



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Calpulli Mexican Dance Co. presents the final, free series of workshops
about its current project

**Tarahumara: A Last Look at the Dances of the Raramuri Natives of
The Sierra Madre in Northern Mexico**

Saturday, June 7th, 2008 at 12:00PM &

Sunday, June 8th, 2008 at 2:00PM

Topaz Arts

55-03 39th Ave., Woodside, Queens

For event information visit www.topazarts.org and www.calpullidance.org

Participants can register online for the free events at the following links:

For June 7th- https://www.nycharities.org/event/event.asp?CE_ID=2604

For June 8th- https://www.nycharities.org/event/event.asp?CE_ID=2607

Calpulli Mexican Dance Co. researches the powerful, ritualistic dances of the Raramuri natives through a concluding series of free workshops open to the public. The workshops will explore the history of a disappearing culture through the dances that are valued dearly by its members. With this knowledge, the company will develop a new choreographic work. At the event, artistic directors will lead a short lecture on the history of the Raramuri's, their dances and costumes, followed by a performance of the work in progress, then an interactive workshop. Each session will conclude with a Q&A with audiences.

Project Background

Calpulli's *Tarahumara* project is viewed in one sense as a rescue of important research completed in the 1960's by Professor Francisco Flores with the Ballet Folklorico de Cd. Juárez in the state of Chihuahua in Mexico. Flores' research focused on the dance traditions of a deeply private people known as the Tarahumara- the Spanish-imposed name of the Raramuri natives. In his research, Flores found extensive information about a people who believe God is pleased by music and dance. In particular, his research focused on dance history with the Raramuris beyond Christian-influenced traditions, which are by far less well known or documented in the current day. Flores went on to create a two-hour production showcasing the Raramuri's rich dance form in which Daniel Jáquez - Calpulli's artistic director- performed.

Now, Jáquez along with Calpulli's artistic staff take on the task of re-collecting key information, which has included two, research trips to Cd. Juárez in northern Mexico. As part of this continued research and development, the company invites the general public to be part of this exploration.

Sponsors

The project is made possible by the generous support of the National Association of Latino Arts and Culture, the Independence Community Foundation, the Curtis W. McGraw Foundation, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

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The Artist

Calpulli Mexican Dance Co. (aka Calpulli Danza Mexicana) is a non profit organization whose mission is to teach and produce dance-based programming incorporating music and theater to promote the rich diversity of Mexican cultural heritage. To this end, the company produces professional performance, educational programming, and community outreach activities including its donation-based children's dance program in Queens, NY. Artistic Staff: Artistic Director- Daniel Jáquez; Associate Artistic Director- Martha Nora Zarate; Lead Associate/ Instructor- Alberto Lopez

Learn more about Calpulli at its website: www.calpullidance.org

More about the Raramuris

The name Raramuri translates to "people." The Raramuri natives have long been known for their endurance and their "*pies ligeros*," referring to their ability to run long distances with their light, agile feet. Rarely do people know of their values and their unique perspective on life. Raramuris are private, spiritual people who have long valued their lifestyle in the open lands of Sierra Madre of Northern Mexico over the comforts of the modern world. Furthermore, they are also a people who place dance as essential to their rituals to ensure arrival of good spring weather for crops. In mid-February, the Raramuri begin playing their traditional drums, and there is a drum playing for 40 continuous days. They prefer to pray in ritual dances over verbal forms.

Jesuit and Christian missionaries alike recognized the Raramuri dance-oriented method of prayer and introduced popular dance forms like those of the "Matachines"- dances with roots tracing back to Europe and in particular of Italian influence. Raramuris often perform on Catholic holy days and dances are performed for rain, healing, and at burials. While these dance forms are more common in Mexico, Calpulli seeks to explore beyond the Christian-based dances.

Despite their impressive ability to survive, the Raramuri face challenges including availability of land for their crops, malnutrition, and a modern world that increasingly pushes closer and close. Increasingly, Raramuri can be found in the large cities of Northern Mexico often on the outskirts driven by the need for sustenance and the resources of metropolitan areas. They are an endangered people whose rich culture, traditions, and history compel us to contemplate our own values, beliefs, and sense of balance in life.