

# Boda Mexicana: Study Guide



## ABOUT THE SHOW

*Boda Mexicana* was conceived by Arts-in-Education Director and Co-Founder, **Alberto Lopez Herrera** who was inspired by the traditions of his grandparents in Oaxaca and southern Puebla in Mexico. Our show tells the story of the union of two people through Mexican songs, dances, customs, rituals and ceremonies. It is re-told through the vision of our Artistic Director, **Grisel Pren Monje**.

## ABOUT CALPULLI MEXICAN DANCE COMPANY

Founded in 2003, Calpulli Mexican Dance Company celebrates and explores Mexican and Mexican-American culture via dance including live music. Based in New York City, Calpulli produces professional performances via its international touring company, designs arts-in-education programming, and leads free community outreach activities.

The word *calpulli*, (pronounced cawl-pool-lee) is an Aztec word that means "big house," "clan," and "family." We are a *calpulli* of dancers, musicians, and teachers that, as a non-profit organization, contributes to the city, country, and community that we love.

Learn more at [calpullidance.org](http://calpullidance.org)



## FACTS ABOUT MEXICO



Capital: Mexico City  
Official Language: Spanish  
Other Languages: 68 Indigenous Languages  
Two Coastlines: Pacific and Atlantic



## WEDDING CELEBRATIONS IN MEXICO

*Boda Mexicana*, or Mexican wedding is about the many traditions of unions seen across the regions and states of Mexico, and features one wedding in the style of the Yucatán. To celebrate the union of two people, friends, family and community members gather. The celebrations are joyous occasions and typically include a ceremony, dancing, music, gift-giving and plenty of delicious food. Many Mexican wedding customs and rituals still practiced today come from both Spanish and indigenous cultural traditions originating centuries ago.



[hilandohistorias.mx](http://hilandohistorias.mx)

# Boda Mexicana: 4 Important Elements



## 1 GIFT-GIVING

In the region of Guerrero, couples exchange bandanas, or **paliacates**. This tradition is similar to the exchanging of wedding rings in many other cultures. Giving gifts to a special someone is a way of showing love and commitment to that person. Although not as common now, dowries used to be exchanges of gifts between families to formalize a union. In our show, the native dances of **Los Viejitos**, or little old men, have the families meeting with their elders.



## 2 COMMUNITY COMES TOGETHER

Community members come together during **La Danza de las Bordadoras**, a traditional dance from Aguascalientes featuring embroidery hoops. Incorporating movement and dance, the dancers work together to make a wedding veil. This is a reference to the rich history of garment making in Mexico.



## 3 PLAYFUL WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

In the Yucatán, a **bomba** refers to a short poem or witty compliment which rhymes. In the traditional jarana dance, the music pauses and then bombas are exchanged between dancing partners. This tradition can be traced back to the colonial era when indigenous Maya traditions and Spanish poetry fused together. Through bombas, the rich heritage of the Yucatán is honored and passed down to future generations.

## 4 FIESTAS!

Family celebrations or **fiestas**, give the community the opportunity to express their joy by dressing up in bright, colorful clothing and dancing together. Most unions are marked by fiestas. One of the biggest fiestas is in Sinaloa, called **Carnaval de Mazatlán**. This carnival features fireworks, parades, dancing, poetry contests and shows featuring incredible artists of the region. This celebration was first staged in 1898.





## DO YOU KNOW...



In Veracruz, Mexico there is a mashup of musical styles called **son jarocho**, which comes from African, indigenous, and Spanish traditions. This tradition is the fusion of many cultures and people coming together, and has been part of the cultural heritage of Veracruz for hundreds of years. In our show, you will see dancers perform “La Bamba” to celebrate the union of two people.

When “La Bamba,” already a fusion of musical styles, was carried over to the United States by Mexican immigrants, it evolved and fused again! This time with 1950's rock & roll. Ritchie Valens, a Mexican American teenager, released his version of the song in 1958. By combining the popular sounds of the time with the Mexican folk music Valens grew up listening to, he created a cultural phenomenon.

**Play the song and listen for yourself!**



## THE MAYPOLE TRADITION



The Maypole Dance is a ceremonial folk dance where participants dance around a pole decorated with garlands and flowers, weaving ribbons into complex patterns. This dance is an ancient tradition practiced in many cultures all over the world, commonly used to celebrate springtime. In Germany, the maypole is a decorated tree trunk raised and celebrated by entire communities on the eve of May 1st. In parts of England, children decorate their own hand-held maypole sticks. In India, the pinal kolattam is danced below suspended ribbons and dancers rhythmically strike two sticks together to celebrate the harvest season.

In Spain, the maypole tradition is called el baile del cordón. From Spanish and other European immigrants, it was brought to Mexico, where it is called **el baile de las cintas**. In the Yucatán, the maypole is danced at joyful community celebrations called **vaquerías**. Dancers alternate their steps and work together to weave ribbons into a beautiful braid. Next, their steps are repeated and reversed, unbraiding the ribbons all in time with the music. El baile de las cintas signifies unity within the community and the excitement of the spring and summer seasons to come.





## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What did you like best about the show and why?
2. Was the program different from what you expected? How?
3. Did you see any of the **4 Important Elements** during the show? When did you see them?
4. Think about the rhythms and music that you enjoyed during the show. How are they similar or different to the music you are familiar with? How does it compare to the music you listen to with your family and friends?
5. How are these traditions similar to your ancestors' traditions? Are there any similarities between these and your own family traditions?

## POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

Find the connection between these family traditions in Mexico and your own family traditions. Interview your parents and grandparents and ask how your family celebrates important milestones and family events.

“La Bamba” has become a unifying song for Mexican people living in the United States. What song would you pick to represent your friends, family, or neighborhood?



Questions? Feedback?  
Contact [info@calpullidance.org](mailto:info@calpullidance.org)