

DANCE STYLE LOCATOR

Bolivian/Peruvian Andes: Andean dance



The Aymara and the Quechua cultures are among the indigenous civilizations that still dwell in the Andes Mountains of South America, which cover parts of Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Chile. These cultures have continued to carry on traditions of dance and music that date back to earlier than 15,000 BC.

The Aymara culture has a wealthy repertoire of folk dance and music known as Native (pre-Colombian) and Mestizo dance, which originated after the Spanish conquest and incorporated European influences. In urban centers, Mestizo dances have found much popularity, especially during local festivities and celebrations of patron saints, while Native dance has only found minimal acceptance. However, Native

dance is still performed in rural areas during religious or secular community celebrations, examples of this dance being: Sikuris, Pinkillus, Chaqallus, Lawa k'umus, Chuqilas, K'usillos.

The events during which music and dance are traditionally performed in this region are considered expressions of *communitás*: an expression of community structure and solidarity through ceremonial events, which interpret and reaffirm common values and identity. Whether the event is religious or secular, private or communal, music and dance are important mechanisms of communication and underline the *communitás*.

Andean music is known as that music performed by the four basic instruments: *siqu* (siku), -also called panpipes or zampoñas – *charango* (stringed instrument), *bombo* (drum), and *quena* (flute). The *siqu* is of Aymara origin, while the *charango* was created after the Spanish conquest, as string instruments were originally unknown in the Andes. In ancient times the *charango* was made with the carapace of the armadillo, which historians believe first originated in Aymara territory (Potosi) in the 17th century.

Until the 1960s these instruments were played only by indigenous people in remote and rural areas. From the second half of the 1960s onwards, a sector of young people in Chile started up a political and cultural protest movement. This social current adopted as its symbol the musical trend known as *nueva canción* or *cancion protesta*, which is performed with the four indigenous instruments. Victor Jara, Inti Illimani, Kollawara, and Quilapayun were the first exponents of *nueva canción*. Later this music spread to the rest of the Andean countries and became popular among students there, especially in Bolivia and Peru, countries that were, at the time, under military regimes. At the beginning of the 1980s however,



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(Andean dance, continued)

the political message of the *nueva cancion* was abandoned, and this music then became commercially acceptable, as it transformed into what we now know as Andean Music.

A recent development in the Andes, as in many areas of the world, is that of “folkloric” music and dance groups that perform on stage rather than as part of a religious or secular communal event. Beginning in 1978, around the time that tourism to the area started to increase, local musicians and dancers began to perform in tourist restaurants in urban centers, and folkloristic groups in touristic taverns. Latin American folk music, played live by groups of young middle class Mestizos alternated with recorded Western disco music.

Suri Siquiris is a dance that dates back to 800 BC. The name comes from the great headdress made of feathers from the *suri* or *ñandu* (American ostrich) and the dance is done in relation to the harvest. The musicians who play the *siquis* and dance are known as *Siquiris*. The *siquis* has 17 canes, and comes in four sizes. They are played in sets of two, in interlocking melody and rhythm. The men dress in beautiful Alpaca ponchos with color tassels called *wichiwichi*, and the women dress in beautiful party skirts.

Huayno, also spelled *Huaiño* or *Wayno*, is widely recognized as the most representative dance of the Andes, with pre-Columbian (Quechua and Aymara) origins fused with Western influences. While historians speculate that it may have come from an Inca funeral dance, today it is purely festive. A circle of dancing couples surrounds the musicians, whose instruments may be flutes, drums, harps, and guitars. Couples dancing the *huayno* perform sharp turns, hops, and tap-like *zapateos* to keep time.

Huayno music is played on quena, charango, harp, and violin, however, there are dozens of regional variations, some of which involve marching bands, trumpets, saxophones and accordions. The musical structure stems from a pentatonic scale (scale of five notes) with a binary rhythm, (2/4 time). This structure has made this genre the basis of a series of hybrid rhythms, running from *huayno* to Andean rock.