

# Ballet Folklórico

*Mexican Folkloric Dance*

**Created by Sara Roybal**

CEO & Artistic Director, [Grupo Folklórico del Pueblo](#)



**Interview:** Jimmy Newmoon Roybal, Velma Roybal, & Sara Roybal | August 11, 2022 [View](#)  
Soundscapes Oral History Collection [View](#)

**Topics:** Ballet folklórico; Mexican American identities; Community music education

## Interview Summary:

Velma, Sara, and Jimmy Newmoon Roybal are the founders of Grupo Folklórico del Pueblo, a non-profit organization providing dance classes and cultural education since 1996. In this interview, the Roybals discuss folklórico, family, and Chicano identity in southern Colorado.

<b>00:00</b> Introduction and early music influences	<b>50:29</b> Folklórico as cultural identity
<b>05:39</b> Geographies of radio	<b>57:26</b> Cultures in collaboration and conflict
<b>09:48</b> Garage bands in 1960s Pueblo	<b>1:12:15</b> Southern Colorado cultures
<b>11:36</b> Folklórico dance in 1980s and 1990s Pueblo	<b>1:17:13</b> Expressing Chicano identity through choreography
<b>15:46</b> Asociación Nacional de Grupos Folklóricos (ANGF)	<b>1:21:32</b> Fiesta Day at the Colorado State Fair
<b>20:47</b> Folklórico dance pedagogy	<b>1:27:10</b> Challenges for cultural educators
<b>30:20</b> Parental involvement in folklórico	<b>1:39:03</b> 21st century folklórico
<b>33:22</b> Creating music and costume collections	<b>1:40:52</b> Parental involvement in folklórico
<b>41:19</b> Practice locations	<b>1:47:43</b> Embodied knowledge in the U.S.
<b>45:37</b> Performance venues	<b>1:52:11</b> Closing thoughts on family and folklórico



## Teaching Ideas

### Costume Design

Recommended Grade Levels: 3-12

In the interview, the Roybals discuss folklórico costuming (33:22). This costuming reflects folklórico's Indigenous, African, and European roots. Alone or in groups, challenge students to design a costume that represents cultural elements of the town or city where they live. Students may draw, create digital art, or make a life-sized prototype of the costume. When the costumes are complete, ask groups to share their creations with the class, describing their rationale for their design choices in writing and/or an oral presentation. (This activity may be preceded by the "Folklórico's Three Influences" activity.)

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### Borderlandia Composition/Improvisation

Recommended Grade Levels: 4-12

At 01:47:43, Sara Roybal discusses her master's thesis project "Borderlandia." In it, Sara blended together dance styles like hip hop, jazz, and folklórico in order to represent her experience of Mexican American identity. (See a solo performance of Sara's modern folklórico style [here](#).)

In this activity, students will create their own Borderlandia project. Ask students to share and research information about musical traditions of their own cultural backgrounds (they may work alone or in groups). Then, ask students to create a musical work that blends musical traditions from their cultural backgrounds together. Depending on available resources and students' ability levels, you may choose to frame this project in terms of specific elements:

- Picking a specific musical element may help keep the project focused, especially for students with limited composition or improvisation experience. Help students research specific rhythms, scalar patterns, and/or instruments from their cultural backgrounds. From there, students can notate a composition or improvise using a combination of those elements. Use available instruments to substitute or try making your own! You can also extend your instrument library by using a simple DAW like [Soundtrap](#) or midi keyboard.
- Mash-up: Focus on existing music. Help students brainstorm and find songs that represent their cultural backgrounds, then challenge them to blend them into one song.
- Notation and improvisation: This project can be done as a fixed musical composition transmitted through oral or written means; students can also improvise using specific elements or songs. It could function as a more informal "getting to know you" activity in groups or as a long-term project developed over the course of weeks.



## **Folklórico's Three Influences**

Recommended Grade Levels: 3-6

This PowerPoint includes foundational information to understand folklórico's cultural background stemming from indigenous, European, and African traditions. The (editable) presentation includes opportunities to pause and engage in discussion questions, and the presenter notes include additional information to share with a class. Download the PowerPoint [here](#).

## **Locating Folklórico Sounds**

Recommended Grade Levels: 3-5

An essential part of folklórico is the music! It is very important that the two work together or purposely have a “contra ritmo” (counter rhythm). The dancers keep the timing and the rhythm of the music by their footwork, skirtwork, bodywork, or all three at the same time.

This [video](#) is a useful introduction to musical instruments of Mexico. Since there are 21, you might choose to introduce one instrument family at a time, then review each day. During the video, you may choose to engage students by exploring timbre or creating an interactive map:

- Timbre activity: Give students [this worksheet](#) with photos of each instrument. In the blank space next to each instrument, ask students to create a visual representation of what they hear as they listen to each instrument demonstration. You might choose to guide students toward specific timbral qualities, such as brightness, or consider the ways in which sound is produced.
- Instrument map: Print off individual maps or complete the activity as a class using a SmartBoard or projector. After students hear the instrument, use the [Teacher Key](#) to tell students which region the instrument comes from. Ask students to locate the region, then mark their maps. They may choose to draw a line from instrument to region, create a color code, or create their own map key with symbols. Encourage students to be neat and keep it simple—many regions will include more than one instrument!

Once students have been introduced to instrument sounds, test students' aural memories by asking them to identify instruments in context! Have students point to instruments they hear on their worksheet as you play [this video](#).



## **Dance Folklórico!**

### Recommended Grade Levels:

We've compiled a list of YouTube folklórico tutorials appropriate for a variety of ages and time commitments. If your school is located near Pueblo, Colorado, you can request in-person workshops by contacting [Grupo Folklórico del Pueblo](#). To connect with folklórico groups elsewhere in the US, contact the [Asociación Nacional de Grupos Folklóricos](#).

### Live Children's Folklorico Tutorial–Ballet Folklórico de Los Angeles

Grade Level: 5-12

Time: 30 minutes (includes practice)

Region: Jalisco

Bilingual

### Folklorico Tutorial: Basic Steps Part 1–Ballet Folklórico de Los Angeles

Grade Level: K-5

Time: 5 minutes (plus practice)

Region: Jalisco

English

### Children's Folklórico Tutorial–Ballet Folklórico de Los Angeles

Grade Level: K-3

Time: 5 minutes plus practice

Region: Jalisco

Bilingual, demonstrated by a child

### Folklorico Dance Lesson–Ballet Folklorico Quetzalli

Grade Level: 5-12

Time: 10 minutes plus practice

Region: Chiapas

English



## **Additional Resources**

*Links to additional websites, books, films, that explore similar themes*

Book:

*Danza!: Amalia Hernández and El Ballet Folklórico de México* (Duncan Tonatiuh, 2017)

[Read-aloud video](#)

Book:

*The Best Mariachi in the World* (J.D. Smith, 2008)

[Read-aloud video](#)

Teaching Resource:

[Discovery Tour: Mexican Banda and Mariachi](#) (Musical Instrument Museum)

Website:

[Grupo Folklórico del Pueblo](#)

Learn more about classes and performances based out of Pueblo, Colorado.

Folklórico Groups in Southern/Front Range Colorado:

- Grupo Folklórico del Pueblo—Pueblo, Colorado
- Grupo Omawari—Pueblo, Colorado
- Semillas de la Tierra—Alamosa, Colorado (Adams State)
- Ballet Folklórico de Barajas—Colorado Springs, Colorado
- Baile Caliente—Denver, Colorado
- Fiesta Colorado—Denver, Colorado

## **About the Author**

Sara Roybal received her Master of Fine Arts in Dance with a graduate certificate in Ethnic Studies from the University of Colorado Boulder. Currently, she is an Independent Artist and the Artistic Director of Grupo Folklórico del Pueblo of Pueblo, CO. She has been studying and performing Traditional Mexican Folklore for over 30 years and has enjoyed sharing her art and culture throughout the United States, Europe, Mexico, and Cuba.