



## Folkloric Dance of Argentina



Argentina is a Spanish speaking country located in the South of South America. The town of Santiago del Estero is known as the birthplace of many famous folkloric dancers and musicians. The dances from this region spring mainly from Europe and the culture of the *gaucho*, or South American “cowboy”.

The word “gaucho” comes from an indigenous Quechua word “huachu” meaning orphan or vagabond. The Spanish colonizers transformed the term into two words: “guacho” (WA-cho) still means orphan, often endearingly, and the term “gaucho” (GOW-cho) means vagabond and refers to the men

of indigenous roots mixed with African and/ or European ancestry, who took up the work of tending cattle in what is now Argentina, Southern Brazil, and Uruguay. Fiercely independent, they lived in a very difficult world of work and solitude. They benefited greatly from contact with the indigenous peoples, who were ultimately exterminated by European contact and by the Argentine government. Gauchos still exist and work, on ranches and in rural areas.

The style of dance that gauchos typically enjoyed was called *malambos*, and began around 1600. Incorporating *zapateo*, the art of percussive footwork, rooted in Spanish Flamenco, *malambos* were traditionally performed by men. The dance movements include the *cepillada* (brushing – to graze the floor with the sole of the foot), the *repique* (striking the floor with heel and spur), and *floreos* (decorative movements of the feet). This dance form was often used as a form of competition between two or more men. One man starts with an *escobillado* (softly brushing the floor with his foot), and then he proposes a “figure” or footwork passage to his competitor, and ends with a salute. The other man copies the proposed figure, adding one that is more difficult, and then performs the salute. When one is unable to copy the other, the competition is finished, with the more proficient dancer the winner. The music features guitar and/or bombo, the drum.

The *boleadoras* were originally a weapon used by the indigenous people and adopted by the gauchos, to entrap fleeing animals. The weapon was basically a lasso, with three balls (originally rocks and later wood) bound and suspended from rawhide strips and swung three at a time in a whirling motion to



entrap the neck or feet of a fleeing animal (or enemy). It is said that in the early 1950's, Santiago Ayala began incorporating footwork (zapateo) with weapons, establishing the malambos with cuchillos (knives), lanzas (lances), látigos (whips), bombos (drums), and finally the famous boleadoras. The dancer uses two wooden balls as boleadoras, making rhythms against the floor, and whirling them in a rotational motion. Increasing the complexity of movements increased the rhythmic possibilities, becoming an exciting dance both physically and musically.

While based on typical and traditional gaucho dance, folkloric interpretations of these dances incorporate stylizations of stage performance, transforming them into artistic works for the stage. The dances of the gauchos are a popular part of Argentine folkloric dance, and are becoming increasingly infused with “fantasía” – incredible feats of skill for exhibition and show. **Pampa Cortés** is one of the foremost Argentine folkloric dancers, and performs with *boleadoras* in **People Like Me 2003**.

## Chinese Dance - DunHuang



China is a broad and vast country with numerous ethnic groups, and Chinese dance has a history of over five thousand years. Until the Han dynasty (206 B. C. - A. D. 220), most of the Chinese dances originated from the “folks,” people dancing in their communities and at celebrations. During the Han period, a musical entertainment court was established for the imperial family, which was essentially a center for systematically documenting and enhancing folk songs and dances. Later, because of the political stability and the economic prosperity of the Tang dynasty (A. D. 618 - 907), poetry, music and dance flourished.

Dances in the Tang dynasty inherited techniques that were developed in the past dynasties such as Zhou, Qin, Han, Wei, Jin, and Nanbei. During the early Tang period, Buddhism was introduced to China, and because trade and social relationship with other countries rapidly expanded, dances were influenced by folk dances of other countries such as India, Rome, Persia (Iran), Korea, Cambodia, Burma, Vietnam, and other Central Asian countries. In addition, it also combined with other forms of fine arts such as painting, scenery, and colorful costumes as well as poetry, classical music and drama. The combination of these colorful traditions brought the performing arts to a new peak, and the Tang dynasty has been regarded as the golden age for dance in ancient China.

### **DunHuang dance**

DunHuang, an ancient city in Gansu Province, Western China, was the gateway to what was called the “Silk Road” leading to Central Asia and Europe. The Silk Road or Silk Route refers to not one but many routes of trade and cultural and religious exchange extending from China, through Central Asia, to the Middle East and Western Europe. DunHuang is world famous for its artistic sculpture statues and fresco paintings of the 4th - 14th century in China, which reflect Silk Road civilization and important aspects of the Chinese people's religious life, arts, and customs in the history, including the introduction of Buddhism to China during this period. Over 1,000 caves were cut out of the cliffs in Dunhuang in this period, and a wide variety of colored frescoes and murals were preserved in these caves before its excavations in the 20th century. It has been regarded as a national treasure of China.

DunHuang frescoes contain many artistic representations of famous images as depicted in various Buddhist stories and *sutras* - classic religious texts of Buddhism. These outstanding and graceful

artistic images show as aesthetic form that often reflected daily life in China in the age the frescoes were painted. In the late 1980's, after close study of these images from Dunhuang frescoes, leading Chinese dance experts created a special style of dance called "DunHuang Dance." This cultural performance reflects a rich and distinctive dance tradition in China.

The traditional Chinese ribbon dance that our dancer **Chih Ting Shih** performs in **People Like Me 2003** is from the classical DunHuang "flying figure" dance. Once a part of the costume, the dancer now holds the ends of the ribbons in her hands and manipulates the shape and flow of the ribbon to the music of the Chinese orchestra.

## Brazilian Dance—Maculele



*Maculele* (pronounced ma-**kú**-lay-lay) “the dance of the sticks.” The exact origins of the dance called Maculele are not certain, however there are many stories and legends surrounding its history. It is agreed that Maculele was created by enslaved Africans working on the sugar cane plantations. The sticks used in the dance resemble stalks of sugar cane, and the “Facao” or machete often used in the dance is the tool used to cut sugar cane.

Some stories talk about Maculele being a dance done by enslaved Africans on the senzala, their living quarters on the large plantations. It may have been to celebrate harvest time, or as a way to practice defending themselves. Possibly, like the martial dance capoeira, this dance was a martial art form disguised as a celebration dance. Escaped slaves would use the movements to battle the “captains” who would hunt them, using sticks straight out of the fire that were still burning.

Other stories say it is related to a battle between tribes in Africa. One such story is that of a village whose people went to hunt and left a single boy to protect the children and women. A neighboring tribe attacked the village, and the boy picked up two sticks on the ground and ran around with so much energy and bravery that he chased away all the attackers. When the hunters returned he became a big hero and they created the dance of Maculele in honor of his bravery and spirit.

Maculele is similar to some dances of the indigenous people of Brazil. There may have been some mixing of African and indigenous cultures to create the movements of maculele, however the music and songs are mostly African, (sung in Yoruba) and Portuguese.



Maculele is most closely tied to the city Santo Amaro in the interior of the Brazilian state of Bahia. There is a story about Mestre Po-Po in Santo Amaro that says he began to use movements of the dance in the streets, clapping hands with a friend in order to get the attention of young women that were passing by. In the early 1900’s, Mestre Po-Po revived and refined the dance of Maculele, and, by his act of forming a folkloric dance company, this dance form became known throughout Brazil and beyond. Maculele is performed by folkloric dancers in Bahia, and also has become a dance that Capoeira schools throughout Brazil practice because of its similar roots to those of Capoeira.

## Maori Action Dance



The Polynesian people seem to have originated on the western rim of the Pacific. From there they spread east, and then south, to colonize widely scattered groups of islands in fourteen million square miles of ocean. These include Hawaii, Tonga, Fiji, Samoa, and Tahiti, whose peoples share certain cultural and linguistic similarities.

The Maori of Aotearoa (New Zealand) are the southernmost members of the race, and oral tradition places their homeland in the mythical island of Hawai'iki. The Maori name for their land means "the land of the long white cloud." For thousands of years the Maori have retained their knowledge of natural lore and spiritual understanding of this world, inspired by the beauty and splendor of their land.

The dance of the Maori people was originally performed for social and religious reasons. The Haka is a dance usually accompanied by chant, which is typified by numerous hand gestures and limited torso movement. Haka means dance, and Waiata means song, so Haka Waiata are "action songs" which tell a story. Men, women and children sang and danced these action songs. It is said that the Haka was designed and performed to gain a psychological

advantage, to give the participants courage and determination to perform great feats. Waiata (song) is an essential element to maintaining the oratorical history and genealogy of Maori society. Each tribe has its own repertoire, with many of its chants composed centuries ago. There are a great number of these chants, with their number being added to by the contemporary compositions being performed in the traditional style.

The Poi dance (Haka Poi) features a soft ball stuffed with down, derived from a traditional weapon. The outside is covered with a thin layer of flax and is then suspended on a cord made of flax fiber. The poi is then swung around the body in various patterns that suggest forces of nature such as birds in flight, waterfalls, or summer rain. There are two main types of poi, the long and the short poi. Both are used in kapa haka performances. The long poi is mainly used for spinning movements and actions. The short poi was used for flicking, catching and slapping movements to mark a rhythm of a song.

In ancient times they were used either by men (among the tribes of the eastern seaboard), to strengthen the warriors' wrists for battle, or by women to make wrists flexible, since all clothing was woven by hand. Although the Haka was often done at tribal ceremonies, it is also used to welcome friends and visitors to one's village. The poi is also used for rites of passage such as the welcoming of guests, the celebration of important events and the fare welling of the dead. With its hypnotic, rhythmic motion the women also used poi to lull the tamariki (children) or mokopuna (grandchildren) to sleep.

**Ku'uwehilani Waianuheia Cid** from the company **KaUaTuahine** performs with Poi in **People Like Me 2003**.

## Zimbabwe—Mbira



### **Mbira Music:**

Zimbabwe's mbira is the primary traditional instrument of the Shona people, and has been played for over 1,000 years for religious rituals, royal courts, and social occasions. It consists of 22 to 28 metal keys mounted on a hardwood soundboard and is usually placed inside a large calabash resonator (deze). The keys are played with the two thumbs plucking down and the right forefinger plucking up.

An mbira piece consists of a basic cyclical pattern, which includes numerous intertwined melodies, often with contrasting rhythms. The extensive possibilities for rhythmic and melodic variation render each performance unique. When two mbiras are played together, the interlocking parts result in rich polyphony and polyrhythms.

A traditional repertoire of hundreds of pieces is transmitted from generation to generation, and pieces popular today are known to have been played over 700 years ago. At traditional ceremonies (mapira), ancestor spirits are called by performing their favorite songs; thus, the same pieces are retained in the repertoire over the centuries. Mbira music is believed by the Shona to belong to the ancestor spirits, not living people, and it is an honor to be chosen by the spirits to play their music for them.

The mbira is played in many traditional and contemporary contexts, including mapira, personal meditation, traditional healing, and assorted celebrations and ceremonies. Several of Zimbabwe's electric pop bands now incorporate mbira in their music.

### **Mbira Dance:**

At the traditional mapira ceremonies where Zimbabwe's mbira has been played for untold centuries, the community dances all night. Everyone dances, from the 5-year old to the 95-year old. Traditionally, mbira dance is not formally organized, because each person dances as his or her spirits wish. Dancing in the context of the ceremony is done by all, from the master dancer to the klutz, because everyone must contribute to the common goal of calling their ancestor to the ceremony. At the ceremony, a person would dance for a while, maybe sit and clap rhythms for a while, rest and have a drink, and then dance some more. Today, modern Zimbabwean dance troupes have taken typical traditional mbira dance steps and choreographed them for stage performance, such as that performed by **Madzimai Mbira** in **People Like Me 2003**.

## Nubian Dance



The Nubians inhabited the Nile Valley to the south of Egypt. Nubia once stretched from the Nile's first cataract at Aswan and extended south to Dongola in Southern Sudan. The Nubians, who are a mix of African, Arab and other Mediterranean peoples, lived in their traditional homeland for millennia. Although parts of Nubia were dominated by Egypt politically, through the ebb and flow of indigenous cultural developments since 3000 B.C., Nubians developed great kingdoms of their own, including the establishment of a Nubian monarchy that ruled Egypt as the Twenty-fifth Dynasty.

The Nubian people were uprooted from their land in 1971 when one of the world's highest dams, the Aswan dam, was built on the Nile to control the flow of flood waters. The Nubians' traditional homeland was flooded and many communities were resettled north of Aswan in present day Egypt. Many anthropologists thought the Nubian heritage – aspects of their culture such as their distinct language and culture—was doomed when the Aswan dam went up. Instead, many Nubians flooded into Cairo, bringing their colorful heritage with them.

The Nubian culture is passed from generation to generation, and resonates particularly strongly in its music. Drums and clapping hands dominated the music of old Nubia. Now, musicians are plugging in new instruments. The new style Nubian music has a growing number of fans both inside and outside the Nubian community, and a culture that some predicted would wash away with the Nile River has instead taken Egypt by storm.

In the villages of northern Africa, most women dance as a social activity, at weddings for example, in all-female groups. The character of this dance style is different in the big cities, particularly in Egypt where the dance has reached its most highly developed form. Top dancers achieve the status of movie stars because of the prominence of the entertainment industry.

The style of dance presented by **Mahea Uchiyama** in **People Like Me 2003** is a female solo interpretive style known and appreciated all over the Arab world including Northern Africa. In its original context, the dance is improvisational in nature, and the dancer draws from variety of characteristic movements with which to interpret the music and show mastery of the rhythm. The second part of the choreo-

graphy is a dance featuring a rhythm typically played for a person only once in a lifetime, at the occasion of a first wedding. The bright and ornamented clothing that the performer wears would only be worn in the company of her family, as in public she would never appear without her fustan or black cover dress, which is a sign of modesty.

The reserve and dignity of the Nubian people shows through the poetry and song. Here is an excerpt from a song by acclaimed Nubian musician, Hamza el-Din, expressing the love a Nubian feels for his lost country.

***Raks at Balad el-Aman*** (Dance of Nubia)

In Nubia, our paradise,  
The girls must go to the river to fetch water.  
I can see you going with your sister in the mountains.  
I can imagine how you will be talking very seriously to one another.  
Nubia, our beautiful Nubia is the land I love and will always remember...

## Physically Integrated Dance



Despite considerable progress in acceptance of people with disabilities in our society, it is still uncommon to see people with and without disabilities collaborating and performing as equals. Integrated dance gives people who are disabled the all-too-rare opportunity to see something of themselves and their highly distinctive culture reflected in dance. At the same time, nondisabled people are given the opportunity to view an exciting new dance form that both defies and expands the traditional and often limited definition of "dance" and "dancer."

Since 1987, **AXIS Dance Company** has created an exciting body of work developed by dancers with and without disabilities. Through its performances, premieres, and commissioned works, **AXIS** is one of the few companies in the forefront of paving the way for this powerful and inclusive dance form. This work is expanding dance to include an entire population, indeed a culture, which has historically been left out of this highly expressive art form. In so doing, a new audience for dance is growing.

*AXIS's* work in *physically integrated dance* has earned critical praise in both the arts and disability communities internationally, and has also earned wide recognition in the health and education fields for its pioneering nature. While their first commitment is to artistic excellence, the social and cultural value that is imbued in the work is integral to the importance of the form.

### Words That Empower

Positive language empowers. When speaking about people with disabilities, it is important to put people first. Catch-all phrases like 'the blind,' 'the deaf,' or 'the disabled,' do not reflect the individuality, equality, or dignity of people with disabilities. Here are some examples of positive and negative phrases. Note that the positive puts the person first:

#### Affirmative Phrases:

person with a disability

person who has muscular dystrophy

person with a spinal cord injury

person who uses a wheelchair

person without disabilities

#### Negative Phrases:

the disabled, the handicapped

afflicted by (stricken by, victim of, suffers from) muscular dystrophy

injured, lame, deformed

confined to (restricted to) a wheelchair; wheelchair-bound

normal person

## *Object Theatre/Puppetry*



Object theatre explores the expressive, dramatic and narrative power of everyday things. In the place of crafted puppets, the performers of Lunatique Fantastique use ordinary/found objects either in their raw form or rapidly altered in front of the audience. Everyday objects displace traditional crafted realistic or fantasy figures—a little girl might be represented by a napkin; a box becomes a pulpit, a gurney, a church. Because they are free of an imposed personality/identity, mundane objects activate the imagination and creative intelligence of puppeteer and audience. Since Lunatique Fantastique is a company in the forefront of this kind of object-based puppet theatre, they

are simultaneously discovering and inventing a new form, continuously trying new possibilities! In a recent piece, for instance, they incorporated food, and a manipulator's bare head becomes a penguin's belly.

Working within a flexible creative process (some pieces, for instance may originate with the artistic director's story idea, some may spring from objects introduced by other members of the ensemble), Lunatique Fantastique has developed its entire body of staged works through collaboration.

The work is very low-tech, performed on a tabletop with the puppeteers usually hooded and black-clad but visible. The audience can see how it is all done, created out of nothing special, brought to life through movement and gesture. In one recent show, for instance, wrapping paper is twisted into a femme fatal, and a crab is made up of two soup spoons, two dinner forks, and two dessert forks. And because the puppet-objects have no manufactured, crafted personality, the audience is half creating what they "see." They are partners in the creative act.