

# In the Footsteps of Tradition

MARLENE PEÑA-MARIN SHARES HER LOVE OF DANCE, CULTURE AND HER COMMUNITY

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Along the animated streets of downtown

Santa Ana, a woman wearing a floral, ruffled skirt with a matching blouse, a white ribbon cinched at the waist and a tocado tucked in her hair drew compliments from people. Every *clack* of her white, clog-like heels felt like a pulse, keeping the urban district thrumming with life.

Her name is Marlene Peña-Marín, and she is one of many passionate dreamers with a desire to showcase the cultural influences of folklórico—Mexican folk dance.

As the Director of the International Dance Conservatory at Orange County School of the Arts (OCSA) and Artistic Director at Relámpago Del Cielo Grupo Folklórico, Peña-Marín embraces both the role of a dancer and an instructor. She didn't always stay en route with dance; she majored in business and worked in the IBM computer industry for many years.

In spite of that, Peña-Marín continued to teach dance classes at her mother's studio during the weekends before OCSA

contacted her, shifting her path back to where she intended it to be.

"I always tell the students, 'You never know,'" said Peña-Marín. "If you're constantly staying in that area that you love...if your heart's in the right place, I think it works."

With her students, she ensures that their posturing, footwork and costuming are all historically accurate. Peña-Marín expressed that creativity with folklórico is always welcome because art evolves, but students should understand the foundation and where it came from.

And while Peña-Marín guides her students to different parts of the world through the history of folklórico, she remains rooted to Santa Ana, a city that supported her in many ways.

"I would tell the city, 'I love you and I want you to continue to support not just the art community, but the community in general through health [and] education,'" said Peña-Marín. "I love... Santa Ana in particular because it is such a diverse community."



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Photoshoot Location:  
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