



THE KENNEDY CENTER

Performing Arts Series

ARTS-BASED PROGRAMMING VIA SATELLITE/WEB

presented in cooperation with PRINCE WILLIAM NETWORK

Los Danzaq de Ayacucho

Tuesday, March 11, 2003

Grades 4 – 8

When viewing *Los Danzaq de Ayacucho* and participating in this guide's suggested activities, the following National Standards for Dance: 1, 2, 5 and Music: 8, 9 will be addressed.

Background Information

Los Danzaq de Ayacucho is a group of dancers and musicians from Peru who perform traditional dances from the Andean region.

The Inca Empire

The Inca people created and controlled the largest native empire in American history. Through conquering other peoples and governing their lands, the Inca Empire reached its greatest political and economic power around 1500 A.D., extending 2,500 miles along the western coast of South America (modern-day Ecuador, Peru, and Chile). At this time, millions of people were under Inca rule.

Inca culture was highly developed in the areas of art, music and dance, architecture, and religion, and incorporated the cultures of many different native peoples. This collective is called Andean culture and includes the

native cultures that extended along the Andes Mountain Range. Most Andean spiritual and artistic practices strongly connected to the forces of nature.

“New World” Incas “Old World” Europeans

After Columbus' 1492 voyage, “Old World” Europeans became aware that the “New World” contained vast lands and riches. Subsequently, Spanish and Portuguese explorers and conquerors (*conquistadors*) invaded the Americas. In 1532, Francisco Pizarro led a group of Spanish soldiers in the conquest of the Inca Empire.

In order to control the Andean people, Spanish conquerors imposed their own religion and language, and prohibited native art forms and religious practices. Inca priests headed a spiritual rebellion, promoting the ancient music and dance rituals

that connected Andean people to their heritage and to nature. The “Scissors Dance” survives from this Andean artistic resistance movement.

The Artists *Los Danzaq de Ayacucho*

The group's leader, Romulo Huamani, organized *Los Danzaq* to preserve and share traditional Andean folk culture. *Los Danzaq* means “The Scissors Dancers” in *Quechua*, a traditional Andean language. The group's four professional musicians and dancers are from the region of Ayacucho.

The Scissors Dance

The ancient art of masked scissors dancing predates the arrival of the Spaniards in the “New World.” Although this dance form is more than 500 years old, its

What to Look and Listen For

- The sound and rhythm of the “scissors.”
- How the dancers’ movements are in time with the music of the harp and violin.
- Dance moves that resemble hip-hop and break-dancing moves.
- How dancers use the tips of their sneakers to execute specific moves.
- How the difficulty of the moves increases as the dancers take turns competing.
- How the costumes, specifically the headpiece and the pants, enhance the dancers’ movements.
- Which dancer you think should win the competition and why.

acrobatic moves bear a striking resemblance to modern-day hip-hop and break dancing.

This dance is a one-on-one competition between dancers. It is a test of strength, endurance, agility, imagination, and artistry. Each dancer must maintain the scissors rhythm in his hands while creating increasingly difficult and acrobatic moves with his feet. Traditionally, this dance competition lasts about a week, with dancers stopping only to eat.

The Musical Instruments

In order to protect their traditions from the Spaniards, Peruvians disguised traditional dances by incorporating some Spanish elements. For this reason, you will see the dance accompanied by the harp and violin—European musical instruments.

One instrument native to the Andes still maintained in this dance is the “scissors.” Originally this instrument was made of long, smooth, flat stones, moved and struck near water to create natural sounds such as wind

and lightning. Long, pointed, metal blades that look like scissors have replaced the stones. Dancers hold a pair of “scissors” in each hand and move and strike them to the rhythm of the music to create high and low tones that connect the dancers to the sounds of nature.



The Costumes

The costumes are closely related to elements of nature. The movement of the trousers represents the wind blowing across a meadow. The shoes represent nature’s energy (modern-day scissors dancers wear sneakers for even greater energy). The movement of the ribbons on the headpiece represents the condor’s wings. In one hand the dancers hold a handkerchief containing earth and leaves.

About the Program

Los Danzaq de Ayacucho will describe how traditional dance competitions are staged in Peruvian villages, perform a traditional scissors dance competition, demonstrate and discuss individual moves from the dance, and talk about the history of scissors dancing.

Instructional Activity Keep the Beat!

Scissors dancers must keep one rhythm in their hands and a different rhythm in their feet. To experiment with maintaining two different rhythms at the same time, try this:

1. Clap and count 1-2-3-4 over and over, to get a steady beat in your hands.
2. Step and count 1-2-3-4 over and over, to get a steady beat in your feet.
3. Continue counting 1-2-3-4, but only step on beats 1 and 2. Your feet do not move on beats 3 and 4.
4. Continue counting 1-2-3-4, step on beats 1 and 2, and clap on beats 3 and 4.

Instructional Activities, Cont.

Once you master this, try something harder:

- Step on beats 1 and 4.
Clap on beats 2 and 3.
- Step on beats 1, 2, and 4.
Clap on beats 3 and 4.
- Create your own hand and foot patterns.



Presented as part of AmericArtes: The Kennedy Center Celebrates the Arts of Latin America

AmericArtes is presented with the generous support of Delta.

Resources

On the Web

kennedy-center.org/pwrtvandes.org
Rose Cano, North South ConeXions
artsnw.org/exhibithall/NorthSouth/Infopage.htm

Print

Mann, Elizabeth. *Machu Picchu*. New York: Mikaya Press 2000.

Moseley, Michael E. *The Incas and Their Ancestors*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2001.