the southwestern part of the city.](#)





what does this performance have to do with michigan?

Explore the map below of some of the murals in the city.



Pictured above, from east to west: Detroit Industry Murals by Diego Rivera (DIA), The Cornfield by Vito Valdez (St. Anne and Bagley), Plaza Del Norte by Elton Monroy Duran (2835 Bagley St.), Untitled by Freddy Diaz (5656 Vernor Highway), and Untitled by Saner (1421 Springwells).



what does this performance have to do with michigan?



Despite major contributions to American culture, industry, and economy, people of Mexican heritage continue to face discrimination, similar to the anti-Mexican sentiments during the Great Depression. As one example, you can [read more about the negative effects that home immigration raids have on the health of people in Washtenaw County.](#)



how do dance and music inspire people?



*stop
and think!*

For each image, ask yourself:
What do you notice in the image? How do you think the artist was inspired by dance? What do you learn about dance from this image?



Dance has inspired many great artists who try to capture it in drawing, painting, and photography.

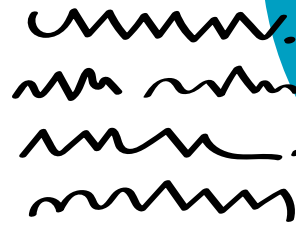
[Look through the embedded slideshow, with images from the Detroit Institute of Arts, to see different ways that dance has inspired artists.](#)



DANCE AND ART

Images from the Detroit Institute Of Arts

how can i write about dance and music?



Artists and writers have been inspired by dance and music as long as it has existed. We hope it inspires you to draw and write, too! Don't worry if you've never written about dance and music before. You don't need to use any technical terms.



Write a Postcard to a Friend

Do you think any of your friends or family members would have enjoyed the performance? Write them a postcard so they can hear all about it. Draw a picture of what you saw on stage or what you imagined in your mind while you were listening to the music. Write about your drawing.



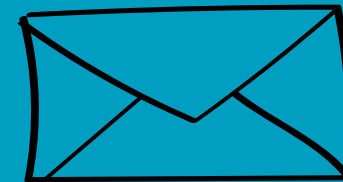
how can i write about dance and music?



Write a Letter to the Performers

Tell the performers what you thought about the concert. Start your letter with “Dear Ballet Folklórico de México de Amalia Hernández.” If you’re not sure what to write, try answering a couple of these questions:

- What did you like most about the performance?
- What were you thinking about while watching the dance?
- What did you imagine while you were listening to the music?
- Did you have a favorite part of the performance?
- Was anything in the performance weird, new, or surprising?
- Do you have any questions about what it’s like being a dancer or a musician?



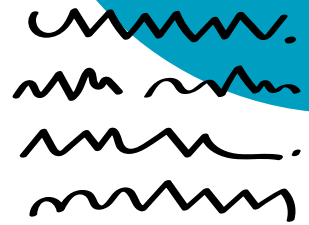
We will deliver these letters to the performers if you mail them to:

UMS at University of Michigan
Burton Memorial Tower
881 N University Avenue
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1011

or email them to umsyouth@umich.edu

[Download a template for your letter here.](#)

how can i write about dance?



Write a Creative Review of the Performance

Imagine that you are writing a review about the performance for other high school students who didn't attend. Your review should include the logistics (what happened and where) and your opinion (was the performance worth attending). But most importantly, you want your reader to understand the experience, what the performance felt like, even though they weren't there themselves. To do this, you should use language that captures what the dance and music feels like.

Here are some options to get you started:

Share what it felt like for you personally to watch the dance and listen to the music. Use as many senses as you can to describe the experience of watching the performance. Tell us about your emotions and what was going through your head as you watched and listened. How does your background (e.g., your experiences dancing or your familiarity with the history of Mexico) affect how you experienced the performance?

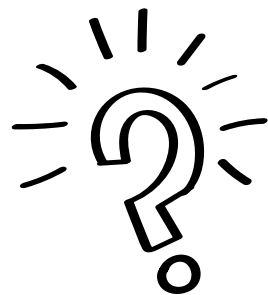
Compare the dance or music to something else you know about. Use similes and metaphors to show us how this comparison works (e.g., "One dancer circled the other like a graceful boa constrictor, closing in on its prey." or "The music was like a boom of thunder.").

Mimic the structure of the dance and music. Were the movements or sound smooth, slow, and drawn out?

Try stretching out your sentences with extravagant adjectives or repeating soft and slippery "s" sounds. Were the movements.... snappy? Chop. Cut. Break up your sentences. Use strong verbs.

Experiment!

how can i find out more?



Are you interested in learning more about dance or the performers?
There are lots of great resources online and in Southeast Michigan.

Online Resources:

[Ballet Folklórico de México de Amalia Hernández](#)

[Ballet Folklórico de Detroit](#)

[El Ballet Folklórico Estudiantil \(Flint, MI\)](#)

[UMS Learning Guides](#)

[Dance Spirit Magazine](#)

[Corpus Art/Elton Monroy Duran-Muralist](#)

[Time Maps History of Mexico and Central America](#)

Partner Institutions in Michigan:

[Ann Arbor District Library](#)

[University of Michigan Museum of Art](#)


[Detroit Institute of Arts](#)

[Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History](#)

[Detroit Historical Museum](#)

[El Museo del Norte](#)





who made this performance possible?



This School Day Performance was coordinated by the University Musical Society (UMS). UMS is a performing arts presenter, which means that they bring in music, dance, and theater groups that are touring to different cities across the world for Michigan residents to enjoy. UMS has been around since 1879!

Every year, UMS has 60-75 performances in many different venues in Ann Arbor and throughout southeast Michigan, and it also offers over 100 free educational activities for students and community members.

UMS has been recognized for its “lifetime of creative excellence” by the national government, receiving a National Medal of Arts in 2014.

Other School Day Performances in 2020-2021

Artists Include:

Jazz at Lincoln Center (Music)

Cleo Parker Robinson Dance (Dance)

Caleb Teicher & Company (Dance)

Battersea Arts Center Beatbox Academy (Theater & Music)

who made this performance possible?



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