

Martha Nora Zarate-Alvarez

Mexico: Dancer, choreographer, teacher, founder of Mazarte Dance Company

Object: Jalisco dance dress

Amo a mi México, mi cultura y tradiciones; orgullo-so estoy de poder compartirlas con la juventud. Sigamos bailando con el corazón. (Spanish)

[I love my Mexico, my culture and traditions; I'm proud to be able to share them with the youth. Let's continue dancing from the heart.]

I come from Puebla, Mexico. I am one of thirteen children. My father played marimba and guitar and because of him, many of my brothers also played guitar and sang. Two of my older sisters were dancers in the Ballet Folklórico de Puebla. Watching them dance, I felt like I had to learn, so I started taking dance classes at school. Most schools in Mexico have folkloric dance classes as part of the regular curriculum. Later I joined four dance companies outside of school. I learned a lot from these companies. This was the beginning of my professional dance career.

Later, I worked in Germany dancing there in restaurants and for parties, and then I moved back to Mexico and was working in Cancun. I came to New York in 2000 and after a few years, I was asked to help start a new dance company, Calpulli Mexican Dance Compa-ny. Because of my dance experience and my continuing research, I became the Associate Artistic Director. I was with the company for seven years. I eventually moved on and formed my own dance company, Mazarte Dance Company, Inc.

When I was starting out as a dancer, I asked my mom to make me a dance dress. She had gone to school to learn sewing. Most of the dance companies in Mexico do not provide costumes, so dancers need their own dresses. My mother and I chose the style and fabric. Then she said, "You are going to do it yourself because, by this time you should already know how to make it." She guided me on how to do the blouse, and then I began to cut and sew. It took me however long to finish. I use this dress a lot. It traveled with me when I came to the United States.



My husband says that someday we will put the dress in a museum, the Mazarte Museum.

Bio:

For more than 25 years, Martha Nora Zarate-Alvarez has participated in the field of Mexican folk dance on stages across the Americas and Europe. She has assumed several roles with a variety of companies, including artistic director, choreographer, instructor, and costume designer. In recent years, Martha has dedicated herself to research, teaching, and the directing of her own company, Mazarte Dance Company, which she founded in 2012 to fulfill her vision of creating a union between dance, research, and authentic indigenous art. Through Mazarte and other work, Martha aspires to create awareness of Mexican heritage and preserve important artistic techniques in danger of being forgotten. For more information visit: mazarte.org