

FRANCISCO MARTINEZ

DANCETHEATRE

Cancionero

Art Form: Dance

Style: Contemporary/Classical—Folk Dance Inspired

Culture: Latin America

MEET THE ARTIST:

Francisco Martinez is a dancer, choreographer and the artistic director of *Francisco Martinez Dancetheatre*. Mr. Martinez began dancing in Mexico, continuing his studies in the United States when his family relocated to Los Angeles. After attending the University of Arizona, Mr. Martinez studied in New York with the Nikolais/Louis Dance Lab, among others. In 1975 he received a dance scholarship to the Texas Christian University, during which time he became a member and eventual principal dancer of the Fort Worth Ballet. Returning to Los Angeles in 1981, he founded Francisco Martinez Dancetheatre, drawing from both a classical and modern dance vocabulary to create over 65 dance works; the company has been in residence at Plaza de le Raza in East Los Angeles since 1988. Mr. Martinez has received two Horton dance awards for his choreography. He is also the recipient of the California Dance Educators Association's Artist Educator Award for 2001.

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE:

Cancionero is a journey of Latin America through dance and music. The concert travels through Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Mexico and Peru showcasing unique selections of music that represent each country. "Pra Que Discutir Con Madame" and "Aguas de Marco" begin the FMDT's expedition through Latin America with the first stop in Brazil, land of the Rain Forest, Amazon River, the pau-brasil tree and the samba. Crossing over the country of Uruguay, the next stop is in Argentina (land of silver) and birthplace of the Tango. Set to the music of the Buena Vista Social Club and sung by Omara Portuondo and Ibrahim Ferrer "Silencio" and "Que Bueno Baila Usted" are the two musical selections that brings our journey to the island of Cuba. "La Golondrina" a poignant song about farewell marks the FMDT's stop in Mexico, home of the Mexica tribe (later re-named "Aztec"). Our journey concludes with the songs "Cholito Toca y Retoca", "Limena" and "Fina Estampa" traditional songs from Peru, as sung by Maria Dolores Pradera. Mr. Martinez's narration gives insight into musical, historical, geographical and choreographic process, making connections between thought, feeling, sound and movement.



PREPARING FOR THE EXPERIENCE:

The dances and music that make up the performance reveal the beauty of Latin American cultures, landscapes and customs. Each country boasts diverse influences in music and dance styles that reflect specific characteristics.

Brazil: The country's name is derived from *pau-brasil* (brazilwood), a tree highly valued by early colonists. Brazil's music has very strong ties to African rhythms mixed with indigenous instruments. The *bossa nova*, *capoiera* and the *samba* are the country's contributions of dances to the rest of the world.

Argentina: The name Argentina comes from the word *argenta*, which means silver or white in Latin. Argentina was thought to be rich in silver, but what the Conquistadores thought was silver, actually turned out to be tin! Buenos Aires is the capital of Argentina, and it is here that the *tango* was born.

Cuba: Cuba was occupied for thousands of years by two Indian tribes - the Ciboney and the Taino - before it was "discovered" by Columbus on October 24, 1492. The name Cuba comes from the word "cubanacan" which means "central place". Its music, like Brazil, has strong ties to African rhythms mixed with the local styles. The bolero and la bomba are two of Cuba's contributions to music and dance.

Mexico: Mexico is the home of some of the oldest known cultures in the world, and many grew into advanced civilizations that include Olmec, Maya, and Mexica (Aztecs) for whom Mexico is named. The Mexi part of the name is from Mexitli, the war god, whose name was derived from *metzli* (the moon) and *xictli* (navel) and, combined, probably meaning child of the moon. In the Aztec language, "co" means "place", so Mexico literally means the home of the people of Mexitli.

Peru: Peru was the main center of the Inca Empire. "Inca" means a "God on Earth" and originated from a tribe based in Cuzco, which became the capital of the empire. No one knows what the word "Peru" means, but linguists (people who study languages) believe that Peru is a hybrid of Spanish and some of the earlier native people's languages.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What does a choreographer do? (creates dances)
- What does a composer do? (creates music)
- Did you have a favorite dance from *Cancionero*? Why was it your favorite?
- How did the dances convey the different styles of the music?
- What are the differences between modern dance and classical ballet? (classical ballet has codified body positions; modern dance has more freedom)

FRAMEWORK FOCUS - LANGUAGE ARTS:

Discuss the performance, recalling the different dances and music. Ask students to describe the mood of each piece, trying to identify the following:

Time: Fast? Slow? Syncopated? Did the tempos change? Were there repeated patterns in the music or in the movements?

Energy: Did the movements convey an emotion? Tell a story? How did the dancers move differently in order to show contrasting emotions? Did they change levels? Face different directions? How is a swing different from a bounce or a reach different from a roll?

Space: How did the choreographer use space to convey ideas? Was space used differently in each dance? Why? Did the music influence the use of space? Did the number of dancers change the way space was used?

Now select two pieces and write a short paragraph comparing and contrasting them. Younger students may write as a group, older students in pairs or write individually. Use the following criteria for the task:

Compare and contrast:

- the themes
- the mood, as influenced by the music
- the use of space and design
- repetition
- rhythm and tempo
- the energy qualities used.

Legend:

- 🌀 Artistic perception
- ❖ Creative expression
- ▶ Historical & cultural context
- ⇒ Aesthetic valuing
- * Connections, Relations, Applications

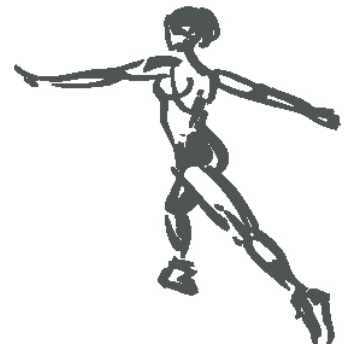
ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE THE EXPERIENCE:

❖ Dance can convey a variety of feelings and thoughts. Ask students to show a feeling through a movement or body posture. Use the following emotions:

Sad Happy Excited Afraid Angry Surprised

🌀 Ask students to pick one of the above emotions to explore in movement. Ask them to try changing and enhancing their gestures: make them bigger, change and add levels, repeat gestures and change the speed. Have students share their movements in groups of four and ask observers to identify the emotions being expressed.

❖ A choreographer paints a picture of music through dance. Ask the students to listen to different pieces of music, trying to decide what the music is telling them, or how it makes them feel. Ask students to create movements reflecting the moods of the music or the images it creates. Use the following as examples of movements: opening/closing, turning, reaching or withdrawing.



* Divide the students into groups of four or five. Ask each group to choose a photograph from a magazine, book or newspaper. Have the students answer the following questions: What is the mood? Who are the characters? What are they doing? Where have they come from? Where are they going?

Ask students to take four ideas and create four tableaux (frozen pictures) to represent their ideas.

Include the following dance elements:

- A clear beginning, middle and end.
- A change in level
- A change in energy

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Balanchine, George and Francis Mason. *101 Stories of Great Ballets*. Anchor Books Doubleday, New York, NY, 1989.

Stinson, Sue. *Dance for Children: Finding the Magic in Movement*. The American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance. Reston, Virginia. 1988.