

Spanish Legacies:
75 Years of Spanish Dance in Arizona

by

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ABSTRACT

Individual artists are capable of deeply impacting the communities in which they practice, leading to cultural development, exchange, and understanding. This impact is sometimes leveraged by nations as cultural diplomacy. Through the lens of cultural diplomacy, this document traces the development of Spanish dance in the Phoenix Valley from 1947 through the end of the 20th century by examining the careers of four international Spanish-dance artists who settled in Arizona; Adelino “Eddie” Fernandez, Lydia Torea, Laura Moya, and Dini Román. Each of these artists connected Arizona to a larger national and international dance community and their influence is felt to this day in the cultural diversity of the Phoenix Valley. The document concludes by describing the exhibit and performances that were built around this research and exploring how this research, and the author’s experience coalesce to reveal how Spanish dance—and more broadly percussive dance—is embraced in local culture, but sometimes experiences a marginalized status in post-secondary education. The author shares how ASU professors inspired her to advocate for inclusion of percussive dance in the Master of Fine Arts program, reveals the historical forces that influence its exclusion, shares personal experiences to illustrate the realities faced by dancers in the academy, and comes full circle in the realization that her advocacy, the positive change it enacted, and this very project are a direct result of these four artists’ influence and are examples of cultural diplomacy in action.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Judith Chacon and Theodore Chacon.

Thank you for being my inspiration.

This is all for you.

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INTRODUCTION

Discovering Dance

When I was a child, I glimpsed the world through dance. I attended Catholic school, and every St. Patrick's Day, our school principal would dance the Irish jig at our assembly. I loved watching this strong woman, who otherwise terrified me, glow as she executed intricate patterns with her feet. The entire school clapped along with the music, adding to her joy. Through dance, I saw another side of our principal; I saw her youth and imagined us surrounded by the vast green fields of Ireland; the red brick, concrete, and desert landscape of Arizona disappeared. One year, a dance troupe from India came to perform at our school. I was transfixed by the bright colors, foreign sounds, and the golden adornments of the performers. They inspired images of spices and vibrancy in my 10-year-old mind. As a family, we visited my grandparents in northern New Mexico every summer and winter, and sometimes we went to see flamenco in Santa Fe. I was enthralled by the expressive power, fierce guitar, self-assuredness, and artistry of the performers. Since the age of three I danced ballet; the various Italian, Russian, and French styles were clearly delineated by my various instructors. As I learned from watching and dancing, I felt in dialogue with different cultures; I sensed different expressions and flavors in the movement—mine and theirs. Through these dancers and my corporeal experience, I glimpsed other ways of being and felt curious about and comfortable with international culture as a result; these experiences made me feel connected to the world.

I was born in the 1970s and feel I am among the last US generation to have experienced a pre-digital childhood, one in which dial-up Internet and cassette tapes were the norm. I can still remember when my dad thought cable TV was a waste of time and money. In those years, and for many generations prior, the performing arts were the primary source of exposure to other cultures; they were windows into the world—they were *my* windows into the world. Interestingly, it seems that other people also valued the power of the arts to foster good will and human understanding.

In following pages I will explain how Soviet and U.S. federal governments leveraged the arts in order to reach the hearts and minds of foreign peoples and to plant seeds of solidarity and inspiration across cultural borders. I see my childhood experiences with international dance as a microcosm of an the movement that today is called “cultural diplomacy.” I believe such experiences have massive potential to positively influence cultural understanding. This is relevant to my project because it reveals how the individual experience parallels federal policy, and demonstrates that through human communication and exchange society can become better, conflict can be avoided, and policies can change. When we understand each other we can find common ground.

Dance as Cultural Diplomacy

American political scientist Milton C Cummings (1933-2007) defined cultural diplomacy as “the exchange of ideas, information, art, and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding (Cummings 1). Film scholar Miia Huttunen explains that in order for cultural diplomacy to be necessary there must be differing views, or a gap in understanding that requires such exchange; in other

words cultural diplomacy requires that there be differences and can best “be understood as dialogue across cultural dividing lines—as a negotiation between and through cultural differences” (26). Huttunen’s clarification helps us to see that difference is a key component in cultural diplomacy. Of course, difference does not only apply to separate nation-states; the idea of a homogenous culture within a geographic nation is a myth (13), one that I believe has its basis in hegemony, which often serves to render differences invisible. Cross-cultural studies expert Ian Ang offers further clarification, suggesting “government-driven cultural diplomacy is only one strand of cultural flow in the web of intersecting cultural relations being spun incessantly by myriad small and large players between nation-states and across the globe” (372). While cultural diplomacy most often refers to actions by nation-states, in this work I examine multiple players—large and small— navigating cultural differences through the lens of cultural diplomacy. In the course of doing this work I learned how dancers contribute to this exchange; instinctively and more often than not, unconsciously.

For much of the 20th century, particularly during the years of the Cold War, the performing arts were harnessed by nation-states to foster cultural diplomacy around the world (Foner, 2). Professor Cadra Peterson McDaniel, a cultural and political historian on faculty at Texas A&M University, describes the political benefits the Soviets gained through cultural exchange leading up to and during the Cold War in her book *American-Soviet Cultural Diplomacy: The Bolshoi Ballet’s American Premiere*. Naima Prevots, Professor Emeritus of Dance at American University in Washington, D.C., explores a similar topic in *Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War*. Popular US history may recall the Soviet style as characterized by grimly determined workers, but the

Soviets invested heavily in the export of artistic talent and saw the arts as a crucial weapon in promoting communist ideology (McDaniel, 13). In her book, McDaniel outlines the Soviet logic in using the Bolshoi Ballet as a gateway into people's hearts; that by praising the artists, they also praised the ideology, and that eventually, the two would be inseparable in the minds and hearts of audiences (14). In 1925, the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (VOLKS) was established by the Soviet Union, with the goal of forging cultural and scientific ties with nations around the world and by 1930, VOLKS had ties with 77 nations, intertwining politics and cultural diplomacy to work toward the development of a new culture in service to communism (28). In the 1920s, American impresario Sol Hurok established an agreement with Anatoli Lunacharsky, the Soviet Ministry of Culture and the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment, to bring leading Soviet performers to the USA (29). McDaniel states that, "Though distrustful of Communism, Americans warmed to the Russian performers, and eventually, these audiences' artistic appreciation would translate into concrete political support" (29), indicating that the Soviet plan indeed worked—much like my early exposure to Spanish dance, Indian dance, and ballet made me comfortable with those cultural expressions. Fairly late into the game, President Eisenhower saw value in matching Soviet efforts, and the President's Emergency Fund for International Affairs was formed in 1954 (Prevots, 23). With these funds, the US State department deployed elite American performing artists to sing, dance, and play music throughout the world, the first of whom was José Limón, who was sent to South America (23).

The President's Emergency Fund for International Affairs was closely tied to the United States Information Agency (USIA), a special program whose mission was, as

stated by the first director, Theodore C. Streibert, “to show...that we are trying to identify ourselves with the aims and aspirations of these other people so as to establish a mutuality of interest” (Prevots, 12, DEPL as qtd in Castagneto). The USIA reported to the President through the National Security Council (Prevots, 12). The Emergency Fund was managed by an Operations Coordinating Board that included the head of the USIA, representatives from the National Security Council, Undersecretaries of Defense and State, representatives from the CIA, and the Special Assistant to the President, the first of whom was Charles Douglas Jackson (13). Former head of psychological warfare in North Africa during World War II, C.D. Jackson was also a patron of the arts, a board member of the Metropolitan Opera, and a key player in the creation of New York’s Lincoln Center (12). For Jackson, “psychological warfare” meant winning the enemy’s hearts and minds in hopes of avoiding physical aggression (12). In a letter to the President of the Senate, President Dwight D. Eisenhower wrote “we need greater resources to assist and encourage private musical, dramatic, and other cultural groups to go forth and demonstrate that America too can lay claim to high cultural and artistic accomplishments...The contribution which such presentations can make toward a better understanding of America can scarcely be exaggerated” (Eisenhower). Because experts in psychological warfare were involved in the development of the program and the statements they made I conclude that the exportation of performing arts became a weapon in psychological warfare; a tactic to win the hearts and minds of global citizens and to show that the United States—that democracy—was capable of cultural achievements on par with the Soviets.

This is important to my work because it acknowledges that through performing arts the psyche of individual citizens can be reached. I believe that government agencies leveraged the arts as psychological warfare because the arts, in essence, allow others to glimpse the performers' human condition, expressive freedom, and physical health. As I see it, the arts express a plethora of aesthetics, costumes, and traditions, that convey life experience and world-view through performance. For me, art can level ideologies and speak to the soul. I believe the US government's investment in cultural diplomacy aimed to achieve exactly what international dance granted me as a child: the evocation of wonder, curiosity, appreciation, and awe for what humanity can accomplish with the body, mind, and soul—and from the U.S. federal perspective, it was for what *democracy* can accomplish.

It is my opinion and personal experience that such exchanges are not limited to government-funded projects and large-scale tours, but that exchange also occurs through individuals who are motivated to explore the world. I experienced such exchange in my own life as a young dancer in Spain, and again, I am not alone in this belief. US Senator J. William Fulbright served for over 30 years in Congress; he had a deep impact on US foreign relations policy and he remains the longest serving chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs). In 1946, with unanimous support, his legislation established the Fulbright Program, an international exchange program in all disciplines designed to facilitate cultural understanding and goodwill between US citizens and other nations (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs). Inspired by his experience as a Rhodes scholar, William Fulbright knew firsthand the power of individual experience in new lands, with new peoples and new

ways of thinking (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs). The first Fulbright Program scholars went abroad in 1948, and since then more than 380,000 individuals have contributed to foreign relations while pursuing their dreams of international experience (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs). The Fulbright website offers a database of student scholars sent abroad since 1949 which lists 134 dancers, five of whom have gone to Spain (Fulbright U.S. Student Program). This is an infinitesimal number of dancers, however they are included. This is to say that the U.S. government will invest in individuals—in dancers—because they believe in the power of one person to impact how a nation is perceived. If the goal is to win hearts and minds, each heart and mind is an individual entity with unique perception. If we accept that perception is an individual phenomenon, it stands to reason that it is through individual actions that trust and confidence are built.

Summary of the Document

In this document, I posit that individual artists contribute not only to foreign relations, but that their accomplishments deeply impact the domestic communities in which they practice, leading to cultural development, exchange, and understanding; in other words, cultural diplomacy is not limited to international exchange, but can also be leveraged among culturally diverse peoples who share the same geographic space. As I see it, geographical areas are not culturally homogenous, especially in the United States, a nation comprised of citizens from vastly different ethnic backgrounds. By exploring the careers of four Spanish-dance artists who settled in the Phoenix Valley, I demonstrate how each deeply impacted their community. I trace the local development of Spanish

dance from 1947 through the end of the 20th century to explore how these artists connected Arizona to a larger national and international dance community and how their influence is felt to this day. I proceed with a reflection on the exhibition I created and provide details on the performances that were built around researching these four artists. Finally, to achieve a deep reflection I include how my academic coursework and lived experience as a student at Arizona State University reveals current problems with Spanish dance in post-secondary education. I share how, in the course of my studies, ASU professors inspired me to make inequities visible and to advocate for the inclusion of diverse cultural expression in dance; the latter portion of this document is my attempt to do so on behalf of percussive dance. To demonstrate understanding of the issue within a larger context of dance in post-secondary education, I researched the historical forces that influence the exclusion of percussive dance and share personal experiences illustrating the types of issues percussive dancers might face in the academy. In the end, I conclude that these very pages are a direct result of these four artists' influence and that cultural diplomacy in action does not need to occur between nation-states, but is something that is continually achieved by individuals willing to navigate differences with the hope of arriving at cultural understanding, acceptance, and respect.

In these pages, I will explore the careers of four artists: Spanish-born dancer Adelino Fernandez, the father of Spanish dance in the Phoenix Valley; his student, Spanish-American dancer Lydia Torea, who made headlines in Spain as a blonde American pom-pom girl turned flamenco artist; Canadian-born dancer Laura Moya, who lived an international dance career during World War II; and Dini Román, an Italian Bostonian who made her own dreams a reality as an independent self-made artist in the

late 1950s. Each of these artists settled in the Phoenix Valley, where they shared their experience and love of flamenco with the community, inspiring generations of dancers and audiences. While each of these artists provided a rich repertoire in their artistry, they also connected Arizona dancers with a greater network of artists and aesthetic legacies inherited from artists with whom they performed and studied. This convergence of regional and generational styles provided the Arizona dance community with a well-rounded stylistic spectrum of Spanish-dance.

When writing about these artists, I will dispense with the convention of using last names and opt to use their first names. I do this, first, because flamenco is a socially and community-driven art form, one in which first names or artistic names are often used, a convention common to performing art forms that emerge from the oppressed such as flamenco, blues, and hip-hop. Second, I do this because each of these artists is personal for the Spanish-dance community and for me. I have known them by their first names since I was a child, and I prefer to bring the personal significance into this work. I hope that by personalizing them in the use of their first names, you can also feel closer to them and the impact they have left.

My central questions of inquiry are, *how did these four Spanish-dance artists of the mid-20th century contribute to local, national, and international advancement of Spanish dance; what significance did that exchange have on the evolving identity of the Southwestern states as they became acculturated into the contiguous US; and how does their work echo in our modern-day Phoenix dance community and in my lived career?*

To answer these questions, I drew on primary materials such as personal interviews, newspapers, autobiographical content, programs, and photographs from the

artists' personal collections. I interviewed contemporaries of the artists when possible to learn about how they were perceived by those who knew them. I also drew on my lived experience as an Arizona-raised Spanish dancer—a direct heir of the legacy they have left.

Why Me?

I am the person to do this work because Lydia Torea, a central figure in motivating this exploration, has been my life-long mentor, and I am part of the legacy she, Adelino, Laura, and Dini have left. I have seen the influence of many artists wane as time passes and new trends emerge. However, when I went to Spain—forty years after Lydia's debut—doors were opened to me because she was my teacher. Renowned Spanish-dance artists invited me to coffee, restaurant owners offered me prime seating and complimentary drinks, and musicians confessed that Lydia was the greatest crush of their past. I am the person to do this work because I am connected to them directly; through corporeal stylization because Lydia is my dance mom and Adelino was her first teacher; and through community because Dini is my friend and because she and Laura trained many dancers with whom I have worked; as an Arizona Spanish dancer, I am a link in their legacy.

In conducting this research, I stand on Lydia's dancing shoulders, influenced by many dance scholars such as the aforementioned Naima Prevots, Professor Emeritus of Dance at American University, who authored the brilliant book *Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War*, in which she examines the deployment of performing arts as cultural diplomacy and psychological warfare under the Eisenhower administration—the same era that Lydia and Román were dancing in fascist Spain. I draw

on dance scholar and theorist Brenda Dixon Gottschild, Professor Emeritus in Dance at Temple University, and her work which reveals the Africanist presence in American dance; Gottschild inspires me to work toward revealing the Latinx presence in American dance. I draw on theater scholar David Krasner's work unveiling the significance of Aida Overton Walker as a negotiator of culture in the post-emancipation United States.

Overton Walker, a Black dancer/actress, who taught upper-class New England Whites and British nobility the cakewalk and toured Europe as an entertainment sensation in the wake of the Civil War. Just as Overton Walker was an independent, unofficial, but powerful representative of an exotic "other," at a time of rapid change, I believe that Spanish dancers served in a similar capacity as the West was acculturating to the Anglo-Saxon east. I am inspired by the writings of Nadine George Graves, Chair of the Department of Dance at Ohio State University; her work on the Whitman Sisters, a group of female biracial light-skinned Black vaudeville entertainers during the early 20th century, reveals how vaudeville reflected social dynamics and drove social change.

Although Grave's analysis pertains largely to Black/White cultural negotiation, Spanish dance was also common in vaudeville across the country, when the West was still wild and statehood not yet attained by Arizona and New Mexico. Graves's conclusions of negotiated racial identities shed light on how "Spanishness" may also have been brokered as the East met West. Last, I draw on French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and his theory of cultural capital; that knowledge is a resource gained within a certain cultural contexts; as such, certain kinds of knowledge may open doors of opportunity to increase one's rank in a particular society. For example, if I, as a non-Spaniard, can speak intelligently about flamenco song forms in Spanish I might be taken more seriously among flamenco artists

in Spain than if I insisted on speaking English and only talked about the beautiful costumes.

I hope this work will be a springboard for me to further explore performing arts as a catalyst for change and a way to bridge social and cultural capital. I draw on personal experience in this journey, combining autoethnography with a study of the historiography as told through newspaper and magazine articles on both sides of the Atlantic. I bring my syncretic being and all that I know in my flesh and my heart as a living embodiment of White and Brown America.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

My Danced Identity

I have always self-identified as a dancer. Some of my most rewarding moments have been hard at work in a studio, leaping, turning, sweating, and pounding my feet on the floor. I have felt competitive in the studio as well as within my tribe. Dancing has taken me to many parts of the world, places I would not have gone without dance. I am a light-skinned woman of Spanish, German, Scottish, Indigenous, and Irish ethnicity. My first confrontation with cultural identity was as an undergraduate at the University of New Mexico when I was embraced as *una chicana del norte*, but I didn't know what that meant. I grew up in Phoenix, where I attended Catholic school; there were Asian, Mexican, and White kids in my classes; European immigrants and speakers of multiple languages. In elementary school, when we had to write about our ancestry, I learned I was German Irish on my mom's side and Spanish on my father's side. This is not untrue; however, this simple origin story omits hundreds of years both my paternal and maternal ancestors occupied the Americas—a story my parents didn't know.

There is something about unveiling my heritage that makes my existence feel more real, more significant, as if I have more strength within me than just my lived experience. Learning my history makes me imagine the resilience, bravery, and complexity of my ancestors and brings them alive inside me. On my mother's paternal side, Scotchman Robert Mein (1802–1877) arrived in New York in 1844; he lived in Brooklyn and made hats. His son, Robert Mein (1835–1910), married Irish immigrant

Anna Flynn (1828–1897). Their son, Robert Mein (1862–1927), married German immigrant Elizabeth Brechwald, who bore my grandfather, Robert James Mein. On my mother's maternal side Lieutenant Colonel John Lewis Sears (1750–1821) and his father James Sears (1720–1783) both fought in the Revolutionary War, and John Lewis Sears' grandson, Aaron Holt (my third great-grandfather) fought for the Union in the Civil War.

On my father's maternal side, Hernán Martín Serrano II was born in 1599 in San Gabriel de Yungue-Ouinge, New Mexico. This was the site of the first Spanish capital of the provincial territory of Santa Fe de Nuevo México. There, Governor Juan de Oñate, along with 600 settlers, established the first permanent European settlement in New Mexico in 1598, and my ancestors were among them. The original settlement was located where the Rio Chama meets the Rio Grande, west of present-day Ohkay Owingeh, New Mexico, approximately 30 minutes from modern-day Santa Fe, not far from where my father was born in Dixon, New Mexico. This was the northernmost colony in the Spanish empire. My family has been here since the beginning. For over 400 years, my family has lived in New Mexico. I was born there, too.

This history gives me a sense of depth in both my Southwestern and New England roots. I am an American hybrid. I have Indigenous blood on both sides, but it runs in my veins unattributed to any tribe. My family has been part of the United States of America, both West and East, from its inception. I embody the complex history of this country, and I express every part of this history when I dance.

I first studied Spanish dance under Lydia Torea in Pheonix, but undertook a long journey of extensive international training to become a professional artist. As an undergraduate in the dance program of the University of New Mexico, I gained exposure

to scores of Spanish artists through the Festival Flamenco Internacional. While at UNM, I also studied modern dance under icon Bill Evans. After graduating, I moved to Madrid, Spain, where I studied under Rafaela Carrasco, Manuel Reyes, El Ciro, Belen Maya, El Junco, and others. It was there that I realized the impact Lydia had many years prior. I spent two years in Spain, teaching English to Spanish businessmen and returning for short stints to visit family, earn money, and return.

In 2001, I received a call from flamenco dancer María Benítez, director of a prominent US-based Spanish-dance company. I had worked in her second company as an undergraduate, and she had heard of my progress in Madrid from Ciro. She offered me a position with her company, and I accepted. For two years I danced with María Benítez's Teatro Flamenco, but the third year my contract was not renewed. Shortly thereafter, my father passed. I went into a deep depression and stopped dancing. I married my boyfriend of four years and delved into the art gallery business. I was directing a gallery on Canyon Road in Santa Fe, New Mexico, when my husband and I decided to form a new gallery with his family's custom woodworking enterprise, Southwest Spanish Craftsmen. When that was established and I felt more secure, I began dancing again and performing with local musicians.

Around that time I reconnected with Carlota Santana, director of Flamenco Vivo, a company with whom I had performed at Festival Flamenco in Albuquerque. She offered me a position with her company in New York. Around the same time, Benitez asked me to return to join her company. The dates did not conflict, so I accepted both offers and traveled regularly to dance across the country. Benitez retired, and I continued working with Santana, touring throughout the US and to Colombia. I formed my own

troupe, and we traveled to Mexico, Georgia, and throughout much of New Mexico. My touring became extensive, and I left the gallery in the hands of my husband and his family.

In 2012, my husband and I separated, and I returned to Spain. There, I danced with the Cuadro de José Galván in Seville and toured to Galicia, Huelva, and throughout Seville. When I returned to Arizona in September 2013, I began to work closely with Peoria Center for the Performing Arts and later with Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts. Since 2014, I have produced annual shows at Scottsdale Center, perpetuating the legacy of Spanish dance in the Valley by working with local, national, and international artists. For four years, I have presented a month-long fall series as part of their season programming.

As a flamenco artist, I embody and express complexity. Flamenco is a syncretic music and dance from the south of Spain, embracing multiple cultures, influenced by the New World, Africa, and the oppressive fist of the Inquisition. It is an art of resistance, yes, but more so an art of resilience. Why does this matter in terms of my research question? Because my complex ancestry includes the Indigenous, Spanish-, and the English-speaking peoples who created the modern-day Americas. I believe that through dance these cultures found common ground and that music and dance transcends language and bridges cultures. I believe that live performance allows the viewer to experience cultural expression with all five senses, facilitating an exchange that fosters curiosity and visceral understanding that elicits a physical response and that dancing human bodies were a primary means of cultural exchange for mosaic that is U.S. culture. I believe that hip-hop is a modern day manifestation of that exchange and that the

syncretic nature of flamenco in particular continues to bridge Spain with the American continents it once dominated.

I believe that live performance contributed—and continues to contribute—to the fabric of our culturally diverse country and that in an effort to be a united nation, we homogenize and sometimes invisibilize differences. I believe that appreciating those differences will help us to see the vibrant tapestry that makes up our United States and that acknowledging the diverse contributions different peoples have made to U.S. culture will allow us to see, appreciate, and tolerate differences with more empathy and compassion.

Literature Review

There are innumerable books about Spanish dance in circulation, but few about Spanish dance within the United States. The academic publications of which I am aware focus primarily on Spanish dance in New York and in New Mexico—both of these places are connected to Spanish dance in Arizona. Some books include mention Spanish dancers who are from Arizona, but connections to place are not explored in any depth. There are three notable books that serve as references for this thesis project.

First, the fabulous publication *The Spirit of Flamenco: From Spain to New Mexico* by my friend of many years, Nicolasa Chavez, former Curator of Latino/Hispano/Spanish Colonial Collections for the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and recently named Deputy State Historian for the State of New Mexico. In her book, Chavez traces the journey of Spanish dance to New Mexico, a journey that is closely tied with flamenco in Arizona. Of the many artists featured in

Chavez's book, four lived and taught in Arizona: Lydia Torea, María Benítez, Pablo Rodarte, and myself, Julia Chacon.

Another emblematic publication, *100 Years of Flamenco in New York*, was written by dance scholar Ninotchka Bennahum and flamenco historian K. Meira Goldberg. The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts produced the volume in conjunction with an exhibition documenting 100 years of flamenco and Spanish-dance activity in New York. The publication traces the journey of many Spanish dancers who passed through New York as a point of entry before touring across the United States as independent companies or on the vaudeville circuit. *100 Years of Flamenco in New York* offers rich insight into the immigrant atmosphere of New York and provides information about early Spanish and American Spanish-dance entertainers. It also serves to unveil the popularity of Spanish dance, provide an account of touring artists, and draw connections between Spain and the Americas, however no explicit connections to Arizona are made.

The publication *The Golden Age of Spanish Dance* by California Spanish dancer Michael "Miguel" Bernal examines the careers of many Spanish dancers who performed from the mid-1800s to the 1930s. In the book, Bernal strives to tell artists' stories from a dancer's perspective. The book contains subsections on individual dancers, regional styles, film references, and delightful information. However, references to primary source material are often absent in the publication, rendering it an unreliable source for academic work but a resource for dates that may be corroborated by primary source materials. The book includes several people who have loose connections to Arizona and mentions the Havana-Madrid nightclub in New York, where many flamenco artists performed. Given the citation limitations, the validity of this resource for academic purposes is

questionable, but it serves as a reference point for digging deeper in primary source materials to corroborate information.

Previous academic research on Spanish dance in Arizona includes an Arizona State University master's thesis by ethnomusicologist Anthony Dumas (2001). Dumas's thesis documents performers at two venues that showcased flamenco at the dawn of the 21st century in Scottsdale, Arizona: Pepín Restaurante Español (since closed) and the Hyatt Hotel at Gainey Ranch. The work provides a vivid snapshot of the Phoenix Valley flamenco scene in 2001. It examines the microculture of flamenco in the Phoenix Valley and records how artists of the era constructed a community around performing the art of flamenco. While Dumas's thesis succeeds in providing a glimpse into the era, the evocative and informative document contains historical information that conflicts with other sources. For example, Dumas states in his thesis that Lydia—the subject of this document—toured with the Jose Greco company for eighteen years before returning to Arizona; however, Lydia's autobiography and personal interviews state that she joined the Greco company in December 1961 and left the company in 1964, when she formed her own troupe. Before returning to Phoenix, she moved to Las Vegas, Nevada, where she worked as a bet runner and showgirl. Through my work, I hope to provide a more accurate history of Arizona's Spanish dance legacy. This brings me to the last relevant publication of this literature review, *La Gitana Blanca*, an autobiography by the central subject of this document, Arizona flamenco matriarch and Spanish-dance legend Lydia Torea (2008). The autobiography served as a rich resource for dates, stories, and contextualization, and all information referenced was corroborated by primary source materials.

In addition to referencing the existing resources, I conducted personal interviews with Lydia and people who danced with her in the 1960s and 1970s. To contextualize public interest in performances and events, I consulted digitized and primary source materials of local publications accessed through the Arizona Memory Project, the Arizona Historical Society, Arizona State University Library, and newspapers.com.

Definition of Terms

Spanish dance encompasses all of the regional dances that originated within the geographical boundaries of modern-day Spain. These dances are varied and include but are not limited to *sevillanas* (a lively partner dance from Seville), *flamenco* (the music and dance of Andalucía), *sardana* (a circle dance from Catalonia), *jota Aragonesa* (a leaping dance from Aragon that incorporates castanets), *escuela bolera* (from Castille, a contributor to ballet, with quick steps and pauses), and many other regional forms (La Meri, 30–93).

Flamenco is the music and dance of southern Spain, originating in the region of Andalucía. Flamenco is an amalgam of cultural influence with contributions—borrowed or imported—from Arabic, Judaic, Roma, Spanish (European), Cuban, African, Afro-Iberian, New World, and Moorish cultures (La Meri, 77–85; Goldberg, 1–2). Seville was a major center of the African slave trade, second only to Lisbon, and Seville is cited as having the highest Black population in Europe (Pike, 355, 357). One might also argue Chinese culture has had a visible influence through the introduction of the mantón de Manila, a large embroidered silk shawl introduced through trade with China established

after the colonization of the Philippines. The macramé fringes were added in Spain, creating a hybrid fashion accessory that swept Europe and became an often-used prop and costume accessory in flamenco. Flamenco may be claimed in parts large and small by each of these influences but cannot be entirely credited to any single one and so is a rich source for examining cultural exchange. Culturally, flamenco appeals to a wide range of people with diverse personal heritage and is adopted and practiced by people of various ethnic backgrounds. Flamenco refers to a trinity of performance art: the singing (*cante*), dancing (*baile*), and guitar (*toque*).

Southwest refers to the original US territories of New Mexico (which included Arizona). I am aware that the Southwest often also includes California, Texas, Colorado, Utah, and Nevada; however, for the purposes of this thesis, those will not be included. This is because Arizona and New Mexico were ceded to the US in 1848 through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and attained statehood 64 years later in 1912. Statehood was granted earlier for the adjacent states of California (1850), Texas (1845), Nevada (1864), Colorado (1876), and Utah (1896). These years of relative independence shaped a separate Hispanic identity within the states of Arizona and New Mexico, particularly within the regions of long-term occupation, such as Santa Fe, which had been occupied since 1598, 20 years prior to British arrival at Plymouth Rock.

Spanish holdings refers to all land within the contiguous United States and Puerto Rico that was originally colonized by or under the rule of Spain during the reign of the Spanish Empire (1492–1854).

Hispanic refers to people of the Americas who are descended from Spanish colonists and the hybridized cultures that resulted from the colonization of the Americas by citizens of Spain.

ARIZONA SPANISH-DANCE PIONEERS

In the days before smartphones and portable entertainment devices, the performing arts took center stage in entertainment. It was through live performance that cultural identity was negotiated and humor was brokered, and consensus determined public appeal. Live experimentation was the source of musical fusion, and visceral audience response determined popular culture.

Spain has had a significant cultural influence in the state of Arizona, the American Southwest, and indeed the nation, more so than some may realize. The colors of the stripes on the Arizona state flag, for example, reference the gold and red of Spain's flag. This influence also bled into the arts and performative expression in Arizona, as art forms like dance became a conduit for cultural exchange. Our story begins in 1947; however, evidence suggests a Spanish-dance legacy that stretches back much further to as early as 1896, when Spanish dancers appeared alongside Indigenous and Mexican performers at festivals and cultural events. The region that is now central Arizona experienced shifting identity as Indigenous land was explored and claimed by Spain (1540), then Mexico (1821), and later by the United States (1853) before officially attaining statehood in 1912. In 1914, a massive wave of immigration to the United States began, as a series of events including World War I (1914–1918), the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), and World War II (1939–1945) unleashed unprecedented chaos in Europe. As immigrants arrived to the Eastern US by the boatload, the American West was wide open, and people moved west in search of space, land, and opportunity.

From the late 1800s through the 1920s, vaudeville was central to popular entertainment, and Spanish dancers were often included. The first woman ever recorded on film by Edison was the Spanish dancer Carmencita, who in 1894 had been performing in New York's Koster & Bial's Music Hall since 1890 (Dickson). In the 1930s, vaudeville declined as the Great Depression took hold, and by the late 1930s, radio and film overtook popular entertainment. By then, the plethora of cultures that had arrived to the US in the early 20th century—and those that continued to come—created a cultural amalgam that birthed new forms of American entertainment. In the 1930s, these diverse influences, particularly in New York, fused to create new forms such as modern dance, American ballet, and new forms of jazz.

Touring artists were nomadic harbingers of culture when travel was far less convenient than it is today. Spanish dancers in particular came to represent a pan-Hispanic identity as artists became cultural brokers between the Anglo-Saxon East and the Spanish West, and indeed across the Americas. Pan-American understanding grew more significant in the face of the Cold War (1947–1991), as the Soviets and the US waged an ideological battle in Latin America. Spanish dance was a gateway to cultural access, and Spanish dancers La Argentina, La Argentinita, Antonio Triana, and others learned Latin-American dances while touring and incorporated them into their acts (“Introducing”). New York nightclubs like the Havana-Madrid, the Riobamba, and the Copacabana featured Latin and Spanish entertainment, and dance icons like Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, Martha Graham (“Ruth St. Denis is Here Today”), José Limón, and Lester Horton drew from Spanish, Indigenous, and hybrid cultures in representing America.

In the heart of the Southwest, our Spanish legacy bridged the Old World and New World, mediating diverse cultures through entertainment at festivals, parties, and cultural events. That tradition continues to this day. *Spanish Legacies* is a historical exhibition of a living tradition; photographs, videos, and artifacts showcase how Spanish dance came into existence in Arizona, as told through the stories of four influential dancers: Laura Moya (1914–2007), Adelino “Eddie” Fernandez (1901–1978), Lydia Torea, and Dini Román. As these artists performed, taught, traveled, and settled in Arizona, they connected our desert with a greater world of dance—one that directly connects Arizona across the United States, frames Arizona within a pan-Hispanic American identity, and encapsulates Arizona’s Spanish legacy. Today Spanish dance continues to be taught in elite ballet schools across the Valley, providing young Arizona dancers with an embodied heritage unique to the Southwest. The 75-year legacy of Spanish dance in Arizona contributes to its artistic identity and ethnic diversity, reflecting the rich, deeply rooted heritage of the Sonoran Desert.

Adelino Fernandez

Adelino “Eddie” Fernandez (1901–1978) is considered the father of Spanish dance in the Phoenix metro area, with his earliest documented classes taking place at the Phoenix Little Theatre in 1947. Mentions of other instructors pepper newspaper archives as early as 1897, particularly of José Cota and Dolores Olivares, who taught and performed from 1935–1946, but their personal stories have been lost. Born in

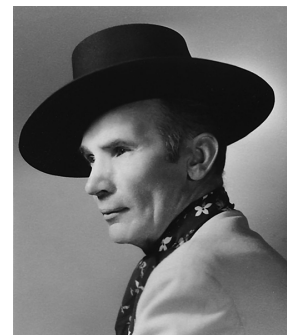


Figure 1: Adelino "Eddie" Fernandez, 1950 (Source: Lydia Torea).

Asturias, Spain, Eddie studied regional Spanish dance as a boy until he arrived to the US in 1916 and settled in Los Angeles. There he studied with flamenco artist Juan Martinez (Dedera), vaudeville superstars Fanchon and Marco (*Arizona Republic*, 1947), and flamenco dancer Eduardo Cansino (1895–1968) (*Arizona Republic*, 1947). Cansino was descended from a prominent Andalusian flamenco family and was the father of Rita Hayworth (Bohorquez). Eddie’s dream was to dance, and he worked hard for it. He helped maintain Cansino’s studio in exchange for classes, but his Hollywood break never came (Torea, 2008, 26).

Eddie made ends meet by working in the kitchen of the Vista del Arroyo Hotel in Pasadena (National Archives). He petitioned for naturalization in 1941 (US Department of Justice), registered for the draft in 1942 (National Archives), and gained citizenship in 1943. In the years of World War II, Eddie was assigned to the mess hall of Luke Field, now Luke Air Force Base in Goodyear, Arizona (Torea, 2021). After the war, Eddie



Figure 2: 1952, Eddie Fernandez’s troupe preparing for a recital. (From left: Rene Baca, Bill Tucker, Vicky Suglio, Maurice Pearse, Alicia Tejada, Eddie Fernandez, Gloria Blanco, Frank Suglio. (Source: Lvdia Torea)

remained in the Valley and became a cook at the Veteran’s Hospital. By 1947 he was teaching and performing at events throughout the Valley (“Theater Study”). People saw him dance and asked that he teach their children. He was quoted as saying, “I will do this. But for the time you give me your children to teach, I am their parents. I will be strict. I will make them cry” (Dedera, 1962).



Figure 3: Eddie's students c. 1953
(Source: Lydia Torea)

Eddie's early classes were held at Phoenix Little Theater and in a recreation room of Grant Park. He later moved the studio to a converted garage underneath his apartment near 16th Street and Indian School Road (Torea, 2021). At age 46, Eddie's Hollywood dreams were behind him, but his passion for dance continued. "I teach dancing because I love to teach and I love the art," he said. "I work hard and the students work hard. They have to work hard" (Dedera, 1962).

The 1950s brought new students and opportunities for Eddie. In 1950, Eddie attended a Spanish Club event where he met a multi-generation family that would carry his legacy forward. The family included the mother and wife, Carmen, and grandmother, Manuela, who were both from Galicia, Spain. The father and husband, George Dzambik, was Czech-American, and the eight-year-old girl, Lydia, was born to dance (Torea, 2021). Lydia enrolled in classes, and performing soon became a family affair. Carmen sang, and Manuela, along with other ladies of the Spanish Club, sewed costumes for Eddie's students. Lydia was a quick study and soon became Eddie's star student.



Figure 4: Lydia Torea with Eddie Fernandez, 1950 (Source: Lydia Torea)

The *Arizona Republic* newspaper provides substantial documentation of the troupe's performances at a multitude of Valley events from the late 1940s through the mid-1960s. Performances often featured Spanish, Native American, and Mexican troupes performing on the same bill, representing popular local culture and influences. In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled for desegregation in public schools in *Brown vs. Board of Education*. That year, the *Arizona Sun* newspaper, whose byline stated, "Read the Sun—The Voice of 60,000 Negroes in Arizona," announced Eddie's racially integrated classes at the Phoenix YWCA. It was a time of major growth for the Phoenix Valley, whose population grew from just under 107,000 in 1950 to over 439,000 in 1960 (City of Phoenix, World Population Review).

By 1956, Eddie was actively launching his students' careers. Arturo Fernandez,



Figure 5: Danzas Ibericas, 1956 from left: Lydia Torea, Benito Palacios, Miguel Santos (Source: Lydia Torea)

born Arthur Sedinger, was a student who adopted Eddie's name out of respect and to portray a Spanish identity (Torea, 2021, Smith). An accomplished pianist and dancer, Arturo sought opportunity in California. There he teamed with dancer Miguel Santos (1925). Together, they auditioned for José Greco in 1955. Both made the cut and toured the US and abroad with Greco (Smith).

In 1956, Santos and Fernandez returned to form a company, *Danzas Ibericas* (Iberian Dances), with Eddie's female students, dancers Gloria Blanco and Alicia Tejada. Lydia Torea, who had adopted her mother's name for the stage, was fourteen years old and the youngest in the company. After regional concerts and performances in Mexico, Arturo stayed in Mexico. Santos returned to California and went on to direct the San Francisco Flamenco Theatre Company for nearly three decades, guarding the torch of Spanish dance in California and carrying on Eddie's tradition of mentorship.

It was only the beginning of Eddie's influence. Eddie's school flourished well into the 1970s as he taught countless students the art of Spanish dance and worked with innumerable charitable organizations. He was a pioneer of Spanish dance in Arizona and cultivated an audience that would help support a network of performers from Spain, Mexico, and California.

Although Eddie never got his "big break," he broke new ground and laid a foundation for Spanish dance in Arizona. His dreams were realized in the careers of those he taught. Because of Eddie, Spanish dance continues in Arizona now, 75 years after his first classes began.

Lydia Torea



Figure 6: Lydia Torea, 1964, "Ship of Fools" promotional image (from the collection of Lydia Torea)

Lydia Torea was born Lydia Dzambik on June 28, 1942, in Lorraine, Ohio. Her father, George, was a first-generation American of Czechoslovakian descent, and her mother, Carmen Torea, emigrated from Galicia, Spain. Six months prior to Lydia's birth, Pearl Harbor was attacked, catalyzing America's entry into World War II. That year, executions began at Auschwitz, and Francisco Franco dominated Spain in the wake of civil war. It was the Jim Crow era, and the

West was wide open. Phoenix had a population of approximately 70,000.

The Dzambik family moved to Phoenix in 1949. Shortly thereafter, Lydia's parents enrolled her in ballet classes. One Sunday, they attended an event for the local Spanish Club, and Adelino sat across from them. When the family learned that he taught Spanish dance, Lydia wanted to join. She associated anything Spanish with her mother, whom she adored (Torea, 2021). The family immediately enrolled Lydia in Adelino



Figure 7: *Phoenix Gazette* cartoon featuring Lydia Torea for the "Teen Tattle" section, 1952



Figure 8: Lydia Torea (Dzambik) performing c. 1952 (from the collection of Lydia Torea)

Figure 9: QR link to Ballet Nacional de España dancing Estampio's footwork variations.



Fernandez's Spanish-dance classes. She was gifted and by age ten was making the papers. Her mother, a singer, often performed alongside her.

For the next eight years, Lydia danced. In 1952, she made her first trip to Spain, where she studied with Juan Sanchez Valencia, "El Estampio" (1879–1957). She excelled, learning ten of his advanced footwork variations in ten days.

In the mid-1950s, her dance classmate Arturo Fernandez

(born Arthur Sedinger) was cast in an international tour to Europe, where he auditioned and was cast in Jose Greco's company (Smith). Arturo returned to Arizona in 1956 with

colleague Miguel Santos (*Arizona Republic*, 1956, 22). With Adelino's support through studio space, living space, an established community audience, students, emotional and

likely financial support, they formed *Danzas Ibericas* (Iberian Dances) and began performing regionally. Lydia was the youngest member, a high school freshman, aged 14. In high school, Lydia traveled to Mexico City, where she studied with Celia and Miguel Peña, who also wanted her to stay (Torea, 2021). When Greco came through town, he saw Lydia dance and said, "If she were older, I would hire her now" (ibid).



Figure 10: Lydia Torea with Miguel Santos, 1956 (Source: Lydia Torea)



Figure 11: Lydia Torea, 1960. Photo by Vicente Ibañez. (Source: Lydia Torea)

By then the Cold War was in full swing. For decades the Soviet Union had actively presented music and dance to global audiences to promote the virtuosic art cultivated under communism (McDaniel, 13). In 1954, President Eisenhower responded by launching the Emergency Fund for International Affairs, a resource created to present America's cultural achievements around the world.

The Emergency Fund enabled the US State

Department to combat the USSR as a top producer of art and culture. Productions directed by artists such as Jose Limon, Martha Graham, Alvin Ailey, George Balanchine, and George Gershwin were sent around the world to prove that America, too, created great art.

Lydia graduated from North High School in 1960 and left for Spain that summer, accompanied by her mother. There, Lydia studied with Regla Ortega at the Amor de Dios School of Spanish Dance in the heart of Madrid. Her mother booked photo sessions with Spain's top photographers, Vicente Ibañez and Juan Geynes.

It did not take long for Lydia to make headlines in Spain. She embodied a fresh and modern America in a country that was vibrant with art, yet isolated from the rest



Figure 12: Lydia Torea performing at the *Corral de la Moreria* in Madrid, Spain, 1961 (Source: Lydia Torea)

of the world. She was invited to participate in round-table discussions with prominent Spanish-dance figures representing the voice of the US American foreigner and commenting on her experience of Spanish dance on American soil.

Soon, Lydia was performing at the nightclub El Corral de la Morería. She was among the first US Americans to perform in a Spanish club (Torea, 2008, 57). On that stage, the Gitano (Roma) artists were the veterans, and they were contemptuous of Lydia's presence and popularity as a foreigner. To mend fences, Lydia brought them two bottles of brandy every week. It worked, and their disdain subsided.

As Lydia negotiated this cultural and artistic exchange, she served as an unofficial, unpaid, yet effective diplomat in her own right.

The blonde, blue-eyed pom-pom girl from North High quickly became La Gitana Blanca, "The White Gypsy," adopted into the fold through her exceptional skills as a dancer, but a curious and exotic novelty as a White American. (Note: "Gypsy" has negative connotations in English, but many Andalusian Spanish Roma self-identify as Gitano. Within flamenco culture, "gypsy" refers to Andalusian Roma people and is in no way a derogatory term.)

The early '60s were exciting times for Lydia. In 1961, she toured in *Sonidos Negros* (Black Sounds) with Eduardo Serrano Iglesias, "El Guito," who is widely



Figure 13: Lydia Torea c. 1960, photo by Juan Gynes (Source: Lydia Torea). This was the headshot used in programs for the company "Jose Greco and his Spanish Ballet"



Figure 14: QR Link to Lydia on "The Hollywood Palace" with Jose Greco, 1964



Figure 15: QR Link to Lydia in "Ship of Fools," 1964, with José Greco.

considered one of the most influential flamenco dancers of the 20th century. Together, they performed in Ceuta, Spain, and traveled to Belgium for a command performance



Figure 16: Flyer for shows at the Caribe Hilton in San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1965.



Figure 17: QR Link to Lydia Torea's Spanish Ballet televised on "The Hollywood Palace," 1965

before the king and queen. That same year, she danced in Alberto Potrillo's *Ballet Español* as part of a nationally funded festival series in Huesca, Toledo, and Segovia. Lydia's performance in cultural celebrations across isolated fascist Spain exposed thousands to international exchange through her embodied, blended American heritage.

In 1962, Lydia auditioned for Jose Greco and was hired on the spot. She toured for three years with Greco, performing internationally. She appeared in numerous television shows, such as *The Hollywood Palace* (Greco, 1964), and in the 1965 Hollywood feature film *Ship of Fools* (Greco, 1964). While touring with Greco, she met a young guitarist named Francisco Gustavo Sánchez Gómez, better known as Paco de Lucia.

Paco became the most influential flamenco guitarist of his generation. He and Lydia became lifelong friends. In his last Arizona appearance, he asked her to stand before the audience and addressed her as "*el amor de mi vida*," the love of my life.

After filming *Ship of Fools*, Lydia left the Greco Company to form her own troupe, with much of the Greco cast joining her. At age 23, she appeared on *The*

Hollywood Palace with her own company Lydia Torea's Spanish Ballet (Torea, 1965) and performed seasons at the Caribe Hilton in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and at El Liborio in New York. She was scheduled to open for Dean Martin at the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas. However, Martin cancelled due to the death of his close friend, Nat King Cole. Instead, she opened for lesser-known comedian Jan Murray, and the show ran for only a week.



Figure 18: Lydia Torea with ballet dancer Rudolf Nureyev in New York, 1965 (Source: Lydia Torea)

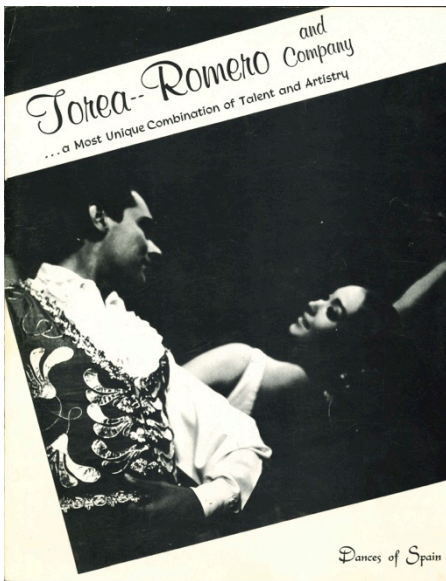


Figure 19: Season program of Lydia Torea with Vicente Romero, Tesuque, New Mexico, 1966. (Source: Lydia Torea)



Figure 20: QR Link to Pilar Lopez dancing with Alejandro Vega in 1962. This is included as a representation of the style of the time.

The politics of running a company became overwhelming for young Lydia. Dissension stewed in the cast, and she sent them home to Spain. Disheartened, Lydia stayed in New York and accepted whatever gigs came her way. In 1966, she spent the summer dancing at El Nido Restaurant near the Santa Fe Opera House in the village of Tesuque, New Mexico, with dancer Vicente Romero. Romero had toured the world with Pilar López (1912-2008). López and her elder sister of fourteen years, Encarnación López Júlvez, “La Argentinita,” (1898–1947) were an international

Spanish-dance sensation from the 1930s through the 1950s. La Argentinita, the elder sister, was in the orbit of emblematic Spanish authors and artists known as the

“Generation of ’27.” Although not officially listed in the members, she was a close friend



Figure 21: Lydia Torea as she appeared with Xavier Cugat and Charro. 1969 (Source: Lydia Torea)

of poet Federico García Lorca, danced to compositions by composers Manuel de Falla, Isaac Albéniz, and Maurice Ravel, and worked closely with painter Salvador Dalí, who created scenery for her productions. La Argentinita was lover to the famous bullfighter, Ignacio Sánchez Mejías, whom José Limón would later immortalize through his work with Doris Humphry. After La Argentinita’s death in

1947, Pilar Lopez continued the company, dominating the world of Spanish dance, and launching the careers of many 20th century Spanish dance artists, including Antonio Gades, who shared the stage with Romero in Lopez’s company and who went on to found the *Ballet Nacional de España* (The Spanish National Ballet) (“Pilar Lopez: 1952–1961”).

When the work with Romero concluded, Lydia returned to her parents, who lived in Las Vegas, Nevada. There, Lydia found work as a showgirl, working for the Follies Bergere at the Tropicana. There she learned the art of choreography for large groups. She traveled to accept Spanish-



Figure 22: Lydia Torea with youth students, 1981. Photographer unknown. (Source: Lydia Torea)

dance gigs and soon became the featured dancer with Xavier Cugat, touring internationally. The work with Cugat transitioned to working with Cugat's wife, guitarist Charro, who earned her own fame as a bubbly entertainer. Lydia worked with Charro and Cugat for much of the 1970s.

In January 1978, Lydia, 35 years old, returned to Phoenix. With support from her parents, she purchased an old church and converted it into the Lydia Torea Dance Conservatory. The studio grew, and in 1989 Lydia established a non-profit called Artes Bellas to perpetuate Spanish dance and music throughout the Southwest. She produced concerts at Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts, Grady Gammage Auditorium, and Phoenix Symphony Hall, bringing guest artists from throughout the United States such as Manolo Rivera, Roberto Lorca, and Pablo Rodarte. She collaborated with dancer Billbob Brown, jazz pianist Charles Lewis, and flamenco artist María Benítez. Lydia performed



Figure 23: Lydia Torea teaching in her Phoenix studio, 1980 (Source: Lydia Torea)

throughout the state through the Artists in Arizona Towns series, bringing Spanish dance to communities that would have otherwise never experienced it. All the while, she trained dancers, employed artists, and built a community.

Lydia reached countless people through her work as a Spanish dancer. Scores of musicians were drawn to flamenco through her productions, and part-time aficionados lived a dream by performing in her concerts. Whereas Lydia's work

with Greco focused on traditional flamenco, with a few artists performing solos and duets on stage, Lydia often had 20 or more student dancers on stage, presenting all the dynamics and choreographic movement of a Vegas production, Spanish-style, appealing to the US-American dance-company aesthetic.

Lydia brought world-class artistry to the Phoenix Valley and reinforced the foundation of those who came before her. She furthered the tradition of Spanish dance in Arizona and contributed to the artistic wealth of Arizona by perpetuating the traditional dances she received from Eddie Fernandez and enlivening the Spanish-dance community by incorporating commercial dance choreography techniques she absorbed during her Vegas years.



Figure 24: Lydia Torea c. 1985. Phoenix, AZ. Photo by Michele Sarda. (Source: Lydia Torea)

Figure 25: QR Link to Lydia Torea performing *Guajira* with Teo Morca at the first *Festival Flamenco* in Albuquerque, NM, 1987.



Lydia’s impact reached thousands of dancers, and her legacy continues in the Phoenix Valley, where elite ballet schools such as the Arizona Academy for the Arts, the Scottsdale School of Ballet, and Master’s Ballet Academy continue to offer Spanish dance as part of their curriculum. Her influence also extends beyond Arizona – she was among the original artists in the first Festival Flamenco de Albuquerque (New Mexico) in 1987, now one of the most prestigious flamenco festival in the world outside of Spain, and to workshops taught at the Institute for Spanish Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico in the early 2000s. Her influence extends beyond Spanish dance,

including former students such as contemporary dancer Clifton Brown, soloist for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater; ballet dancer Michael Cook, dancer with the Suzanne Farrell Ballet at the Kennedy Center; contemporary dancer Lorena Egan-Alvarado, Julliard graduate and former dancer with The Mark Morris Dance Group and the Pascal Rioult Dance Theater (now RIOULT); and flamenco dancer Linda Richardson, Fulbright Scholar and flamenco teacher in Denver, Colorado. Lydia's teaching inspired the careers of professional Valley Spanish dancers such as Japanese dancer Yumi Takahashi, "La Rosa," and my personal professional dance career. Her dance lineage is echoed in my teaching, which includes dancers of María Benítez's Next Generation, a Santa Fe, New Mexico youth group of the early 21st century that included dancer/director Emmy Grimm, "La Emi," and many others who continue to dance, to teach, and to pursue the art of Spanish dance.

Laura Moya



Figure 26: Lolita Moya c. 1940, photographed by Murray Korman, New York (Source: Melanie Levin collection)

Laura Moya (1914–2007) was an influential artist who lived two separate Spanish-dance careers. In the 1940s, she was a New York headliner and international performer appearing with figures such as modern dance pioneer Ruth St. Denis (1879–1968) and Spanish-dance archetype La Argentinita (1898–1945). Her second career took place more than 20 years later as a grassroots ambassador, sharing an extensive Spanish-dance experience with a burgeoning community in Phoenix. Much of the

information obtained is from personal correspondence with her daughter, Melanie Levin, and from dancers who studied and performed with her in the Phoenix Valley. Where possible, the information is corroborated by primary source materials. Precise dates proved difficult to trace because Laura was very private about her age. She cut dates out of all news clippings and programs, making international sources particularly difficult to track.

Laura led an interesting life at a vital time in our country's history. She was born in 1914 in Vancouver, Canada (Obituaries). She studied dance as a child and began performing in local variety acts at age 14. At 15 she started Spanish-dance lessons, and in 1931 at age 17 she left for New York (Savoy, Nava). Nothing is known of her early New York life, except that she experienced nine years of dance training and big-city hustle in



Figure 27: Laura Moya and Alberto Torres c. 1940 photo by Thomas Bouchard (Source: Melanie Levin collection)

the heart of America's melting pot before getting her break at the Havana-Madrid in 1940. It was a pivotal time in U.S. history; the Great Depression (1929–1939) hit its lowest point in 1932, and America's Prohibition era (1920–1933) was in full swing. Immigrants poured into New York as totalitarian governments took hold in Europe. Benito Mussolini (1883–1945) ruled with an iron fist as the founder of Italy's National Fascist Party, Adolf Hitler (1889–1945) gained power in Germany as the leader of the Nazi Party in 1933, and dissension was rising in Spain

as the Spanish Civil War loomed (1936–1939).

New York became a hub of dynamic multicultural exchange as elite performing artists and regular citizens alike fled hostile European conditions to seek asylum in the United States. Dance was at the forefront of popular entertainment and Spanish dance in particular was highly celebrated, as is well documented in historian Richard Kagen’s 2019 book *The Spanish Craze*. Modern dance was evolving in New York, as dance had the ability to transcend language, evoke the homeland, and foster cultural negotiation and understanding. Laura was fortunate to be evolving as a Spanish dancer amid this complex amalgam of cultures, as artists like Antonia Merce “La Argentina” (1890–1936); Encarnación López Júlvez, “La Argentinita” (1898–1945); Carmen Amaya (1913–1963) ; Antonio Triana (1909–1988); the Cansino family; and many others fled civil war in Spain. These and many other artists intersected in New York while Laura learned and listened.



Figure 28: Laura Moya, Alberto Torres, and unidentified dancer in a promotional photo by Boris Bakchy, c. 1946

Figure 29: QR Link to Antonio Triana performing with Lola Montes in the 1944 feature film, *The Lady & the Monster*



Figure 30: Maruja Serrano, Alberto Torres & Laura Moya performing at the Havana Madrid nightclub c. 1940

In January 1940, dancers Alberto Torres and Manuela del Rio arrived from Spain for a series of concerts around the country (“Dancer Refused”). Torres sought to pick up extra work in the nightclubs, but Rio was not interested. Torres was at the Havana-

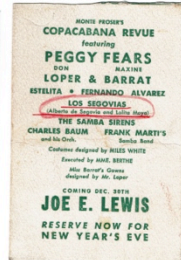


Figure 31: Various NY night-club flyers featuring Laura Moya, c. 1940-1946

Madrid nightclub, a New York hotspot that featured Spanish and Latin entertainment, when Laura auditioned for the show (Lawson). She had been training with Spanish dancer Antonio Triana, who was among the greatest Spanish dancers of the era. That day Torres invited her to partner him. Together, they were a success, and Torres’s group started making the papers (“New Attractions”). Laura performed with Torres for several years, including a

1942 event for the United Nations at Carnegie Hall, headlining with modern dance pioneer Ruth St. Denis. The original program was obtained from Laura’s collections and a digitized copy was requested by the Carnegie Hall collection, thus contributing to the national archive for both Spanish and modern-dance historiography (Carnegie).

From 1940 to 1946, newspaper clippings reflect that Alberto Torres gained a significant following performing for various nightclubs. Many reviews omit the names of Torres’s dancers; however, Laura’s scrapbook of original programs (scanned and emailed by her daughter, Melanie Levin during the COVID pandemic) documents her appearance



Figure 33: An ad in the *Daily News* New York, NY, Sep. 30, 1943

at various clubs, including the Copacabana, the St. Regis Hotel, and the Havana-Madrid, reviewed by Walter Terry, dance critic for the *New York Herald Tribune*. Items shared also include an undated program from the S.S. *Brazil*, the first vessel to complete the round-trip journey to Buenos Aires in November 1938 (Moore-McCormack). The *Brazil* cruised

regularly to South America through December 1941, after which it became a US Army transport ship for the War Shipment Administration. The vessel was not returned to civilian passage until 1946, indicating that Laura’s contract would have occurred between 1938 and 1941. Although the program is not dated, her daughter, Melanie Levin, wrote in an email that Laura “danced on the French Line, S.S. *De Grasse* Feb25th to March 9th, 1939 to Haiti, Jamaica and Cuba. Then she was also on a transatlantic to Le Havre, France. On the S.S. *Brazil*, she sailed from NY on October 5, 1940, for Rio De Janeiro, Brazil; Montevideo, Uruguay; and Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Then on October 30, 1940 she sailed to Port of Spain, Trinidad” (Levin, July 8, 2021). Accompanying the program is an undated Argentine newspaper article about Laura’s performances in Buenos Aires with other Spanish-dance artists. Laura also claims to have performed with Alberto Torres and La Argentinita for the Spanish consul, although substantiating documentation has not surfaced. In a 1982



Figure 32: Promotional material for Laura Moya featured at Teatro Hispano in Harlem on 116th St and 5th Avenue. Date c. 1942 (Source: Melanie Levin)

memoir published in the *Phoenix Gazette* and *Jaleo Magazine*, Laura states that the iconic dancer Carmen Amaya came to see her perform in New York and complimented

her after the show. Many Spanish dancers came and went to the United States during the 1930s and 1940s, among them highly influential artists who held the American spotlight and served as mentors to Laura.

At the apex of her career, Laura met George Rosner (1910–2002), a Polish pianist-composer who arrived to play in the 1939 New York World’s Fair (Levin, Savoy). Shortly before his scheduled return, Adolf Hitler invaded Poland. Consequently, Rosner remained in New York and became a regular entertainer in the New York club scene (Levin, Savoy). Around 1946, Laura and George married and had their first child, followed by two more within four years. The family moved to Arizona in 1960, where George became pianist for the Phoenix Country Club and Laura raised their children (Levin, Savoy).



Figure 34: Laura Moya Rosner c. 1965 in Phoenix, Arizona. Photographer unknown (Source: Melanie Levin)

It was not until 1964 that Laura began performing again, launching a second career in Arizona (Savoy). The years had passed, but Laura’s love of dance remained. At age 50, Laura started teaching out of a backyard studio at their home on north Central Avenue in Phoenix (Lopez-Wolpert). It was there that Laura cultivated



Figure 35: Laura Moya performers dancing a Jota Aragonesa in Phoenix, AZ c. 1970. Photographer unknown (Source: Melanie Levin)

The Institute for Hispanic Dance and worked her way back onto the familiar stage. Her students included local children, adults, and former Radio City Music Hall Rockette

Kathleen Kelly (“Kathleen McGillicuddy Kelly”). Interviews with former students, Laura’s scrapbook, and local Phoenix newspapers evidence performances for many community groups and at venues like the Arizona Sun Bowl (1971), Los Olivos (1971), Northern Arizona University Arts Festival (1980), Symphony Hall (1983), Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts (1984, 1985, 1986, 1987), Herberger Theater Center (1990, 2002), Arizona Opera fundraiser gala (1992), Orpheum Theatre (1997), and Kerr Cultural Center (1999). Laura Moya was able to use her deep Spanish-dance roots to access and invite artists Pablo Rodarte, Oscar Nieto, Victor Lamadrid, and others, including her mentor, Antonio Triana, and his daughter, Luisa Triana, to come to Phoenix to perform and/or teach her students.

For more than forty years, Laura Moya was an ambassador of Spanish dance to the Phoenix metro area. She was pivotal to connecting Arizona to national and international Spanish-dance communities, introducing young artists to new inspiration and fresh perspectives and keeping the flame of Spanish dance alive in the Valley. Her protégés include Phoenix Valley dancers Francisca Ivon Nava, a soloist and regional performer; Carlos Montufar, an arts educator with Carlota Santana Flamenco Vivo and my former dance partner and soloist with my company of many years; Bernadette Gaxiola, soloist with Caló Flamenco and sister of the company’s founder, Martín Gaxiola, who watched his sister



Figure 36: Laura Moya at the Phoenix Civic Center c. 1983 photographer unknown (Source: Melanie Levin)

dance throughout their childhood; and Herlinda Lopez, local amateur performer who continues to practice, rehearse, and perpetuate Spanish dance in Sedona, Arizona.

Dini Román



Figure 37: Dini Román, 1968, photographer unknown (Source: Dini Román)

Information about Dini Román was obtained nearly entirely from personal interviews and telephone conversations, corroborated by primary source materials and artifacts from her personal collection. A private woman, Dini was reticent to share exact dates such as her birthday and year. For this reason, dates are provided based on news articles and estimated ages provided by Dini.

Dini Román was nearly 20 when she started dancing—a late start by professional dance standards. Her family did not have money for such luxuries, so she paid her own way. Dini was born in Boston, Massachusetts, to a working-class family. Her mother was a first-generation Italian-American housewife with roots in Naples, and her father was a first-generation British-American truck driver. She first studied with Juanita Cansino in Boston. Juanita was the wife of Paco Cansino, brother to Eduardo Cansino (Eads), who

Dini Román was nearly 20 when she started



Figure 38: Dini Román, photo by Les Carr, N.Y.C. c. 1970 (Source: Dini Román)

was Adelino “Eddie” Fernandez’s instructor in Los Angeles. After her first class, Dini made it her life’s mission to become a Spanish dancer. She started saving and two years later boarded a one-way ship for Spain. Independent and driven, Dini stayed in a Madrid boarding house and taught English to pay for dance classes. She studied at the Amor de Dios School of Spanish Dance for two years with legendary dancers La Quica, Paquita Monreal, and Alberto Lorca. Her classmates included future Spanish-dance stars Antonio Gades and Carmen Mora.

Dini’s father fell ill, interrupting her studies, but her return from Spain would present new opportunities. She continued to dance and was offered her first professional gig in 1959. At age 24 she accepted a tour with Raul Izquierdo’s Granada Dancers (later called Ballet Granada) based in New York. Izquierdo was a Venezuelan entertainer who ran a touring nightclub act (“Dine”). One of Dini’s friends, Francis Shulfane, worked with Izquierdo



Figure 39: Dini Román, photo by Les Carr, N.Y.C. c. 1970 (Source: Dini Román)

regularly under the stage name Graciela Galvan, but she was booked, so she recommended Dini. The dancers wore short skirts and the “flamenco” was inauthentic, but it was enough to get her started. Dini worked with Ballet Granada for two years, performing in Florida, Georgia, Mexico, Arkansas, and the Catskills. They returned to New York, where Dini chose to remain.

In New York, Dini was part of a small community of advanced and specialized artists. Spanish dance was popular, and jobs were plentiful for artists of her caliber. She danced with the Ximenez-Vargas Ballet Español co-directed by dancers Roberto Ximenez and Manolo Vargas, both former dancers with Pilar Lopez from 1962 (Brier) until 1964, when the company split and Dini went with the new Ballet Español Alba-Reyes, co-directed by dancers Maria Alba and Ramon de los Reyes (Hughes, 1964). The archives at Jacob's Pillow iconic dance ranch (founded by Ted Shawn, the renowned modern-dance trailblazer and aficionado of Spanish dance) reveal that Dini continued to appear there with Alba-Reyes through 1972. Dini also appeared at the Pillow and on national tours with Mariano Parra Ballet Español from 1967 to 1968 (Crane, Jacob's Pillow). In 1969, Dini performed a three-week run in the New York City Center production of "Fiesta in Madrid" directed by Tito Capobianco ("Fiesta," Schonberg, Hughes). Through her reputation and work at Jacob's Pillow, Dini formed a bond with the ethnic dance vanguard and internationally renowned dancer La Meri (Kowal, 75). Dini's original programs and local newspaper clippings reveal that she taught and choreographed regularly at La Meri's Ethnic Dance Festival throughout the 1970s.



Figures 40 & 41: Fiesta in Madrid Playbill and rehearsal photo, New York City Center, 1969. Photo by Beth Bergman, Dini Román & Liliana Morales (Source: Dini Román)



Figure 42: Dini Roman in "The Shoemaker's Wife" San Francisco, 1977

From 1974 to 1977, Dini worked extensively with Theater Flamenco San Francisco (TFSF). Founded in 1960 by Adela Clara, it is the longest continually operating Spanish-dance company in the United States. TFSF received funding from the National Endowment for the Arts to commission new choreography from Dini, which debuted in December 1977. A few months later she

was asked to be first dancer with the new Boston-

based Ramon de los Reyes Spanish Dance

Company. Dini married that year and continued

dancing, traveling between Boston and San

Francisco regularly. She performed with Reyes

throughout New England from 1978 to 1984, when

a three-year grant from the California Arts Council

lured her back to the Bay Area. In 1984, Dini was

offered directorship of the Theater Flamenco San

Francisco (Ethnic), where she directed,

choreographed, and produced shows for three

years. In 1987, Dini returned to Boston, and Miguel Santos (former dance partner of

Lydia Torea) took over leadership of Theater Flamenco San Francisco (Ulrich).



Figure 43: Dini Román, 1972, Les Carr, N.Y.C. (Source: Dini Román)



Figure 44: Mariano Parra Ballet Español with Mariana Parra, Mariano Parra, Juan Mejia, Ines Parra, Dini Roman, Jerane Michel, 1967

In 1991, Dini's husband was transferred to Phoenix, Arizona. She made guest appearances at Pepín Restaurante Español in Scottsdale and started teaching. She taught exclusively private lessons, and her dancers all became qualified

performers. From 1991 to 1999, Dini nurtured the careers of local Spanish-dance artists, fueling the flame of professionalism and infusing the community with new choreographic blood. Her students included Martín Gaxiola, founder of the disbanded Phoenix-based flamenco company Caló Flamenco and soloist with María Benítez Teatro Flamenco; Tamara Sol Flys, who went on to dance in the company of Baltimore-based dancer Edwin Aparicio; and many local gig performers. She returned to New England for six years from 1999 to 2005, but returned to Phoenix, where she resides in retirement.

Dini Román's career in Spanish dance spanned the latter half of the 20th century, and she was instrumental in keeping flamenco alive throughout the East and West Coasts. An active dancer, choreographer, teacher, and director, Dini was among the first truly American flamenco dancers, a dedicated artist of non-Spanish descent who went straight to the source in Spain. She fiercely and independently pursued her dream and found success. Dini studied and performed with



Figure 45: Dini Román with two students in San Francisco. C. 1983 (Source: Dini Roman)

some of the greatest artists of her era, at a time when Spanish dance dominated international stages. Her expertise connected Arizona with the national community of Spanish dance, bringing the work of Adelino Fernandez, Laura Moya, and Lydia Torea full circle in a network of international dance.

COMING FULL CIRCLE

Exhibition and Performances

I believe these four artists lived careers as unofficial ambassadors for Spanish-dance in the U.S., abroad and in the Phoenix Valley. Their drive, passion, and pursuit of Spanish-dance is perpetuated in the dancers they trained and in local performances to this day; not only in Arizona, but in California, New Mexico and Colorado where their colleagues and students reside and practice Spanish-dance. I am one of these artists and as such I, and others, inherit a legacy of stewardship, and part of that legacy is telling the story of Spanish-dance in Arizona and in the U.S. at large.

At the time of writing, an exhibit on the aforementioned artists hangs in the Art Reach Gallery of Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts (September 24, 2021 to May 2, 2022). The event, titled “Spanish Legacies, 75 Years of Spanish Dance,” was co-curated by Brittany Arnold of Scottsdale Arts’ Learning and Innovation program and myself. In creating the exhibit, I procured content from the artists, wrote the text, selected a wide range of images, and found video examples to include via QR code links. Brittany kept me on track, edited my work, asked guiding questions to help educate a new audience, and facilitated all aspects of the exhibition through Scottsdale Arts.

In tandem with the exhibition, I completed a seven-show series of performances in October 2022 that brought the historical exhibition to life. I performed the first five shows of the series as the sole dancer with live guitar, flute, and vocal accompaniment. I created new choreography while conducting research for the exhibition and restaged one

of Lydia's choreographies created approximately 30 years ago. The creative journey informed by my historical research led me to deeply understand Lydia's influence on my development as a dancer and the opportunities created by these artists for my and subsequent generations.

The last weekend of the series featured professional dancers Tamara Sol Flys, who once studied with Dini Román and now resides in Santa Fe, and Francisca Ivon Nava, who once studied with Laura Moya and continues to reside in Phoenix. Both of these dancers perpetuate Spanish-dance and share the legacy, primarily with young dancers. For the final shows Lydia joined the performance from the audience, rising from her bistro-table chair while playing castanets in an improvisational exchange with the artists onstage. As the elegant, silver-haired Lydia claimed her space in the intimate 120-seat theater, the audience was suddenly part of the show. This spontaneous shift embraced the audience into an experience that transcended the theater, transcended generations, and in my heart transcended time. This sense of community is what I long for; it is something I discovered through Spanish dance and it is part of what grounds my identity. Being *part* of something is different from *observing* it, and my participation in Spanish dance is a gift I want to share with others, it is the purpose of this work.

In conducting this research and creating these shows I had the opportunity to explore and honor the long living tradition of Arizona Spanish dance. Examining the careers of these dancers helped me to process lived exchange, not only between nations, but also between individuals, generations, and cultures. Spanish dance matters in Arizona because the history of this region is tied to Spanish and Indigenous heritage – the conquerors and the conquered. This history is further nuanced by the absorption of the

region into the United States, and the pervading Anglo-Saxon culture that comes with it. By actively participating in Spanish dance, particularly flamenco—an art that was forged in the crucible of oppression—I am able to express the complexity of my personal identity and heritage.

I am personally motivated and feel a responsibility to work toward racial and ethnic justice because all parts of *me* are equal—the Iberian, Indigenous, and Anglo-Saxon. I am an American hybrid embodying the conquered and the conquerors, a modern-day incarnation of the diverse heritage of our American Southwest. I am descended from the earliest Spanish settlers to Santa Fe and from survivors of the American Revolutionary War. I am 20% Native American from Northern New Mexico, but that blood is unattributed to any tribe. It is my view that assumptions based on perceived ancestry almost inevitably lead to misunderstanding. I am privileged to feel comfortable in most settings but have also felt alienated by White people for being too Brown and by Brown people for being too White. I am a corporeal product of over 400 years of history, and while I cannot change the crimes that led to my existence, I *can* shape my personal identity and enact positive change by embracing all the threads that weave the fabric of my life; I strive to do this through flamenco.

Cultural Diplomacy, Advocacy and Activism

From the moment I embarked on this MFA journey ASU has emphasized leveraging artistic work for advocacy and activism, but that felt inorganic to me because my relationship with dance is deeply personal and expressive of my own life experience. At the time I felt, and in many ways continue to feel, that the intentional, strategic use of

dance as a weapon or tool for social change sells short the intimate growth and introspection that dance has to offer, and instead makes it about spectacle, influence, and propaganda. On the other hand, I am a producer of concerts in which I create performances for the public, essentially creating a spectacle; a career in dance is anchored to performance be it onstage or in a studio. I have grown to accept this aporia, and find that it resolves when I consider the arts as cultural diplomacy rather than activism, remembering that cultural diplomacy is “the exchange of ideas, information, art, and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding” (Cummings 1). Remember that the need to achieve mutual understanding stems from a lack thereof; in other words there must be a gap that must be bridged, and sometimes that gap is only felt on one side, attempting to bridge over and reach the other side. To me, this attempt to find mutual understanding—and respect, I add—feels very different than attempting to impose a desired change through the force of advocacy or activism. While related, I find a subtle difference in these approaches.

The first class I attended at ASU was “Teaching Praxis,” taught by Professor Karen Schupp. Prior to our first meeting we were assigned an article titled “Perspectives on an Expansive Postsecondary Dance” by Pamela S. Musil. The article advocates for a decisive move toward greater sensitivity, awareness, and inclusion of cultural diversity in postsecondary dance by examining “what it would mean in our individual programs to represent more fully the scope of dance and culture throughout the world and how students might be better prepared to create curriculum that recognizes diversity of ideas, beliefs, and values among peoples and traditions without trivializing, tokenizing, or marginalizing” (114).

I responded to the claim that diversity was absent from post-secondary dance with incredulousness because my undergraduate dance experience included classes in Brazilian capoeira, Spanish Classical, Indian kathak, West African dance, tap dance, and flamenco. Diversity was welcomed, extolled, and undeniably present at the University of New Mexico; global dances were respected as fully complete cultural expressions without a shred of trivialization or token exposure. My career as a Spanish dancer is predicated on the foundation I received as an undergraduate and on the viability of flamenco as a career. I arrived to the University of New Mexico as a ballerina and Spanish-dancer and excelled as a flamenco dancer, but also studied modern dance and somatics with Bill Evans, choreography with Larry Lavender, and dance history with historian Judith Chazin-Bennahum while the other aforementioned idioms were taught in the adjacent studios. The idea that diversity was absent from postsecondary dance seemed preposterous to me. I thought that every program was as inclusive as what I had experienced. I was wrong

Soon after that first class with Professor Schupp I learned that I could not wear flamenco shoes in creative movement classes, in teaching praxis classes, to rehearse on ASU's sprung studio floors, or to dance on ASU stages, with the exception of one instructor in one 7-week class session. I was told that shoes were not allowed, even after explaining that I had purchased \$200 shoes with soft soles for the explicit purpose of dancing, rehearsing, and creating at ASU. It became very clear how fortunate I was as an undergraduate at UNM and how ignorant I was to the varying degrees of access percussive dancers might face in the academy. This confusion took me on a research journey in an attempt to understand why percussive dance is so often on the fringes of

acceptance in post-secondary dance programs, and that journey began with an attempt to understand the surface upon which we dance, and why percussive dance is permissible in some places, but not in others.

A Brief History of Dance Flooring

Dancing trends, spaces and access to those spaces have changed drastically within the last 100 years. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, public dance halls grew in popularity and business owners grew increasingly more concerned with the actual dancing surfaces (Nott 208). If patrons were comfortable they could dance longer, thus purchasing more refreshments and spending more money (208). A pliable floor was easier on the joints, so innovation led to the development of the sprung dance floor (208). There does not seem to be a comprehensive history of sprung flooring in the U.S. available, however James Nott, cultural and social historian and Professor of History at the University of St. Andrews, provides a brief history of dance hall architecture in Britain in a 2018 article titled, “Dance Halls: Towards an Architectural and Spatial History, c. 1918-65,” published in *Architectural History*. Nott documents one of the earliest installations of sprung flooring in the Tower Ballroom in Blackpool, Britain in 1899 (Nott, 208). While the article does not directly reference sprung flooring in the U.S., Nott states that entrepreneurs were “inspired by the cavernous dance halls that had emerged in the United States before the First World War,” (207) and that the first ‘palais de danse’ (dancing palace) in Britain “was opened in 1919 by two American businessmen (Howard Booker and Frank Mitchell) who had seen these developments at first hand” (208). These statements lead me to believe that similar flooring innovations were used in

the United States, and that active exchange between the U.S. and Britain influenced the development of the dancing halls and the floors used.

In the United States during the first half of the 20th century, dance performance evolved into more acrobatic and virtuosic feats, led by innovators such as Fayard Nicholas (1914-2006) and Harold Nicholas (1921-2000), known as the Nicholas Brothers, who grew up watching tap performers as their parents performed in the orchestra of various nightclubs (“The Nicholas Brother’s Story” 01:00). Sprung floors helped to protect the joints of performers, thus extending dancers’ careers and reducing injury while allowing them to execute increasingly difficult movements. From this research I conclude that the evolution of dance flooring directly supported the innovations in U.S. tap and social dance. This is significant because these are among the forms that were later alienated from sprung flooring in studios.



Figure 46: The Nicholas Brothers in "Stormy Weather," 1943



Figure 47: Harlem Congaroo Dancers, in "Hellzapoppin" 1941

In the 1920s and 1930s the dances of foreign cultures held particular interest, as evidenced in the body of work by prominent modern dancers Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn, who romanticized Spanish-dance, Arabic dance, and many other forms in their repertoire. Shawn’s “Spanish Suite,” including “Farruca” and “Malaguena,” was included in their repertoire from 1920 through 1933 (Jerome Robbins Dance Division “Singers and Dancers in a Spring Festival”). A quick search of the New York Times archives from 1930-1939 reveals 3,503 articles include the phrase “modern dance” and 2,216 articles contain the phrase “Spanish dance,” indicating a very strong interest in Spanish dance. It is common to find both forms mentioned in the same article; one such example is a 1938

article by John Martin featuring a photo of Martha Graham next to a photo of La Argentinita (Martin, 1938).

In 1948, the Marley Company in Kent, England, invented a dance-flooring product called “Stageflor” (Thomas). The flexible polyvinyl chloride (PVC) surface was invented because stage surfaces were unpredictable for touring dance companies. Stagflor ensured that the surface would be consistent – not too slippery nor sticky. Originally the surface was a portable performance solution to be transported with companies on tour. It was placed on the surface of the stage, then removed and brought to the next venue. This solved the problem of unpredictable stage surfaces, but soon dancers wanted to rehearse on the same surface on which they performed so the PVC was installed in company rehearsal studios. The dancing schools aspired to be like the professionals, so they invested in PVC flooring and over the decades PVC surfaces became more and more prevalent. This trend alienated percussive dance because tap shoes have metal plates screwed to the soles and flamenco shoes have small nails that are filed to a glassy smoothness. These screws and nails are normally secure, but can, on occasion, become loose. The original PVC was thin and easily dented, gouged or sliced by percussive shoes (“The Evolution of Dance Floors”), indicating that the dance forms that evolved from the sprung flooring of the social dance halls became alienated from formal dance studios.

Today many (if not most) contemporary studios have PVC flooring permanently installed. Today’s surfaces are thicker than the original, are multi-layered and most are deemed “all-purpose,” meaning they are designed to withstand percussive dance (“The Evolution of Dance Floors”). Some varieties are designed to emulate the look and feel of wood.

As evidence of the durability of all-purpose PVC flooring, Spanish flamenco dance is included in the major ballet studios of the Phoenix Valley, including Master's Ballet, the Scottsdale School of Ballet, the School at Arizona Ballet, the Arizona School of Classical Ballet, and Arizona School for the Arts, where large classes of percussive dance students wear heeled shoes (and have for decades) without damaging the floors. Arizona is unique in its inclusion of Spanish-dance because for over half a century Lydia collaborated and built relationships with arts organizations across the Valley, including Ballet Arizona, Arizona Opera, Metropolitan School for the Arts, the New School for the Arts, South Mountain Arts Program, and many others, which led directly to the inclusion of Spanish dance at major Phoenix dance academies. Be that as it may, many studios in the Valley and across the country continue to maintain policies that marginalize percussive dance, regardless of advancements in dance flooring that render such marginalization unnecessary. This led me to wonder why studios and universities hold ballet and modern dance in higher regard than tap, hip-hop, flamenco, ballroom or other dance genres when, in my experience, there are substantial professional opportunities in those genres.

Dance in the Academy

Dance—in the form of social dance, folk dance, or movement to music—has been included in universities and colleges for as long as women have attended such institutions, but the first program to develop a specialized dance major was the University of Wisconsin in 1927 (Vertinsky, 1116, 1118). Established by Margaret H'Doubler (1889-1992) the program grew out of a dance minor that had been established in the

physical education department in 1923, marking dance's entry into the academy, not as art, but as a physical practice (Vertinsky 1120).

H'Doubler attended the University of Wisconsin as an undergraduate from 1906 to 1910. She majored in physical education and excelled in team coaching so upon graduating, the growing program hired her to teach (Vertinsky, 1120). In 1916 H'Doubler took leave to pursue a masters degree at Columbia University. As part of her leave agreement she was charged with finding a dance technique to incorporate into the Wisconsin program (Vertinsky 1115, Saumaa 257). The competitive athlete rejected several dance techniques before discovering Alys E Bentley, who saw dance as an avenue to develop of the soul, body, and mind (Saumaa, 253-254). Bentley's movements initiated from structural, anatomical knowledge of the body, from which improvisatory movement expression was encouraged—this resounded deeply with H'Doubler, who returned to teach at the University of Wisconsin with a new love of dance, which she infused into the program (Vertinsky 1116, Saumaa 258).

H'Doubler never performed and believed that dance was a personal practice beneficial for its non-competitive qualities and potential for self-knowledge; performance and skill development were secondary to joyful participation (Vertinsky 1120). In the seminal program H'Doubler developed the first classes in philosophy of dance, dance composition, rhythmic form and analysis, and other such courses that are still offered today (1120). Among her students was Anna Halprin, the postmodern dance pioneer, who credits H'Doubler as “the only person who ever affected me profoundly, deeply and forever.... she taught you about how to internalize. She taught you how to use your body as your total instrument” (McHugh 03:44). H'Doubler's mission to leverage dance as

personal development and self-exploration left a lasting influence and arguably laid the groundwork for what is now known as somatics (McHugh, 04:13).

Although H'Doubler was not interested in performance she oversaw a student group called *Orchesis*; a movement laboratory for self-expression (Vertinski 1121). *Orchesis* presentations garnered so much attention that the university, who did not want to be known as a dancing school, prohibited them (1121). The *Orchesis* model was implemented in other institutions across the country, such as University of California, Berkeley, and became instrumental in the development of a number of post-secondary dance programs (1121).

H'Doubler's dance program at the University of Wisconsin coincided with the emergence of a U.S. modern dance aesthetic initiated by Isadora Duncan (1877-1927), Ruth St. Denis (1879-1968), and Loie Fuller (1862-1928) that was rooted in American Delsartism and emphasized anti-formalist philosophy, self-expression, physical freedom, and comfortable dress (Thomas 55). Initially a fad among upper class Western women, Duncan and St. Denis crystalized the anti-formalist aesthetic in theatrical performance (55). However, it was the progeny of these artists; Martha Graham (1894-1991), Doris Humphrey (1895-1958), Charles Weidman (1901-1975), Ted Shawn (1891-1972), and others, who drove the form toward dance for art's sake—toward “high” art, separate from common entertainment (Thomas, 99). French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu implies that the hierarchy of high and low art reflects class power dynamics that are inherently discriminatory (Fischer 475). That is to say, knowledge can be a factor in determining one's social standing, and social discrimination is the nature of class. For example, an ability to discuss the deeper social implications revealed in *Othello* might earn one social

prestige among certain company, while a comparatively equal knowledge of Bugs Bunny in *Loony Tunes* might not have the same affect in said company. The split between dance as high performing art and dance as personal practice was to widen as the 1930s unfolded (Vertinski 1121). As Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman, Ted Shawn, and others became stars of the stage young dancers dreamed of being like them, and their philosophies regarding high art came with their techniques. A debate emerged regarding the purpose of dance education; was it to create exemplary performers, or was it to develop a healthy mind-body connection centered on self-discovery? These are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but it seems that an approach aimed at performance-based skill acquisition might tend toward developing athleticism, while one focused on non-performed advancement of mind, body, and soul will be more introspective. Comparatively, contortionism and traditional yoga might share common traits in strength and stretch training, but they have vastly disparate goals, spiritual philosophies, and consideration of the human body.

Dancer and educator Martha Hill (1900-1995), championed the advancement of dance as high art. A former student of H'Doubler and dancer with Martha Graham from 1929-1931 (under the stage name Martha Todd), Hill joined the dance faculty of New York University in 1930 and became the head of the dance program in 1932 (Dunning, Vertinski 1123). The same year, she accepted a part-time teaching position at Bennington College in Vermont where she helped to develop a Bachelor of Arts degree in dance, for the first time elevating dance to the status of performing art within the academy (Vertinski 1123). Hill offered summer courses for dance teachers at Bennington, competing directly with a similar program H'Doubler ran in Wisconsin. Hill drew on

emerging New York dance artists as instructors, increasing their exposure while offering work critical to maintaining their careers. Her festivals over the years included Martha Graham, Hanya Holm, Charles Weidman, Doris Humphrey, Paul Taylor, Alvin Ailey, Merce Cunningham, Jose Limon, and many others (Dunning). Hill developed a touring circuit to bring these choreographers to college dance programs. The professionals were grateful for the work, but disdainful of the physical education gymnasium settings in which they found themselves (Vertinski, 1123). Like the *Orchesis* groups, the arrival of notable artists to college campuses and the choreographies they mounted helped shift dance out of the physical education programs into the art programs. These dancers were cultural ambassadors for dance as high art; once understood, their influence permeated the programs. In addition to the work at NYU and Bennington, Hill founded the American Dance Festival, the School of the Dance at Connecticut College, and the dance program at Julliard (where she taught for 35 years), served as a consultant for the United States Office of Education, was chair of the advisory committee for modern-dance at New York's City Center, and was a recipient of the New York Mayor's Award of Honor for Arts and Culture. As I see it, the influence of modern dance in post-secondary dance education cannot be overstated, yet it is interesting to note that the long-standing divide between dance as self-exploration and dance as elite performance has continued to plague modern dance in educational settings; however such a point is outside the scope of this document.

Immediately parallel to the emergence of dance in post-secondary education tap artist Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, a famous vaudevillian, was making headlines as an established artist and philanthropist (White), appearing in the first interracial dance

number partnering Shirley Temple in *The Littlest Colonel* (1935) as well as many other films; the Nicholas Brothers were nationally recognized acts who got their start at the Cotton Club (Seale) appearing in films like *Pie Pie Blackbird* (1932), *The Black Network* (1936) and many others; lindy hop dancers like Whitey's Lindy Hoppers made films like *A Day at the Races* (1937), the short *Symphony in Black* (1935); and Spanish-dance icon la Argentinita headlined the *New York Times* dance section alongside—and often superseding—modern dance and ballet stars like Graham, Humphrey and many others (Martin, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1932, 1938). This glimpse of professional dance at the time is in no way comprehensive, however, it demonstrates that, from the inception, genres vital to the professional dance landscape in the United States were excluded from the academy in service to one form: modern dance. A century has passed, yet little has changed in many post-secondary dance programs. So, perhaps there is a gap that needs to be bridged and the time is right to reach a cultural understanding. Perhaps that work can be part of the Spanish-dance legacy, and perhaps, in some small way, this very project plays a role.

Percussive Dance at Arizona State University

I researched the history of flooring and dance in post-secondary education in order to better understand my experience at Arizona State University (founded 1885) in contrast to my experience at the University of New Mexico (founded 1889). ASU's charter prioritizes the inclusion, success and elevation of their students stating, "...we are measured not by whom we exclude, but by whom we include and how they succeed; advancing research and discovery of public value; and assuming fundamental responsibility for the economic, social, cultural and overall health of the communities

[the University] serves.” (“ASU Charter”). At ASU there is great emphasis placed on the success of first generation university students, tremendous support for the development of written skills, and in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic exceptional care was taken to look after the health of all members of the university community. ASU demonstrates commitment to the charter, yet I believe that commitment can be strengthened in regards to studio and stage access for percussive dancers who are accepted into the graduate program and look to ASU to provide them with the tools necessary to succeed in their chosen field.

At the beginning of my degree program in August of 2019 until January 2022, I was told that I could dance flamenco in only one studio at Arizona State University; a converted gymnasium space with wood installed directly on top of concrete. Percussive dancers strike the floor with rapid-fire footwork, constantly impacting their joints; for that reason wood-over-concrete is among the most injurious for percussive dancers. The space has exposed brick walls and open rafters through which sound bleeds from the adjacent studio, further complicating percussive dance with echo and reverberation. There is one ASU studio with a sprung floor and wood-textured PVC surface; however, I was not given access to that room. All other ASU studios have contemporary all-purpose dance flooring but many professors and staff told me that I could not dance in those spaces. I have fractured my feet dancing on flooring like the studio I was offered at ASU, and after recovering I have continued to tour and perform extensively. I am able to do so because I am selective about the surfaces on which I dance. I am not willing to knowingly subject my body or those of my students to injurious surfaces, particularly when dancers of other genres are not asked to subject themselves to such risk. As an

MFA candidate I was disappointed to not have access to a suitable studio on campus, however I have a rehearsal studio and established performance space outside of ASU. The lack of access to space at ASU affected me very little; however *other dancers do not have this advantage.*

One such dancer was a third-year undergraduate student in a Creative Practices class I attended. Toward the end of the semester the student conducted a presentation on her favorite genre, tap dance. She lovingly shared footage of tap icons including the Nicholas Brothers and Bill “Bojangles” Robinson. Throughout the semester-long course—a class meant for students to perfect their craft—I had seen no evidence that she was a tap dancer. I realized then that I was not alone; and that if I had been told I could not dance, perhaps tap, Lindy hop, step dance, and Mexican folklórico dancers were also restricted from ASU stages and studios, and all of these arts come from historically marginalized Black and Brown communities.



Figure 48: Bill "Bojangles" Robinson in "Stair Dance," 1932

Had I not attended Professor Shupp’s Teaching Praxis class in my first semester I probably would have sadly shaken my head over the exclusion and progressed through the program without protest. But I *had* taken the class, I *had* read the material, and I *had* seen the young tap dancer excluded, in addition to my own feelings of exclusion. As a flamenco dancer I accepted that I was an anomaly, but I was beginning to sense that the problem went beyond my personal experience. The next time I was confronted with exclusion at ASU was the only time I danced outside of a scheduled class on ASU campus; it was at a casual showing at a required monthly “Dance Matters” meeting for all dance students. As I prepared to perform on the proscenium stage, the theater director

walked me to the upstage right corner, where she gestured toward a dusty 4' x 8' piece of masonite. She informed me that it was my dancing surface and waited for me to pick it up and carry it by myself to center stage with the entire community watching. I felt tears of embarrassment, my throat closed, and I glanced around nervously. Two undergrads rushed onstage to help, but something happened in my heart. The 30' impeccably clean stage floor was off limits to me, and I was expected to physically demonstrate that I concurred with the exclusion and limitation by placing the tiny, dirty masonite myself.

I arrived to ASU as an established artist in my field; I have performed for many thousands of people, toured extensively for over ten years on stages from Spain to Colombia and throughout the United States; taught workshops at Duke University, the University of Louisiana, and Harvard University—all on PVC dance floors. I have over 85,000 views on a TedX talk; my choreography was performed at the 50th Anniversary of the Shanghai Opera House in China; I am a two-time finalist for the Phoenix Mayor's Arts Award and finalist for the Arizona Governor's Arts Award. Yet, in that moment I felt like an incontinent dog for which one would place newspaper on the floor to collect the mess they will surely leave. No one grasped how disrespectful and particularly salient it felt after reading many assigned articles on “the need for inclusion in dance programming.” The gap between philosophies being extolled in the classroom and the practices being implemented in the space literally brought me to tears.

And then, I performed.

I never again attended a “Dance Matters” gathering because I felt humiliated, unwelcome, and unanimously forbidden from the stage that every other dancer in the program could occupy unquestioned; it became crystal clear to me what kind of dance

“mattered,” in the space, regardless of the statements made or articles read in theory courses. On other occasions I again tried to participate in live productions, but flamenco was problematic; I was told it was too complicated to have live accompaniment, they would need to put down a protective surface, the audience would need a pause to remove the surface, they would have to find microphones, cables, and monitors for the musicians... the layers of resistance to accommodating flamenco conveyed the sense that the show, audience, and crew would have to suffer through the laborious requirements necessary for me to participate. This, after my previous experience, inhibited me from pursuing things further because it was less painful to back away than to attempt to justify my entire art form.

Interestingly, when I served as a dramaturg for a collaboration entitled “Healing Wars,” the School of Music, Dance and Theater built entire sets, designed costuming, used wireless microphones, incorporated live music, and rolled large pieces of equipment across the stage with no concern for the flooring. I also recently learned that the Theater Department has a studio in which tap dance is regularly taught for musical theater, but that space was not offered as an option for me. Does this knowledge further demonstrate the marginalization of percussive forms in dance programming? Does it shed light on theater programming as more inclusive of percussive dance? Perhaps it does neither, because in a recent conversation with Professor Robert Kaplan I learned that prior to my acceptance in the program tap dance was performed in 2018, however another Spanish-dance graduate student faced issues of access and was reduced to the 4’x8’ masonite as her stage. Further discussion revealed that Lydia Torea taught workshops at ASU in the 1980s. A discussion with former graduate student Liliana de Leon revealed that she

taught in various studios and performed from 1989-1993. In the later 1990s I personally attended a performance choreographed by graduate student and flamenco dancer, Fred Darsow at ASU. So, it appears that across the decades, treatment of percussive dance has been inconsistent, and that in the most recent years percussive forms have been further marginalized regardless of social and technological progression. Perhaps others were given access years ago, yet my attempts to participate were met with active resistance. This leads me to believe that the lack of a clear policy for percussive dance will perpetuate inconsistent access, and thus inequality, for future dancers. I was able to satisfy the requirements of my degree program because I own a home with a studio and was presented on the season programming of Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts for the three years I was enrolled at ASU. Other dancers do not have access to the opportunities my professional career has afforded me, and they need access at ASU to further their horizons.

As a student, it is daunting to challenge the institution that is supposed to be a resource for guidance, knowledge, approval, and advancement. It is more likely that a dancer—an artist who speaks through movement, not voice—will remain silent and back away, particularly if they are inexperienced, young, and without resources. As a consequence of not performing, a dancer's art is not made visible. If her artistry is not seen her classes will likely fail to meet sufficient enrollment, no matter how good she is or how much experience she might bring. This is a systemic process of exclusion.

I share these uncomfortable stories and observations here to document the discrepancies and also to give voice to any dancer that came before me; who felt alienated but remained silent; I share them in the hopes that future percussive dancers

will be spared such experiences—and there is hope. Not all universities have such adverse policies against percussive dance, and change *can* happen. In the current semester (Spring, 2022) I am teaching flamenco live and in person at ASU in a studio with a sprung floor; in this and previous semesters overrides were written so that ASU undergraduate and graduate students could take flamenco for credit toward their degree—an exception that required the advocacy of multiple graduate students and the cooperation of faculty and administration. My presence and work at ASU has had a positive impact; these are significant steps toward positive changes, and there is still more to be done. Perhaps one-day percussive dance will also be embraced on ASU stages, and in the 21st century the ASU community might experience flamenco with live accompaniment—even if it is after my program is complete.

Moving Forward

While percussive dance can be problematic in post-secondary settings, several universities across the country embrace percussive dance, including the University of New Mexico, University of California Los Angeles, Kansas State University, Parsons School of Design, Harvard University, Northwestern University, Duke University, Northeastern Illinois University, Arizona State University's own Theater Department, and many others. Allowing percussive dance requires an adequate dancing surface; wood surfaces can splinter and quickly deteriorate with constant use, sticky PVC surfaces designed to grip ballet shoes can torque dancer's ankles and cause severe injury, and floors that are not sprung can cause irreversible damage to joints that can cause chronic health issues. The institutions mentioned above do not tolerate careless abuse of well-

designed, costly spaces nor of the dancers' bodies that occupy them; both studios and dancers bodies can be damaged by improper treatment and qualified instructors are aware of this. Mindful instructors will require approval of students' shoes, particularly for beginners, for the protection of the student and the space. Heels that are too high, too narrow, unstable, or otherwise inappropriate cannot responsibly be allowed in class. In addition, instructors must advise students to stop immediately if they feel anything underfoot—anyone who has ever stepped on a tiny pebble will recognize the sensation. Lastly, instructors can briefly inspect the floor after class. These simple precautions are necessary to care for community space. Specific studios with proper flooring can, should be, and often are designated for percussive dance, but this does not alienate other dance forms from using the space; I believe that dance spaces are meant to be shared, and that through sharing space communities are strengthened.

If other institutions have found solutions, surely ASU—the number-one ranked educational institution for innovation, and the largest public university in the United States—can do so as well. I call upon the innovative strength and mission of ASU to include and maintain a healthy studio space suitable for percussive dance and—when a qualified instructor is available—to embrace percussive dance as part of our Arizona and U.S. cultural heritage.

Dance is a cultural bridge, and a bridge can only function if it is supported on both sides. My original intent to document and archive the pioneering Spanish dance artists in Arizona became permeated with a desire to understand how dance helps to negotiate culture among different peoples because I was negotiating a place for myself in the program. Through this work, I perpetuate a legacy of negotiating culture through

dance. Any positive affect I have is a direct result of these artists' impact on dance in the U.S., in the Southwest, and in my lived experience. I hope that this and future work can bolster understanding of dance's power to negotiate understanding between disparate peoples and perspectives, and sometimes that requires patience.

Adelino, Lydia, Laura and Dini were corporeal and artistic expressions of the syncretic beauty of this region; they made visible the bilingual, multi-ethnic, dancing archetypes of cultural *mestizaje*. I conducted this research only to come full circle and realize that their impact lives on through my colleagues and me; through what we do, and how we perpetuate the legacy we have inherited.

The emphasis on equity at ASU has shifted the way that I see the world and has shown me how I, and how dance, can be an instrument for positive change by consciously leveraging dance as cultural diplomacy to advocate for access to diverse cultural and artistic expression. The Southwest is heavily influenced by Spain and as such I believe that percussive dance has historical and cultural value here. Denying dancers access to space for percussive forms in this part of the world raises important questions regarding equity and social justice. I share my experience with gratitude for all that ASU has given to me; the support, opportunities, growth, perspective, learning, and incredible relationships; which I hope will last a lifetime. I hope that the very few from ASU who came to see my work (and the fewer who read this document) will see that all percussive dance—and particularly Spanish dance—has value, even if it is to open the conversation about what is included, what is excluded, and why

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