

IDAC Performer dances in her Peruvian culture's traditional dance and regalia.

Here at International Dance Arts Collective, we've jumped into 2025 with an exciting new project! Our Junior Collective class (comprised of students in 5th-8th grade) delved into Peruvian dance with a Valicha workshop by Efrain Villalobos, a former BYU Living Legends and International Folk Dance Ensemble dancer and choreographer. Villalobos was delighted to share his culture through dance with us, and we were delighted to learn from him. "It has been a privilege to come to Northern California to teach these amazing youth a traditional dance from my culture. These dancers were eager to learn and very respectful of this dance. It has been a joy working with them." Villalobos began the workshop by teaching the students about the cultural significance of Valicha, which is a "love story" and "dance of celebration". The dancers were engaged in learning about Andean culture. This piece is exceptionally special to our team because one of our dancers, Luciana, is Peruvian, and her family has been instrumental in helping promote and encourage this project and in finding authentic traditional costuming to be worn when this piece is debuted.

Luciana's father shared, "It's tremendously satisfying to see our American-born child learning about diverse international cultures and especially from Peru with the 'Valicha' dance; it reinforces her Peruvian ancestry even more." Luciana's mother expressed, "When we left Peru and moved to the USA, it was like a part of us was left behind. As our daughter learns all these different international dances at IDAC, and is now being taught Valicha, it is like that part of us is coming back to us. Seeing all these kids learning about our culture through this dance is a beautiful overflowing of emotions..." As a dance educator and director, it made my heart leap to see her eyes swell with tears of happiness as the dancers practiced this dance that is such a significant representation of the beauty of her home and culture. It was equally remarkable to see the rest of the team gratefully and enthusiastically learning about their teammates' culture through dance. Truly, we had many #peacethroughdance moments.

Following the Valicha debut.

IDAC was so pleased to receive the beautifully hand-made Valicha costumes from Peru just days before they were debuted on stage. One of our dancers, Italia Bucio, reported, "When we had the costumes, it was so much better. With all of it together, it was memorable. The costumes were hard to put on, but so worth it when it all came together." The entire Valicha ensemble of music, costumes, and movement was a magical and meaningful experience for audience members as well. Many reported that they had never seen dances from Peru and were so happy to have that opportunity.

Our Peruvian dancer, Luciana Pacheco, had an especially meaningful experience learning and performing in Valicha. She shared, “I was very happy at the thought of doing a dance from my own culture with my dance family...Don’t even get me started on the costumes! Both of my parents and even my Grandma from Peru were involved, and they all did a great job of coordinating the logistics to make sure all the Valicha outfits were acquired from local Peruvian hands, and they were nicely packed and brought from Peru.”

Our youth dancers have already performed in these costumes at three events, namely, the Rocklin Civic Celebration, the Rocklin Heritage Street Fair, and the 5th Annual IDAC Family Barn Dance and Fundraiser. They look forward to performing Valicha again in our 5th annual Festivals of Light performance in November. As this Valicha dance and its costumes remain in our repertoire for decades, we will be reminded of the generosity of donors and their dedication to the preservation of folk dance.

