

Ballet Folklórico Ritmo Alegre

2018-2020 Strategic Plan



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



photo by Brad Kemp

From my first Gala performance through town hall meetings, focus groups, interviews, and work with volunteers, staff and board members, each interaction has confirmed the value of Ballet Folklórico Ritmo Alegre.

First, I must thank the beautiful dancers who have danced for me. By some synchronistic blessing, I find myself in the audience in the background of photo of a radiant dancer. I am beaming. I always beam as I experience with delight the joy and pride you exude.

I am grateful to the over 40 dancers, parents and instructors who participated in the town hall meetings. You set the tone for the future of Ritmo Alegre. Thank you for the energy with which you expressed your opinions, and your clarity about what was most important to you.

Thank you to the 14 focus group participants, including school teachers, alumni dancers, and others who value the organization, for giving a summer evening to talk together about the strengths, challenges and potential of Ballet Folklórico Ritmo Alegre. Your input enabled us to think more broadly as we made decisions about the future of the organization.

To the 17 community members who, while you may not be intimately connected with Ritmo Alegre, took the time to share with me your perspectives and ideas: Thank you. In addition to your care for the dancers, you clearly expressed the value of this organization to the wider community.

My deep appreciation goes to board president, Rachel Ciddio, and board members, Monserrat Alegria, Cheyanna Martinez, Candelaria Romero, Rosalba Siordia-Perez, and Santana Ciddio who had the wisdom to know this work was necessary, and the commitment to follow through with countless meetings and discussions. You took a mountain of input and determined that which would be best for the dancers and the organization in the coming years.

I am grateful to Candace Turtle, incoming managing director. You jumped in enthusiastically, answered questions, and provided editing to make the plan a useful and functional document.

Snow Mountain, founder and managing director for 24 years gave her heart to the organization, and true to form, did the same in assisting me with the plan. Your passion for the dancers and Ritmo Alegre is infectious. I learned so much from you and a passion was kindled in me. I am indebted to Snow. This plan, this Ritmo Alegre future, would not exist without her.

Each of you has contributed to this plan that will take the organization forward, for the benefit of dancers and our community. Your participation will enable Ritmo Alegre to fulfill their mission to: empower youth through dance, and educate youth who serve as cultural ambassadors in our diverse community.

In deepest gratitude,

Tatiana Bredikin
MeetingMastery.com



photo by Snow Mountain

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“Hard work leads to reward -
it's a life lesson.”

“I used to be ashamed to be Mexican. Now I want people to see me dance the beautiful dances of my culture.”

FOUNDER'S LEGACY STATEMENT

Dear Participants and Friends of Ballet Folklórico Ritmo Alegre,

I would like to share with you a few points that I hope will remain in the history and culture of Ballet Folklórico Ritmo Alegre. After 24 years working with this wonderful group, it has been a big challenge for me to let go of being “the leader” and to watch with excited curiosity to see how the group evolves! First, I would like to share the three accomplishments of the group I am most proud of and why.

The group has survived and grown - We had a rocky start. After a few glorious months with a professional teacher, we ended up with no permanent teacher and few mentors, respectfully trying to learn on our own. We had practice space problems, and the school was never sure what to make of us. Many of our best dancers left after a year or two, or after graduation at the most, so we had a very hard time maintaining a consistently growing performance quality. I wasn't sure how to create and build the organization. It became a vocation/second job, but KIDS WANTED IT and the community kept asking us to dance! For many years we had almost no money. At various times we tried to create a steering committee, then a board of directors and then to make the group a community arts nonprofit. We had some in house conflict, but KIDS WANTED IT, so we kept going.

Known for authenticity, validation of Mexico's folk tradition and celebrating local Mexican population

Whether by looking up information in books, finding relatives or friends who knew a dance, or as we grew, studying at Danzantes Unidos, and finally using the internet, we made it a point to be as authentic as possible in steps, choreography and costuming. We also emphasized proper behavior in public. We noticed that at performances Latinos in the audiences stood up taller and expressed gratitude and pride, and Anglos expressed a new appreciation and acceptance of Mexican/Latino culture. We were asked to dance at more and more events and our photos were used in many places. It appeared we had become a symbol of the local Mexican/Latino population.

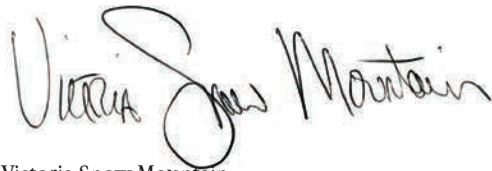
Known for empowering youth

The purpose of the group was always two-fold- to preserve and celebrate Mexican folk culture, and to empower and celebrate the youth. The group was meant to be for the kids. It was started really by them and kept alive by them. It was meant to be another resource toward a bright future for individuals and for the Mexican/Latino community.

I'd also like to share how I would like to be remembered by organizational members and the community. I would like to be remembered as someone who is a dedicated ally of the Mexican community and who considers herself an adopted Mexican. I see myself as a bridge person who strives to help build communication, understanding, acceptance and appreciation to bring the Mexican/Latino community and mainstream/Anglo community into contact for community harmony and mutual benefit. I would like to be remembered as a champion of kids - someone who cares deeply and is happy to go out of her way to give youth opportunities and to help break down barriers to their success in life. I would also like to be seen as someone who keeps growing and learning throughout life.

Gracias, Ritmo Alegre, for 24 wild crazy wonderful years! Whenever I see the group dance, I know it has all been worth it! I'll see you at your performances!

Con mucho cariño,
Snow



Victoria Snow Mountain
Founder and Director, 1994 - 2017
January 1, 2018

ORGANIZATIONAL FOCUS

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to empower youth through dance, and educate youth who serve as cultural ambassadors in our diverse community.

VALUES

- ▶ Culture
- ▶ Education
- ▶ Discipline

WORKING PRINCIPLES

- ▷ We blend the rich history, music and dance of traditional Mexico to further cross-cultural understanding for students of dance and the community at large.
- ▷ We create programming and select instructors to inspire and motivate students to learn the art of Mexican folk dance.
- ▷ We embed in our programs, dancers, and instructors discipline and respect for this art form.
- ▷ We create opportunities for students' cultural understanding by connecting Folklorico dance with their individual ancestries.
- ▷ We inspire students and families of Mexican heritage to feel proud of their roots, beliefs and traditions.

VISION STATEMENT

The Student

Children in our community know their self-worth, and the strength of their culture. They will be more successful in life as a result of the physical and artistic expression of dance.

The Culture

Ritmo Alegre broadens cross-cultural understanding for students of dance and the community by blending together the rich history, music, and dance of traditional Mexico. Tradition and values are preserved, keeping vital cultural threads alive for future generations.

Family Engagement

Parents are committed and invested in the organization as evidenced by participation, dedication, volunteerism, educational growth, and personal development.

Collaboration

Ritmo Alegre develops partnerships with the wider community and explores educational avenues for enrichment programs.

Financial Capacity

Financial stability is a strength of the organization. Increased student participation and diverse funding sources create financial sustainability.

Organization and Communication

Families of Ritmo Alegre receive timely communication and information to effectively support involvement. The board embraces change and understands the needs of the organization as well as the community, ensuring meaningful planning and implementation.

WHO WE ARE

Ballet Folklórico Ritmo Alegre offers education in traditional regional Mexican folkdance and culture for students aged six to adult in classes for beginner to advanced dancers. Ballet Folklórico Ritmo Alegre has danced throughout the Rogue Valley at community events, festivals, wineries and for private parties, performing as many as 30 times per year. The Gala performances have been held consistently for 20 years. The group is a favorite at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival Green Show, and with a 10-year history is their longest running annual performer. Ritmo Alegre has also danced at the Britt Festival.

BALLET FOLKLORICO RITMO ALEGRE HISTORY

Origins - 1992-1999

In 1992, Marta Peña Ballesteros, the mother of two English as a Second Language (ESL) students, formed a Ballet Folklórico student club at South Medford High School (SMHS). ESL teacher, Victoria Snow Mountain, was the club advisor. After about six months and several performances Marta was not able to continue. In 1994, some students started holding dance practices after school at South High. Teacher Snow Mountain supported the student dancers, and the club was named Latin Reflection. The group participated in a Portland Folklórico group workshop. In 1996 Latin Reflection went to Danzantes Unidos for the first time, and has gone every year since. The first Gala show was held in January 1999.

Development as a school club - 2000-2005

The group grew to include elementary school dancers and an adult group. The group practiced in various places including the Sacred Heart School gym, Kids Unlimited on West Main Street, and “The Shack” at Jackson Park. All classes were free, and taught by volunteer instructors.

Moving out into the community - 2006- 2009

A steering committee was formed and the Multicultural Association of Southern Oregon (MASO) agreed to provide nonprofit status. The group was renamed Ballet Folklórico Ritmo Alegre, translating to joyful rhythm. Practices were held in school gyms, a church, and the SMHS Little Theater and Modern Dance Studio. In the fall of 2009, a mission statement and a five-year strategic plan were crafted.

First Strategic Development Plan - 2010-2014

Strategic goals were completed, including leasing and converting the old South Medford High School art room into a dance studio. Other goals included establishing a separate bank account, setting up QuickBooks accounting, filing articles of incorporation and by-laws, and successfully applying for 501c3 nonprofit status, approved in Sept. 2014. Ritmo Alegre hired the first instructors, Luisa Zaragoza and Juan Martinez, and then promoted Luisa to Artistic Director. Advanced level classes were added and taught by nationally recognized dancers, Alex and Hector Zaragoza. Ballet Folklórico de la Escuela de Bellas Artes de Tejupilco, Mexico, and Son Fandango de Toluca, Mexico, visited, performed, and taught workshops.

Recent years - 2015-2017

After school classes were held at Kids Unlimited. Rachel Ciddio stepped into the leadership role of Board President, and additional board members were recruited. The organization began capacity building by upgrading the bookkeeping and financial reporting, and beginning to develop the board. In 2016, Kathy Bryon of Gordon Elwood Foundation became our capacity building mentor. In conjunction with the finalization of this current three-year strategic plan, a new Managing Director, Candace Turtle, was selected to succeed founder-director, Victoria Snow Mountain, on her retirement after 24 years of service to the organization.

“I saw the dancers and wanted to be a part of our positive culture. I wanted my family to get that.”

THE STRATEGIC PLAN

GOALS

The focus of this strategic plan is to establish a solid foundation on which to grow the organization. While the plan is extensive, the initial priorities are specific:

► PROGRAM STRENGTH ► PERFORMANCES, FUNDRAISERS ► BOARD DEVELOPMENT

Programs

Through quality instruction, dancers will not only develop discipline and nurture their dance skills, they will also see a more accurate representation of Mexican culture, a crucial component to the identity of many of our dancers and Ritmo Alegre. We aim to provide a space where families can support their dancers and the organization while actively building cultural identity together.

Dancers / Classes

We will recruit, motivate and retain dancers through quality instruction and performance opportunities that build cultural identity and self-esteem.

Performances

We will select performance opportunities that are a valuable return on investment and further our mission.

We will deliver professional performances that are well-planned, organized, and run smoothly.

Family Engagement

We will engage dancer families through clear communication, and volunteer and social opportunities that preserve traditional Mexican culture, build community, strengthen relationships and develop skills.

Artistic Instructional Staff

We will recruit, hire and train staff to be proficient in Ballet Folklórico instruction and Mexican culture, as well as classroom management and the support of dancer personal development.

Community Connection

We recognize the importance of building relationships; it is through partnerships and collaboration that Ritmo Alegre has become a presence in the community. This visibility and engagement allows us to serve as cultural ambassadors, to teach others about the Latino culture, and to connect with a diverse community encouraging potential dancers to learn about our organization and become involved.

Partnerships and community engagement

We will collaborate with partners who offer opportunities for educational enrichment and engagement, and access to audiences that reach into the wider community.

Public Relations and Marketing

We will deliver timely, effective marketing and publicity that furthers our mission by increasing audience size and diversity, and prospective dancer recruitment.

Organizational Effectiveness

It is crucial for staff, the board, and those actively engaged to have an understanding of what it takes to run the organization and build a more sustainable model where everyone contributes to the betterment and stability of the group. We ought to be prepared for any transitions without disrupting the harmony and collaboration of the group. We can achieve this through effective communication and with clear structures and systems to be able to support our staff and members and avoid burn out.

Board of Directors

We will develop our board into an effective, knowledgeable, and diverse team.

We will continue to grow our Board's skills to lead the organization in governance and development activities.

Financial Stability

We will operate from a solid financial plan that includes reliable income across the six funding streams: tuition, performances, fundraising, corporate sponsors, individual donors, and grants.

Administration, Organization, Communication

We will implement effective communication, organization and administrative systems to support increased family engagement, eased performance delivery and organizational stability.

Data Measurement

We will collect, manage and analyze data to direct organizational development, support funding requests and prospective partnerships, and demonstrate the value of our programs.

Succession Plan

We will implement a succession plan for all staff positions that builds on the strong history established by the founder, and fulfills the vision.

OBJECTIVES

DANCERS / CLASSES

Goal: *We will recruit, motivate and retain dancers through quality instruction and performance opportunities that build cultural identity and self-esteem.*

- DAN 1 Develop a system to integrate dancers new to the organization and new to each class.
- DAN 2 Recruit and train more dancers, including more male dancers.
- DAN 3 Incorporate an end-of-class debrief tradition.
- DAN 4 Develop a dancer evaluation process.
- DAN 5 Provide advanced performance skills training, quarterly.
- DAN 6 Provide external enrichment and incentive learning opportunities.
- DAN 7 Create an elite-level, professional caliber troupe for high-level performances.
- DAN 8 Conduct exit interviews when dancers leave the organization.
- DAN 9 Develop in dancers the discipline of commitment and communication.
- DAN 10 Create a mastery skill curriculum with requirements to advance through the class levels.

Performances

Goal: *We will select performance opportunities that are a valuable return on investment and further our mission.*

- PER 1 Create and implement a performance decision-making matrix.

Goal: *We will deliver professional performances that are well-planned, organized, and run smoothly.*

- PER 2 Establish systems for effective performance preparation.
- PER 3 Establish processes to follow through on delivering quality performances.
- PER 4 Implement a dancer pre-performance inspiration and preparation circle, and post-performance debrief.
- PER 5 Institute a volunteer pre-performance circle, and post-performance debrief.
- PER 6 Maintain costumes in quality condition.
- PER 7 Test one “Demo and dance” experiential learning performance.
- PER 8 Maintain a repertoire of at least two dances from two regions, for four-six total each year retained from the previous years.

Family Engagement

Goal: *We will engage dancer families through clear communication, and volunteer and social opportunities that preserve traditional Mexican culture, build community, strengthen relationships and develop skills.*

- FAM 1 Hold family meetings with classes, monthly.
- FAM 2 Implement structures that support volunteerism and get families involved.
- FAM 3 Hold six costume sewing activities, annually.
- FAM 4 Host a social event, quarterly.

Artistic Instructional Staff

Goal: *We will recruit, hire and train staff to be proficient in Ballet Folklórico instruction and Mexican culture, as well as classroom management and the support of dancer personal development.*

- AIS 1 Conduct staff evaluations, annually.
- AIS 2 Improve classroom management skills and techniques.
- AIS 3 Continue the creation and implementation of the New Instructor Development Program

OBJECTIVES 2

Program

- AIS 4 Expand instructors' training opportunities.
- AIS 5 Support dancer development at home.
- AIS 6 Recruit and hire a lead instructor with professional ballet folklórico teaching experience.

Partnerships and community engagement

Goal: We will collaborate with partners who offer opportunities for educational enrichment and engagement, and access to audiences that reach into the wider community.

- PCE 1 Participate in meetings that build relationships and have the potential to strengthen the organization.
- PCE 2 Create a plan to collaborate with other arts organizations.
- PCE 3 Seek opportunities for Elite dancers to perform at wineries, other ideal venues, and for special events.

Public Relations and Marketing

Goal: We will deliver timely, effective marketing and publicity that furthers our mission by increasing audience size and diversity, and prospective dancer recruitment.

- PRM 1 Develop marketing and publicity plans for key events.
- PRM 2 Update the website, monthly.
- PRM 3 Develop a publicity plan for event marketing to schools and for dancer recruitment.
- PRM 4 Deliver timely event publicity to the community.

Board of Directors

Goal: We will develop our board into an effective, knowledgeable, and diverse team.

- BRD 1 Implement effective meeting structures to support positive meetings and create solutions.
- BRD 2 Review board procedures and policies, and update as appropriate.
- BRD 3 Implement a board contract.
- BRD 4 Incorporate board development activities and training into the regular meetings, or leadership workshops.
- BRD 5 Transform board meetings from “working meetings” to reports and decision-making meetings.
- BRD 6 Increase the size, skill, and socio-economic diversity of the board.

Goal: We will continue to grow our board's skills to lead the organization in governance and development activities.

- BRD 7 Complete the upcoming program year goals by August and annual budget by December of the previous year.
- BRD 8 The board is trained in donor development and regularly engages in friend-raising conversations.
- BRD 9 Incorporate an annual managing director review.
- BRD 10 Engage advisors and supporters with special skills and strengths who can be called on as needed.
- BRD 11 100% of board members make a personally meaningful financial contribution to the organization annually.
- BRD 12 Re-examine the internal tuition scholarship process for students.



photo by Snow Mountain



photo by Brad Kemp

Planning Process and Participation

The strategic plan was prepared by a strategic planning committee of staff and volunteers, under the direction of the board and with guidance from the strategic planning consultant. The impending retirement of the founder/managing director made this a pivotal time for the organization and an ideal time to envision the future of the organization.

A needs assessment was conducted, including input from dancers, parents and community members, through town hall meetings, focus groups and individual interviews. It is included in this appendix. The board and strategic planning committee identified the priorities and set the direction of the organization in a full-day planning retreat. Working meetings were held with the leadership team and the strategic planning committee members to translate that broad vision to a functional plan. The board reviewed and approved recommendations throughout the process.

This plan is intended to establish the focus for Ballet Folklórico Ritmo Alegre for the coming three years. An annual review of progress and re-evaluation of priorities will be used to create an implementation plan for each of the following two years of the plan.

PLANNING PARTICIPANTS

Board: President, Rachel Ciddio; Members, Monserrat Alegria, Cheyanna Martinez, Candelaria Romero, Rosalba Siordia-Perez, and Santana Ciddio (Junior board member/dancer).

Strategic Planning volunteers: Suzie Meraz, and Maria Underwood.

Staff: Founder/Managing Director, Victoria Snow Mountain; Artistic Director, Luisa Zaragoza; Managing Director, Candace Turtle; Instructor, Sugey Jacqueline Reyes.

“Dance takes stress away. I forget other problems when I dance.”



**This strategic plan is dedicated to Victoria Snow Mountain,
con mucho coriño. Gracias for your legacy of Ritmo Alegre.**

photo by Donna Boutwell