

PRESS RELEASE

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GRANDEZA MEXICANA FOLK COMPANY PROUDLY UNVEILS *TERCERA RAIZ*

Los Angeles, CA – March 26, 2008 -- *Grandeza Mexicana Folk Ballet Company* (GMFBC) proudly presents its newest concert production, *Tercera Raiz*, to be held at the historic Ford Amphitheatre at 8:00 p.m. on July 26th. The evening features a historic perspective of the modern influence of African cultures in present day Mexican folk.

The anticipated dance works begin with the exploration of the direct African contribution of music and dance fused with traces of Spanish and indigenous influence as presented in Veracruz. Wherever their number allowed, slaves created networks that permitted them to cope with their experience, giving expression to their humanity and providing a manner of maintaining a sense of self. These networks flourished in areas such as Veracruz and Guerrero, where the intersect of the Spanish, Indigenous and African cultures forged new and dynamic relationships that would become the basis of Mexico's cultural heritage. This work was developed in collaboration with leading Mexican Choreographer Viviana Basanta Hernandez and Iddi Saaka, a choreographer from Ghana.

As the African presence was diffused over time throughout Latin America, it was molded and combined with various indigenous influences to create something truly unique. One of those places where this new combination of cultures created something magical was in Cuba. There we saw the birth of the Mambo, Cha Cha Cha, Conga, and Rumba; music and dance styles that were ripe with African influence. In the 1940s, during the height of the Mexican Golden Age of Cinema, these dynamic music and dances were introduced to the Mexican masses where they took hold with great fervor. In *Pasion Rumbera*, the story of the Mexican Rumberas is told through the eyes of a young girl as she climbs the ranks of the seedy urban dance clubs to become a bonified "Rumbera."

Since then, the influence of the African spirit and rhythms have been reshaped and molded to create something uniquely Mexican as is found in the state of Sinaloa. With its lively music, carnivalesque style costumes for the women and the bravado style of the men, Sinaloa is the synthesis of two distinct cultures in the reflection of modern day Mexico.

Rounding out the concert will be some of Jose Vences' most beloved dance works including Guerrero and Jalisco. Live music will be provided by the accomplished *Grupo Cuicatlan* ensemble, directed by Geraldo Palma and Sergio Alonso, dedicated to preserving Mexico's rich musical traditions.

Grandeza Mexicana, a professional quality folk dance company founded by Jose Vences in 2003, has as its primary goal to present performances that inspire and educate audiences on the beauty and diversity of Mexico's colorful dance traditions. Stylized choreographies are developed through research on Mexican folk dance and culture; input from collaborating choreographers and historians; and by studying and appreciating the work of other artists.