

Nelda Drury Honored on her 100th Birthday

by Kathy Molga

In April of 2018, Nelda Guerrero Drury, one of the pioneers of Mexican folk dance in the United States, will be 100 years old. To celebrate her 100th birthday, the San Antonio Folk Dance Festival (SAFDF) will hold a weeklong series of dance workshops and folk events.

Nelda Drury founded the San Antonio Folk Dance Festival in 1958. Nelda is best known for introducing Mexican folk dance to the United States.



Nelda's dance performing and teaching career spanned over 50 years and many continents. Under her directorship of the International Dance Performance Group at San Antonio College, Nelda's dance company performed around the country at camps from Stockton Camp to Maine Camp. Over 40

dancers each year worked meticulously to design and create their costumes according to the precise stylistic details of each country highlighted in their repertoire.

According to Betty Casey, Nelda "held workshops and was a featured dance teacher at festivals in Canada, Japan, Mexico and Hawaii and at the American University of Beirut, Lebanon." With her dance company, the San Antonio Folk Dancers, Nelda taught and performed throughout the world. In 1976 her company toured Japan, culminating in an invitation to perform a Mexican dance for Prince Mikasa. This was a high honor awarded to them, since Nelda's workshops were attended by the thousands throughout Japan. Her contributions to folk dancing included dances such as Santa Rita, Evangelina, and Jarabe Tapatio (often considered the national dance of Mexico).

This year, San Antonio will hold its **60th Annual Festival on March 15-18, 2018** featuring Jaap Leegwater (Bulgarian Dances), Sonia Dion and Crisian Florescu (Romanian Dances) and Campbell Miller (Social and American Vintage Dances). This

year, in honor of Nelda's 100th birthday, the Festival will span nine days of events, culminating in a long weekend (Thursday through Sunday) of dance workshops, parties and a concert featuring the performances of Miroslav "Bata" Marčetić's Academy of Serbian Folk Dancers from Toronto, Canada. In addition, the Ballet Folkorico of South Texas will give a command performance in Nelda's honor. This year's SAFDF will be the largest, most well-attended San Antonio Folk Dance Festival, with dance performances and master teachers from various nations in attendance. There will also be many opportunities for gathering together to talk with Nelda and share memories.

For more information about the San Antonio Folk Dance Festival, contact Lissa Bengtson at 210.867.0692 or email Lbengtson@ollusa.edu. For schedules and registration information, go to www.SAFDF.org. SAFDF information can also be found on Facebook.

