



Ballet Nepantla Integrated Curriculum Guide

Ballet Nepantla presents *Mística*, a ballet that honors ancestors by celebrating the creative and spiritual energies of Indigenous, Afro, and Hispanic roots. Inspired by Día de Muertos, the work transports audiences into the afterlife through Ballet Nepantla's distinctive fusion of folklórico and contemporary dance.

Below is the run of show for *Mística*, followed by standards connections and classroom applications aligned to North Carolina arts and world language learning. This guide is designed to help teachers connect the performance to cultural study, movement exploration, and interdisciplinary instruction.

Ofrenda

Choreography by Andrea Guajardo

A village gathers to establish an atmosphere of solemnity, generosity, and reverence for loved ones who have passed.

Chinantla

Choreography by Andrea Guajardo & Martín Rodríguez

This fusion piece pays tribute to Chinantla, a rural village in Puebla that lost a disproportionate number of immigrants to COVID-19, including many who had been living in Brooklyn, New York. Ballet Nepantla honors the community and stands in solidarity with its families. A soloist represents the purity and beauty of life after death.

Dios Nunca Muere (A mis Padres)

Choreography by Argelia Arreola

We take a moment to remember our lost loved ones who enlightened our lives. We learn to accept the process of their transition while honoring, in life, the lessons and love they left behind.

La Bruja

Choreography by Anthony Bocconi & Andrea Guajardo

We go on a journey through Nepantla, as our protagonist falls under a spell set by our mystical Venado. He visits a long-lost love, La Bruja, whose soul continues to haunt his every dream.

Diablos (Spirit Guides)

Choreography by Argelia Arreola

This work blends African, Spanish, and Indigenous influences. Led by the Tenango and his wife, the Minga, the Diablos call to the souls of their loved ones so they may reunite through dance. They are rebellious guardians of the dead and represent Afro-Mexican communities from the coasts of Guerrero and Oaxaca.

La Martiniana

Choreography by Andrea Guajardo

A woman bound to the physical world must learn to accept and embrace her departure. Only then will her soul be set free.

Las Pascolas y El Venado

Choreography by Martin Rodríguez

The Danza de Pascolas is a ceremonial dance from Sonora, Mexico, traditionally performed by a father and son. Paired with the Danza del Venado (Deer Dance), the work positions Venado as a symbol of goodness, life, and spiritual balance, while the Pascolas represent irreverent forces that attempt to lead Venado astray. As the dancers enter a trance-like dream world, they receive the gifts of dance and transformation.

Venado Mictlán

Choreography by Andrea Guajardo

We follow Venado in its transition into the afterlife, as it transforms in body, spirit, and dance.

INTERMISSION

Angelitos

Choreography by Martín Rodríguez

The little angels, or cherubs, are innocent souls from the afterlife that spend eternity without worry or responsibility. They dance around, demonstrating their eternal happiness and joy. Día de los Angelitos takes place the day before the big events of Día de Muertos because it's said the spirits of the children are so eager to come back to the land of the living that they run ahead of the adults, who arrive a night later.

Catrina Ball

Choreography by Andrea Guajardo

After the little angels arrive, the Catrinas and their companions enter. A mischievous and flirtatious Catrina wanders the afterlife in search of love, luring admirers through spellbinding charm and theatrical trickery.

Danza De Los Viejitos (Dance of The Little Old Ones)

Choreography by Martín Rodríguez

From Michoacán, México, Danza De Los Viejitos is a ceremonial dance performed by the Old Gods. They dance with great agility and strength towards the four cardinal points to bring good harvest and a prosperous life to their people.

Palo Congo

Choreography by Argelia Arreola & Andrea Guajardo

Palo came to Cuba from Congo, Africa (Bantu religion). It is a bridge between the unborn, the living, and the dead - the dance represents spiritual communication with our ancestors.

El Aguanieve

Choreography by Andrea Guajardo | **Dancers** Anthony Bocconi & Aoi Ohno

El Zapateado Veracruzano

Choreography by Martín Rodríguez

This dance is part of the son jarocho that originates from Veracruz, Mexico. It is performed during different celebrations or fandangos, where everyone joins and demonstrates their skilled footwork on raised platforms, and women use their skirts to imitate the ocean waves.

Standards and Classroom Connections

This section connects *Mística* to dance, visual arts, and world language learning in ways that support classroom instruction. The revised language below reflects the four artistic practices in North Carolina’s current arts framework—Connect, Create, Present, and Respond—and helps teachers translate the performance experience into meaningful student learning.

Dance Standards Connections

Connect (CN.1): Students relate the themes, movement choices, and cultural contexts in *Mística* to traditions such as Día de Muertos and to the Indigenous, Afro-Latin, and Hispanic influences represented in the work. **Create (CR.1):** Students create original movement phrases inspired by memory, ancestry, ritual, or transformation. **Present (PR.1):** Students perform movement studies that draw from traditional and contemporary forms with attention to expression, rhythm, and staging. **Respond (RE.1):** Students analyze choreography, symbolism, and performance choices using dance-specific vocabulary. These connections align with North Carolina’s 2024 arts framework, which is organized around Connect, Create, Present, and Respond.

Visual Arts Connection

Students can extend their experience of *Mística* through visual symbolism and design. Invite students to create self-portraits, masks, altar-inspired collages, or color studies that reflect themes from the production, such as remembrance, family, transformation, or spiritual journey. Teachers may also ask students to compare the use of costume, gesture, color, and imagery in the performance with the visual traditions associated with Día de Muertos.

Pre- and Post-Performance Applications

- Before the performance: Build background knowledge by discussing Día de Muertos, the role of ancestors in cultural memory, and how dance can communicate story, ritual, and identity.
- During or immediately after the performance: Ask students to notice recurring movement qualities, symbolic characters, musical shifts, and staging choices that shape meaning.
- After the performance: Guide students in reflective writing, movement response, or small-group discussion focused on how the performance communicated memory, grief, celebration, and connection.

Spanish and World Language Connection

For Spanish or other world language classrooms, *Mística* offers opportunities to strengthen interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational communication while building intercultural competence. Students can interpret familiar words and cultural references related to family, celebration, remembrance, costume, and dance; discuss how traditions express community values; and present short oral or written reflections about the performance in the target language. These applications support North Carolina's 2024 World Languages framework, which emphasizes communication, intercultural competence, and interdisciplinary connections.

Practical Classroom Applications

- Movement study: Students create a short phrase that represents a memory, ancestor, or symbolic guide using a beginning, middle, and end.
- Writing connection: Students write a reflection on how dance can honor personal or collective history.
- Discussion prompt: Students compare how different pieces in the performance communicate joy, grief, ritual, or transformation.

- Cross-curricular connection: Teachers connect the performance to social studies, literature, or visual arts through themes of tradition, migration, identity, and remembrance.

Classroom Activity: Solo Self-Portrait in Movement and Image

Objective: Students create a brief solo study and a visual self-portrait that express identity, memory, or cultural connection.

Directions:

1. Invite students to brainstorm important images, colors, objects, family traditions, or memories that shape who they are.
2. Have them create a visual self-portrait using drawing, collage, or mixed media.
3. Ask students to choreograph a short solo that reflects one or more ideas from the portrait through gesture, shape, rhythm, and pathway.
4. Encourage students to organize the solo with a clear beginning, middle, and end.

Reflection: After sharing, students describe how their movement and visual choices communicate meaning and how their work connects to themes explored in *Mística*.