

The folkloric traditions of Chile bring vivid color to Miami Beach

By **Orlando Taquechel**

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(Photo courtesy of FUNDarte)

Chile's Antumapu Folkloric Ballet will come to Miami for the first time in its more than 50-year history, presenting a program of emblematic folk dances at the Miami Beach Bandshell.

The company, dedicated exclusively to traditional folk dances of its country, performs at 8 p.m. Friday, Oct. 3 in a free performance.

Founded in 1971 at the University of Chile by Oscar Ramírez, who has been its artistic director since its inception, the presentation is a collaboration between the company, FUNDarte, and the Rhythm Foundation as part of the "Away from Home" series at the Miami-Dade County Auditorium. The performance is also produced with support from the Consulate of Chile in Miami.



One dance depicts a competition between the guaso (a Chilean countryman and skilled horseman) and a very characteristic figure known as the gañán, the farm worker. (Photo courtesy of FUNDATE)

“The show we are bringing to Miami is a synthesis that I call ‘Chiliche (People of Chile),’ where we take a journey from north to south, showcasing the geography of our country,” said Ramírez.

Ramírez, the company’s choreographer, said that his “Chilean peasant background” afforded him firsthand experiences with the folklore, specifically that of central Chile.

Growing up in the Colchagua region in the central part of the country — “a region characterized by its rural culture, a productive world where people are primarily engaged in livestock farming and working the land” — it was those experiences that he has incorporated into what he called his “choreographic vision.”

“Chiliche (People of Chile)” originally premiered in 1982. With this work, he seeks to share a message of unity, “because no matter what region you come from, you are Chilean,” said Ramírez, whose path to choreography was not through formal dance training, but rather through folklore.

He explained that at the University of Chile in the school’s Institute of Physical Education, there is a specialization in folklore, which includes musical and artistic groups. Ramírez himself graduated with a degree from the university in Physical Education.



"It's essential that the audience doesn't base their appreciation solely on the beauty of the costumes or the lighting effects," says Oscar Ramírez, founder, choreographer, and artistic director of the Antumapu Folkloric Ballet of the University of Chile. (Photo by Lucas Ramírez)

Antumapu, which means "land of the sun," is one of these artistic groups, comprising students from various majors at the university, including dance.

Ramírez said that one of the most important aspects of his choreography is to present the culture of his country.

"I use the foundation and the roots of the tradition without stylizing it. Rather, I try to be as careful as possible in my interpretation of the folk culture, so as not to distort it and to stay true to that essence which is fundamental for us. I don't want it to be affected by my own creative interpretations, but rather that the choreography remains very closely aligned with what the folklore itself offers as material."

The show, which features 16 dancers, draws on a range of cultural traditions, including *sikura*, a dance from northern Chile; *huayno*, the characteristic rhythm of many dances from the northern Chilean Andes; *kai-kai*, a Rapa Nui rope game traditionally made from horsehair; and *rucatún*, a Mapuche ceremony that celebrates the construction of a new home.



Founded in 1971 and based at the University of Chile, the ensemble is dedicated to preserving and sharing the rich cultural heritage of Chile's diverse regions. *(Photo courtesy of FUNDarte)*

While Ramírez acknowledged that the costumes and staging are full of color and wonderful effects, he hopes that South Florida audiences dive deep into “Chiliche.”

“For us,” he stated with genuine anticipation, “it is essential that the audience doesn’t focus solely on the beauty of the costumes or the lighting effects, but that they truly grasp, through the expression of each region we represent, the true essence of what it means to be Chilean.”

If you go:

WHAT: “Chiliche, People of Chile” by the Antumapu Folk Ballet of the University of Chile

WHEN: 8 p.m., Friday, Oct. 3.

WHERE: Miami Beach Bandshell, 7275 Collins Ave., Miami Beach

COST: Free (RSVP required) at www.eventbrite.com/o/rhythm-foundation

INFORMATION: fundarte.us

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