

“Raices de Mexico” group at Carrington Hall

By Nom de Plume

Carrington Hall’s stage this past Friday evening was filled with color, graceful footwork and beautiful, traditional costumes by **Raices de Mejico**, the East Palo Alto-based Mexican Folklore dance school.

There was apparent passion for authenticity in every aspect of the evening’s program, and passions of appreciation in the audience.

The appropriate title was “Primavera en Mejico”—“Spring, Indeed!”

Some 15 adult and 11 children dancers aroused the audience to tempo-echoing, foot-stomping and handclapping response.

They danced around the stage, with its colorful, handpainted backdrop, featuring the arched columnar effect of the Chochimilco floating gardens, and the Mexico City Cathedral built in the 18th Century, over the blood-stained stonework base of the infamous Aztec sacrificial pyramids, fittingly backed by the sleeping volcanic mountains of Popocatepetal.

Artistic directress Maria Inez Perez, in collaboration with instructress-choreographer Amanda Navar, and the assistance of technical director Matias Varela, had beautifully coached, staged and paced some remarkable dances, featuring the long-established “Chilena” dance, which has reflected the early steps introduced to Western Mexico by South American sailors in Acapulco in the state of Guerrero. The taps laid down some fantastic groundwork into

the Spanish and mixed Indian cultures.

Echoing the hot and humid climate of the Yucatan Peninsula, with florid fanning of voluminous skirts, the “jarana” dancers brought about kaleidoscopic flashes of male and female highstepping “courtships” only barely shy of the next stage, namely the passions of matings such as “Cabeza de Cochino,” “Mimi” and “El Torito.”

Next came Northern (Durango) Mexican dances reflecting the Scottish schottische, Polish redowa and German polka. The Americas, both north and south, absorbed and reflected their native and immigrant influences.

As is long said of such situations, “There’s nothing ‘new’ about ‘excitement,’” and these vibrant steppings clearly interpreted the traditions.

It’s obvious the debt owed to those who carried these steps down to us all.

The Sinaloense reflections of the State of Sinaloa led to the intermission with great flirtations, led by the sombrero-fanning Gauchos of the north, with grins, sassing eyes, and engaging body language.

Picking up the tatters of audience response following the intermission, the “huapango” music of San Luis Patasi brought the introduction of the violin to mind with its roots in sentiment and romance. (Same urges—second interpretations!!)

These airs led into the musical area with the strongest European influence, namely that of

Roman Catholic Spain, which seeped into the body of musical passions via the eastern Port of Vera Cruz, or “The True Cross.” These aroused leanings by crowning each altar, pew, and transept with the Roman cross, and formalizing the resultant pairings.

A final program, featuring the music of the Mariachi Cardinal de Stanford, led into an outstanding performance of lariat-twirling by Adrian Franco, described in the Mexican dialect as a “Floreador.”

Senor Franco was florid, indeed, fascinating his audience with apparent mastery of his rope.

Following two exceptional district dances entitled “La Negra” and “El Carretero,” Maria Calderon presented beautiful examples of her singing technique, as well as audience-delighting beauty. Having noted her contributions to the evening’s dancing, it was rewarding to hear a well-placed, well-trained soprano.

There could hardly have been a better assembled group of dancers, all of whom evidenced their training and rehearsing with natural grace and advanced professionalism.

It was natural to think that this company is well prepared for a tour of other North American venues and greater Latin American audiences.

Benefitting from the support of the **Redwood City Civic Cultural Commission** and the Philanthropic Ventures Foundation, Carrington Hall was lucky to have them enrich our local entertainment roster.