

BYU



AMERICAN FOLK DANCE ENSEMBLE



The Group

Combining rich American traditions with exquisite costuming, Brigham Young University's American Folk Dance Ensemble (AFDE) showcases the diverse folk dance heritage of the United States and represents American culture at festivals and events around the world. The ensemble offers one of the broadest spectrums of American folk dance performed by a single group of its kind. Its extensive repertoire highlights dance and music from regions across the country. Members of AFDE are selected by audition from among BYU's most skilled performers, drawing from a pool of more than 200 talented students.

Honors

- In 2024, performed at the Vallarta Azteca International Folk Dance Festival in Mexico and toured the Southern United States with performances and community workshops
- In 2023, participated in the CIOFF International Folk Festivals in Czechia and the Danube Carnival Festival in Hungary
- Invited back at least five times to prestigious festivals including the International Folklore Festival in Haifa, Israel; the Festival de Confolens in France; the Bingham International Folklore Festival in England; and the Hello! Schoten Festival in Belgium.

1971-2025

113

TOURS



2,373+

PERFORMANCES



54+

COUNTRIES VISITED



1.23M+

AUDIENCE MEMBERS



500+

OUTREACHES



Festival Repertoire

BYU's folk dance program presents *Journey*, a show that shares strength from the past and present through traditional American music and dance. During the show, audiences are immersed in the heritage of the United States as dancers showcase regional styles through energetic footwork, lively rhythms, live music, and colorful costumes. Featuring traditions such as American Clogging, Square Dance, Lindy Hop, Swing, and other folk forms.

Recent Tours

- February 2026: California
- July 2025: Italy
- May 2024: North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, Florida



Outreach Efforts

BYU American Folk Dance Ensemble participates in various outreach activities during their tours, including:

- School presentations that share traditional cultural dance and music through engaging performances.
- Interactive lecture-demonstrations where dancers and musicians teach audiences about cultural traditions and invite participation.
- Combined performance and educational experiences that blend entertainment with cultural learning.
- Community outreach such as visits with special needs groups and opportunities for students to interact directly with dancers and musicians.
- Cultural exchange through showcasing international dance traditions, such as Indian dance, to broaden understanding and appreciation among audiences.

“The dancers and the musicians were absolutely magnificent. Everyone in my office who was lucky enough to attend the performance has been talking today about the energy, enthusiasm, and sheer talent that was on stage last night. The overwhelming feeling here is that it’s extremely unfortunate that there could only be one performance!” Courtney Austrian, U.S. State Department, Kiev, Ukraine



234K+

VIEWS



1.31K+

SUBSCRIBERS



Director Jeanette Geslison

- Master of Fine Arts in Dance, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (specialized in Hungarian dance)
- From Odense, Denmark; trained in classical ballet, jazz, and theatre
- Former student performer with BYU American Folk Dance Ensemble (1987–1991, 1993–1994)
- Rehearsal specialist with IFDE since 1995; Artistic Director since 2011
- Expanded AFDE’s repertoire through her diverse background in dance and cultural performance
- Serves as committee chair for membership services in CIOFF-USA, supporting the safeguarding of traditional folk arts and international festivals



Scan to stay in touch with
BYU American Folk Dance

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