



Ailey/Fordham Dancers Explore Modern and Traditional Culture in Mexico

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Seven students in the Ailey/Fordham bachelor of fine arts program traveled to Mexico this past August for two weeks of performances and immersion in Mexican culture.

They made the journey as part of JUNTOS, a dance collective founded in 2006 by one of their own—rising senior Joanna Poz-Molesky from Berkeley, Calif.

"It's important that artists work together, in their own communities and in others," she said.

JUNTOS included participants from the Julliard School and SUNY Purchase. In all, 13 dancers took part in the experience.

"I wanted to bring these schools together because they're three of the best dance schools in New York," Poz-Molesky said. "I wanted them to have this shared experience, so that it might inspire them to work together and to open their eyes to what else dance can offer."

The trip included three days of study with Mexican choreographer Jaime Camarena as well as public performances and workshops at a retirement community and an orphanage. The collective made stops in Mexico City, San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato and Queretaro.

The dancers in JUNTOS, which means "together" in Spanish, collaborated on fundraising, designing and creating costumes, choreographing six original pieces and advertising the performances.

The meeting with Camarena was made possible through the assistance of Ailey/Fordham alumna Katherine Horrigan, (FCLC'02), Poz-Molesky said.

The collective included Ailey/Fordham dancers Kate Chamberlain, the group's New York coordinator; Kile Hotchkiss, Helen Hatch, Ninia Agustin, Marisa Martinm and Adam Salberg, the group's photographer and webmaster.

Hatch said she was grateful for the entire experience.

"I have learned so much about other cultures, people, places, personalities and ideas," she said. "It has been a huge learning experience, for which I will be forever grateful."

Poz-Molesky said the JUNTOS trip was inspired by a similar immersion experience she organized in 2005 for En Pointe Youth Dance Company, a troupe she founded while still in high school.

"A year and a half ago, for spring break, I took a friend to Mexico. That was the first time I'd gone there in three years, and people there asked me if I would dance again," she said.

Poz-Molesky said she would like to continue excursions with JUNTOS, particularly to Guatemala, where she has family and where she hopes to visit next March.

"People might ask why, when they need so many other things there, that we would go to dance," she said. "But I think art can offer community. With community, comes love from other people, and that's how people live."

Founded in 1841, Fordham is the Jesuit University of New York, offering exceptional education distinguished by the Jesuit tradition to approximately 14,700 students in its four undergraduate colleges and its six graduate and professional schools. It has residential campuses in the Bronx and Manhattan, a campus in Westchester, and the Louis Calder Center Biological Field Station in Armonk, N.Y.

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Students working with choreographer Jaime Camarena
Photo by Joanna Poz-Molesky