



Times Tribune staff photos by Mark Crosse

Juan Soto and Lupita Aceves of Ballet Folklorico Juventud dance Mexican dances Monday at Kavanaugh School in

East Palo Alto in celebration of Cinco de Mayo. Martha Mariscal (below) awaits her chance to dance.

It's el Cinco de Mayo — a colorful show for Mexico

By Phyllis Brown
Times Tribune staff

EAST PALO ALTO — The dancer's brightly colored skirts swirled through the air in red, yellow, orange and green, moving to the Mariachi music. Woven brown pigtails, sporting ribbons the colors of the Mexican flag, trailed behind them.

The men of the Ballet Folklorico Juventud tapped out the traditional rhythms Monday at Kavanaugh Elementary School. Their sombreros hopped up and down to the music.

Their dances are the dances of Mexico, their songs the songs of Mexico. They celebrate Cinco de Mayo, May 5, the day many celebrate as Mexican Independence Day.

It is one of the most important Mexican holidays, a day of rejoicing and cultural pride for Mexicans and Chicanos in the United States.

Though many think of Cinco de Mayo as Mexican Independence Day, Mexico actually gained its independence from European domination later, Gonzalez said.

"To the Chicano in the Southwest, Cinco de Mayo is symbolic of the Chicanos continuing struggle in the United States. It is a day of cultural pride," said Ismael Gonzalez, associate coordinator of multicultural relations at Foothill College.

Cinco de Mayo is celebrated because of the defeat by popular Mexican forces of a colonial French army at Puebla, Mexico, on May 5, 1862.

While it was only one in a series of battles, it was an important psychological defeat of what was believed at the time to be the world's greatest army, Gonzalez said.

The holiday is celebrated with regional dances and songs and other cultural activities.

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The Ballet Folklorico Juventud danced the dances of the "Nortenos," northern Mexico, and of the Mexican state of Jalisco, whose capital is Guadalajara.

Many of the 26 Kavanaugh Elementary School students in the youth troupe are from northern Mexico, according to Ruben Avellar, the group's leader.

Tap, tap . . . tap, tap, tap, said their black boots and pumps against the hard wooden floors. The girls giggled as their skirts flew up around their waists.

They danced the Machettes, a dance of thanks for the tool that makes the harvest and the wealth of the village possible. They danced the Madrugada, a dance of love, as many of the dances, including La Negra, the Jarabe Tapatio (Mexican Hat Dance) and La Bottea, are.

At Canada College in Redwood City, a lecture on The Raza Experience on Higher Education will be presented Wednesday at 10 a.m. by a guest lecturer from San Francisco State University.

Thursday at 11 a.m. in the Cafeteria there will be folkloric dancing by Ballet Folklorico Juventud.

For further information, call Canada College at 364-1212 ext. 300.

Several schools in the Redwood City Elementary School District and Sequoia High School were conducting Cinco de Mayo activities today.

Foothill College Cinco de Mayo activities include a Mariachi Band that played in Hyde Park this afternoon. Wednesday, a slide presentation on the Heritage of Mexican American will be shown in Room F-12, at 1 p.m.

Musica es Cultura, a musical group, will perform Thursday at 1 p.m. in Hyde Park. For further in-

formation on Foothill's Cinco de Mayo activities call Ismael Gonzalez at the office of Multicultural Relations at 948-8590.

At De Anza College, a Mariachi band will perform at 6 p.m. in the Campus Center.

Wednesday, in the El Clemente Room at 6 p.m. Musica es Cultura will present a "lights out program." An art exhibit will be on display in the foyer of the Campus Center. For further information on De Anza College's Cinco de Mayo activities call 996-4602.

At Stanford University Wednesday, a bag lunch will be held at noon the Latin American Studies Department. Esperanza Duran from Mexico College will speak on The Oil Industry in Mexico and Brazil, comparative perspectives. At 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, a film, "Mexico and the Frozen Revolution," will be shown. For further information call 497-3495, the Chicano Affairs Office.