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# Fact Sheet

## FOLK DANCE ENSEMBLE

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Brigham Young University

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- The BYU American Folk Dance Ensemble (AFDE) has traveled to folk festivals around the world since 1964. Each performance is a rich cultural expression, combining traditional music, costuming and choreography to showcase the heritage of the United States.
- The troupe is one of the most sought-after ensembles to represent American folk culture at international folk festivals.
- This summer the ensemble will travel to Europe to perform in three international folk festivals;
  - The International Folklore Festival Karlovac, Croatia
  - 'Ciudad de Burgos' International Folkloric Festival Burgos, Spain
  - Extremadura Festival Badajoz, Spain
- Since 1964 the ensemble has visited 29 festivals in 31 countries. AFDE has been invited back to the Mondial des Cultures de Drummondville in Quebec, Canada more than any other group in the festival's history. Many prestigious festivals have invited the ensemble back at least five times, including the International Folklore Festival in Haifa, Israel, the Festival de Confolens in France, and the Billingham International Folklore Festival in England.
- AFDE features dancers, musicians, and technicians who combine to form one of the most unique groups of performing artists in the United States. The performers, all students of Brigham Young University, study a variety of academic disciplines.
- *Mountain Strings*, AFDE's folk music ensemble under the direction of Mark Geslison, provides the magic of live music for the group. Its traditional approach to music includes the banjo, the fiddle, and other acoustical instruments. Their American musical styles range from American New England and Appalachian Folk to Bluegrass, Cajun, Jazz, Blues and Country. The distinct sounds of spoons and bones add percussive variety.
- The ensemble performed at the Opening Ceremonies and at the Olympic Medals Plaza for the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. In 1988, the group also performed in the Seoul, Korea Summer Olympic Games.
- Founded in 1956, BYU's folk dance program is currently the largest and most versatile program of its kind in the United States. The group has celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Members of the ensemble are chosen by audition from among the most skilled performers in a program involving more than 200 students.
- The Folk Dance Ensemble originates in the Department of Dance of the College of Fine Arts and Communications at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. BYU is one of the nation's largest private universities with an enrollment of approximately 30,000 students from throughout the United States and 110 foreign countries.

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