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## FOLK / WORLD DANCE DESCRIPTIONS

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### **Festival Ribbon (China)**

The Festival Ribbon Dance is a traditional Chinese folk dance in which the dancers use a long red ribbon to create different shapes and movements in time to the music. The Chinese Ribbon Dance is often performed at festivals, like Chinese New Year. At the end, the dancers imitate fireworks as they welcome the Dragon Dancers. In the breeze, the clothing appears to be swaying and dancing. Today, each performer holds a ribbon stick and in unison makes the ribbon dance to the beat of a Chinese song!

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### **Flight to the Moon - China**

Flight to the Moon is a dance story which incorporates movements of Chinese Ribbon Dancing and elements of the ancient Chinese myth, "The Lady in the Moon". In this version of the story, many of the dancers use their white ribbons to reflect the light of Moonbeams as they move through different elements in nature: the moonlight in the sky and clouds, through the trees, on the water, and in the mountains, but we don't want to give away the rest of the story. The words for our dance are Beauty and Hope.

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### **Tanko Bushi (Japan)**

Tanko Bushi (Japan) Tanko Bushi is a Japanese folk song. It is a song and dance about coal mining, and it refers to old Miike Mine in Kyūshū (Tagawa City). It is a common song used in Bon dances during the Bon Festival, and the dance that accompanies it depicts actions in mines such as digging, pushing a cart or hanging a lantern.

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### **The Krakowiak (Poland)**

Krakowiak (krah-KOH-vee-ahk) is one of the 5 National dances of Poland. It takes its name from the city of Krakow (Cracow) in Southern Poland. It is a lively couple dance which features the Chasse (sliding step), skips, stamps, and heel clicks. Although its roots are in peasant and village dance, the Krakowiak became a popular "ballroom" dance outside of Poland in Vienna, Paris, Russia, and later, even in Israel. These days, it is often danced on the Market Place in Krakow during

the spring to commemorate the victory over the Tartars. The choreography is based on a very traditional dance.

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### **Troika (Russia)**

The Troika is just one of several Russian dances that have shaped dance in Russia. It is a popular folk dance. The word 'troika' means 'three horses' in Russian, which makes clear both the trio of dancers and the copying of horse-like movements in the dancers' steps. Imagine a horse pawing at the ground, jumping from one foot to another, and moving very quickly from one spot to another. These are some of the attributes that make people think of horses when they see the Troika danced.

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### **La Bastringue (French Canadian)**

One of the few true folk dances, La Bastringue is still danced by "folk" in Quebec, Canada as part of a longer dance suite. Some say "la bastringue" means "the hoedown". Some say it means "the honkey-tonk". This style of dance is usually done in informal settings like a barn or a field, at the end of a long work week as the farmers throw down their shovels and hoes (hence "hoe-down") and dance together in their communities. Celebrating the hard work and good lives they lead.

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### **Virginia Reel & Clogging (USA, 1700s)**

The Virginia reel is a folk dance that dates from the 17th century. Though the reel may have its origins in Scottish country dance and the Highland reel, and perhaps have an even earlier influence from an Irish dance called the Rinnce Fada, it is generally considered to be an English country dance. Clog Dancing originated in the Appalachian mountains of America, and is a combination of European clogging and line dancing, and Native American footwork. You will see some Clogging at the end of this piece.

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### **Irish Ceidlagh Circle Dance (Ireland)**

Ceidlagh dancing is a social form in Ireland done in sets of eight similar to our square dances. Step dancing originated in Ireland with the millers and miners. They wore wooden soled shoes and created intricate and lively shuffles and footwork that developed over the years which also became one of the roots of tap dance and clogging.

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### **Tarantella (Italy)**

This lively dance is said to have its origins in a healing dance whereby the afflicted person shakes out the poison of a tarantula spider bite. Healing and shaking dances are quite common in many cultures for ridding the body of various illnesses. Today, the Tarantella is a dance performed at all festive occasions and enjoyed by everyone at Italian weddings and celebrations.

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### **Egyptian Cane Dance (Egypt, North Africa)**

This is traditionally a men's solo dance which uses the cane to mimic the farmer planting his seeds. People often use every day movements and props in their dances to tell stories about their own cultural traditions and past-times.

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### **Odunday (Nigeria, West Africa)**

Odunday is a harvest dance from Nigeria that imitates the planting cycle. Very often in folk traditions, everyday movement is incorporated into a traditional dance. When done in unison, a simple movement like digging the earth or planting a seed becomes a dance that brings a community together through the strength of dancing together. This song and dance was brought to the Vanaver Caravan through Carol Chappell, an extraordinary keeper of West African dance and song.

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### **Congolese Elephant Hunting Dance (Congo, Africa)**

This dance was originally done by the Iffi Tribe deep in the rainforests of the Congo, in Africa. The dancers search for an elephant, blending into the forests around them by imitating the brightly colored birds of the rainforests. They sing out vocables; wordless melodies that accompany music and rhythm.

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### **Lion Hunting Dance - Kenya**

Long ago, as a rite of passage, the Massai warriors of Kenya would each spend three months in the forest, learn how to herd cows, and hunt a predator, as a rite of passage. The warrior who hunted and caught a lion would become the chief of the tribe. Today, chiefs are chosen by a dance called the "adumu", or "jumping dance". The one who jumps the highest is chosen as chief. To the Massai, jumping is a valuable skill which represents strength, stamina, and determination. The dance you will see tells the story of the tribe dancing and protecting their village from the lion, together. As the lion approaches, each dancer jumps as high as they can to distract the lion until the lion is too tired to keep going. The song we sing in the beginning is a classic Kenyan children's song. The words of our dance are Strength and Community.

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**Children of the Calabash (Tanzania/Kenya, Africa) - *The Calabash Children*** is a well known traditional African Folktale from the base of Mount Kilimanjaro, in Tanzania (on the border of Kenya). It tells the story of an old woman who is given a gift by a magical mountain spirit. The themes in this story are about working together as a community, being kind to one another, and

being very careful with the words you use because--sometimes--the words you use have a powerful effect! *"Folk tales and myths serve as a means of handing down traditions and customs from one generation to the next in Africa. For several generations, stories from Africa have traditionally been passed down by word of mouth. Often, after a hard day's work, the adults would gather the children together by moonlight, around a village fire and tell stories. This is traditionally called Tales by Moonlight. Usually the stories are meant to prepare young people for life, and so taught a lesson or moral."* <http://anikefoundation.org/index.php/african-folktales/>  
<http://www.aaronshep.com/stories/024.html>

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### **“El Tapatio Jarabe” (Mexico)**

The Mexican Hat Dance is one of the most popular dance forms of Mexico. At one point, it was considered the National Folk Dance of Mexico. The Hat Dance was born about 100 years ago during the Mexican Revolution and was symbolic of the national unity. The Hat Dance was originally a form of dance in which the man tries to court the woman in a very fashionable way. In this performance, you will notice the dancers playing tricks on, and games with each other in friendship, fun, and celebration.

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### **Los Viejitos - Mexico**

The dance "Los Viejitos" or the "Dance of the Old People" honors our elders with a touch of humor. The dancers mimic the aches and pains of old age through falls, spasms and a stooped walk. They also boast a youthful vitality that they express with quick foot movements to the rhythm of the music. The Danza Los Viejitos is so deeply rooted in the villages of the Lake District of Michoacán, that most of the children of the region are initiated as dancers from an early age, following the example of their parents. That is why the relevance of dance exceeds folklore, because it has to do with a deep sense of identity. This dance is recognized internationally for its expression of color and symbolism. The words for this dance are Humor and Honor.

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### **Maculele (Afro-Brazilian Stick Dance)**

Maculelê is an Afro-Brazilian martial art dance performed with sticks or machetes to the rapid beat of drums. Maculelê originated in the sugar-cane plantations by African slaves who would practice their ancient martial art form to defend themselves and keep their traditions alive. They used the sugar canes to disguise this martial art as a game or dance. Today, Maculele is a popular dance performed around Brazil.

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### **Samba (Brazil)**

Samba is an Afro-Brazilian dance. The people of Angola and other regions of Africa brought much of their music and dance culture into Latin America. Samba music is very similar to many Angolan music genres. The Samba music rhythm has been danced in Brazil since its inception in the late 16th century. There is actually a set of dances, rather than a single dance, that define Samba dancing in Brazil. The style of Samba you will see performed at your school is choreographed for and performed at Carnival, a huge festival which takes place throughout the streets of Brazil.

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**Chinchinas Dance (Guatemala)** The Guatemalan Chinchinas dance was brought to The Vanaver Caravan by friend, Edwin Fion, who grew up in Guatemala. “Chinchinas” is another word for moraca. As you will see in this ancient folk dance, the dancers shake their chinchinas to the rhythm of the music. *Guatemala is known for its fascinating culture, which merges indigenous Mayan histories with colonial traditions. Dance is an important part of Guatemalan culture, and the folk dances that are still performed here today are a meaningful reflection of both Mayan and Spanish cultures.*

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Guatemala> / [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maya\\_civilization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maya_civilization)

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### **Bembalay - Jamaica**

Bembalay is a celebration dance from Jamaica. This dance is traditionally performed by the Kumina people during their holidays. Celebration dances are a big part of Jamaican culture and everyday life, and always have been. The Vanaver Caravan learned this dance from Barry Moncreef, a dancer from the National Ballet of Jamaican. The words for this dance are Celebration and Tradition.

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**Gujarati Stick Dance (India)** The Dandia-Ras or “Stick Dance” is the most popular dance of the Gujarat region in western India. It is known for its lively traditions of both folk and classical music. Because of its popularity, the “Stick Dance” is performed throughout the country. Men and women join the dance holding small polished sticks or “dandies.” As they whirl to the rhythm of the dance, they strike the sticks together, adding to the joyous atmosphere. *The Dandiya Raas dance originated as a part of the Garba dances, which were performed in Goddess Durga’s honor. The sticks (dandiya) of the dance represent the [swords](#) of Durga. This dance form is sometimes said to be the staging of a mock-fight between Goddess Durga and Mahishasura, the mighty demon-king. This dance is also nicknamed ‘The Sword Dance’. While Garba dances are traditionally danced by women, Dandiya Raas is performed afterwards by men and women, as a celebration of lively merriment.* Did you know that the greeting “Namaste” translates to “The Light in Me Sees the Light in You” in Hindi?

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dandiya\\_Raas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dandiya_Raas)

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**South African Gumboot Dance** Gumboot dance developed from traditional African roots to become part of urban South African working-class culture. Rural laborers came to work at the gold mines in South Africa where conditions were deplorable. They worked in darkness and in knee high

water and were given black Wellington boots, also known as gumboots, to keep them protected from the polluted waters. South Africans who worked in these mines were sometimes forbidden to talk and often could not see one another in the dark tunnels, so they created their own means of communication, using their gumboots! The communication consisted of stomping their boots, slapping their chests and shaking their chains, which produced a kind of Morse code of drumlike rhythms. This also allowed them a form of self expression in otherwise unpleasant working conditions. Eventually, the dance style left the mines and today, gumboot dancing is a highly popular dance form! Ultimately, this dance came from a difficult time in history, but it also demonstrates how the power of dance can unite people and keep traditions alive. /

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gumboot\\_dance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gumboot_dance)

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**Ke Au Nani (Hawaii, USA)** This is an ancient hula that describes the beautiful world. It is a dance of gratitude to nature. "In the sky, the birds are flying. On the earth, the flowers are blooming. In the mountains, the trees are growing. In the oceans, the fish are swimming. This chant I give to you about the beautiful world." In ancient Hawaii there was no written language. The most revered member of the King's court was the Hula dancer, who taught the people about the world and passed down stories and traditions through song and dance. Notice how at the end of the dance, the children keep their heads lifted as they bow. This is because, in Hawaii, bowing the head is a sign of shame, and the hula is a dance of which to be proud!

<http://www.hawaiihistory.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=ig.page&CategoryID=288>

<http://andyoucreations.com/blog/the-history-of-the-hula-dance/>

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### **Big Apple (USA, 1930-40s)**

The Big Apple is a circle dance of solo jazz moves created in the 1930's by African American dancers in the United States, and lives within the realm of Lindy Hop (Swing Dance). At the peak of its popularity, the dance-craze was featured in dance halls, where a "caller" would call out moves for a group of dancers to do on the spot. In 1939 The Big Apple was performed in a choreographed form in the Hollywood movie "Keep Punching", which captured the essence of the craze. In the 1980's the dance underwent a revival and is still very popular today within the Lindy Hop community.

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### **Charleston (USA, 1920-40s)**

The Charleston is an American dance form created in the 1920's and developed throughout the 1930's and 1940's. The Charleston can be danced solo and with a partner and is still widely danced within the worldwide Lindy Hop community today.

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### **Lindy Hop (USA, 1930-40s)**

Lindy Hop is an American partnered and solo dance that evolved in the 1930's and 1940's in Harlem, a neighborhood in New York City. It is danced to swing and jazz music and in its partnered form is improvised whereas the "Leader" (traditionally the male) creates movements on the spot, and the "Follow" (traditionally the female) follows the Leaders lead, making it a "social dance". Lindy Hop is characterized by its athletic nature and often in performance has "aerials": big tricks, lifts, and partnered flips. Lindy Hop can be high-energy, and also calm and smooth, which makes it an excellent dance for people of any age. Though it was created and mainly danced by African Americans at its inception, there were a collection of public dance halls in New York City which were open and welcoming to all ethnicities--a rarity at the time during a very segregated America. In the 1980's there was a resurgence of popularity of the dance, and now swing dance is very popular widely spread across the world.