



## DANZAS CEREMONIALES DE MEXICO

*Art Form:* Dance

*Style:* Aztec

*Culture:* Mexican

### *Technical Needs*

- ❑ three microphones w/stand
- ❑ amplifier
- ❑ two monitors
- ❑ 30' x 15' performance space

### *Meet the Artists*

The group **Nahui Ollin** was founded to embrace and perform the indigenous, ancient ceremonial dances of Mexico. **Nahui Ollin** focuses primarily on Aztec dances, also known as the Dance of the Concheros.

### *About the Performance*

The choreography of La Danza (the dance) is derived from the movement of the sun and the planets and guided by the sun. For the dancer, La Danza starts at the soles of the feet through which he or she connects mind and thoughts to heaven.

La Danza represents, through the body and its movements, all the elements in nature. The dance originated during the Aztec empire as an expression of gratitude for natural elements like fire and wind, shown to their gods and ancestors. The dance begins with a ceremony, offering fire to the four winds of the world. The burning of incense acts as a cleansing element for the ceremonial space, instruments, and dancers.

## Contextual Information

Experience the living traditions of Mesoamerica with **Nahui Ollin** as they present the pre-Hispanic Aztec traditions of central Mexico. Vibrant and active, the dancers' movements represent and honor the elements in nature, totem animals, deities and sacred actions. Both ritualistic and spiritual, the program is highlighted with authentic costumes and instruments.

This Aztec Dance is a real and tangible manifestation of the living tradition of Mesoamerica. La Danza represents the "Guerra Florida" or the floral war, which is the spiritual battle between good and evil, active and passive, ignorance and wisdom, light and darkness, and life and death.

The rhythm is marked by a large drum that sits in the center of the circle called the huehuetl. It symbolizes the heart of the dance. Accompanying the huehuetl is the concha guitar. Made from an armadillo shell, it serves as the symbol of the union between the Spanish and the indigenous people. Additionally, each dancer wears ankle belts filled with large seeds called ayoyotes. It is their sound which serves as the distinguishing sound of La Danza. The dancers perform several dances, each paying tribute to natural elements like fire; totem animals like the white eagle; spiritual deities like Quetzalcoatl; or sacred actions like the sowing of plant seeds.

## Vocabulary

**Aztecs:** a Pre-Columbian Mesoamerican people of central Mexico in the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries; they were noted for their advanced civilization particularly before Cortez invaded Mexico in 1519

**Ceremonial dance:** specific dances invented and performed by a group of people as a ritual to honor, give thanks and show joy to higher spiritual beings and each other

**Choreography:** literally "dance-writing," is the art of making the steps and patterns in which movement occurs and forms a dance

**Indigenous:** occurring or living naturally in a particular area or environment; native

**Mestizo:** a man of mixed European and American Indian ancestry

**Percussion:** the striking of one thing against another to produce a sound or rhythm

**Rhythm:** time divided up into parts; the result of energy acting on movement; a pattern of beats with accents

**Tenochtitlan:** the capital of the Aztec empire, it was built on raised islets in Lake Texcoco; the capital of Mexico, Mexico City is built of the ruins of Tenochtitlan