

JOHNAVALOS RIOS

Dance Workshops

MEET THE ARTIST:

For over five years **JohnAvalos Rios** has been working as a lecturer for the University of California system. At UC Irvine he has held the artistic director and choreographer positions of the Ballet Folklórico de UCI and instructor of the Department of Dance. At UC Santa Barbara he has been teaching for the Chicano Studies Department where his responsibility is to train, choreograph and direct the Grupo Folklórico de UC Santa Barbara. He has taught lecture courses in Mexican and Chicano dance cultures for such programs as UCLA Chicano Studies and UC San Diego Summer Program in Guadalajara, Jalisco. Rios has also worked as a dance specialist for children. In 1984, he was the recipient of a California Arts Council Artist in Residence grant for children's programs at Plaza de la Raza, the cultural center for the arts and education in East Los Angeles. In addition, he taught Mexican Folklórico dance for eight years in the Lincoln Heights area schools.

As a dancer Mr. Rios has performed and toured nationally and internationally with various companies that utilize Mexican folklore as well as contemporary dance forms to represent the Chicano/Latino cultural experience. The companies include: Los Lupenos de San Jose, the National Chicano Dance Theatre (Denver), Ballet Mexicano (Los Angeles), Aman International Folk Ensemble, Miguel Delgado's Teatro Mexicano de la Danza and Chester Whitmore's Black Ballet Jazz. He has performed for such noted choreographers as Loretta Livingston, Rene Gubernick Olivas/Martha Kalman and Sally Whalen. His film credits include a feature dance role in the 1980 motion picture "Zoot Suit" written and directed by Luis Valdez.

Mr. Rios holds a Master of Arts in Dance Education from Stanford University and a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from UC Santa Cruz.



ABOUT THE WORKSHOPS:

Mr. Rios' workshops focus on providing the students with a taste of Mexican culture and folklore through *Danza Indígena*, the dances of indigenous peoples like the Totonac, the Huasteca and the Chamula, and through *Danza Mestizo*, dances that evolved out of the blending of the Indian and Spanish cultures, characterized by explosive *zapateados* (footwork). In addition to learning a specific dance, the students will participate in a warm-up session and will learn about the state or region of Mexico that the dance comes from, the people who created it, and about the history and significance of the movements and dance steps.



BEFORE THE WORKSHOP:

- Please have the students wear nametags for the workshop. It saves times if they are made beforehand!
- Review the importance of listening and observing. Ask the students what it means to be a good listener. What does it mean to be a good observer? Why is it important in daily life? Why is it important when the artist is here?
- Ask students what they already know about dance. List the types of dance they have done or seen. What part of the world do these forms of dance come from? How are they different? How are they similar?
- Discuss the importance of being able to express oneself through movement and dance. Where can they use this skill in their lives?
- Discuss how an action can express an emotion. Let the students wave "hello" to each other. Then have them use the same action but add an emotion (anger, excitement, disgust, etc.) Discuss how the action changes in tempo, rhythm and energy.
- Show your students a map of Mexico. Locate and name the various states. Divide the class into groups and have each group report on a state of Mexico. Make sure they include information about the people of the region: their customs, their clothing, their way of life.
- Examine the history of Mexico: Who were the Aztecs? What were they like? What kind of a civilization did they build? Where was the city of Tenochtitlan? Who were the Conquistadores? Where did they come from? What changes did they bring with them?
- Make sure the students know they will be working with a professional artist who makes his living from creating, performing and teaching dance. Reassure them that they are not expected to be expert dancers, but should be ready to listen carefully and be willing to try as the artist teaches them about dances that carry with them the history of the people who created them.

AFTER THE WORKSHOP:

- Review the major points presented in the workshops. What did they learn about dance? What did they learn about Mexican dance? What did they learn about themselves?
- Review and practice the warm-ups, skills and dances done in class so students can attain more comfort, ability and involvement in dancing.