

World culture

offered by drum and dance group

By Victoria Carlborg
COMMUNITY NEWS WRITER

SAN MARCOS — Just watching the Palomar World Drum and Dance Ensemble at Palomar College wasn't enough for Rosalva Nunes Silva. The Brazilian woman decided that simply enjoying the performance while she was on vacation wasn't enough for her.

The drummers and dancers so impressed her that she went home, packed up, and moved to San Marcos.

Silva is now working on her associate of arts degree in dance at the college and is a performer in the group.

The Palomar World Drum and Dance Ensemble is a class that teaches folkloric dance traditions of Brazil and Cuba. Students may attend the class as beginners and learn rhythms alongside more experienced drummers and dancers. When students are ready, they may audition to perform with the ensemble at the college and elsewhere.

Silva said she knew many of the Brazilian rhythms that associate professor of dance and founder of the ensemble Patriceann Mead teaches in the class. After all, those rhythms are from the state of Bahia, where Nunes was born.

"The Cuban and African dances were new to me," said Silva, who also studied classical dance in Brazil. "It added to my dance vocabulary."

The class includes traditional and ritual dances from western Africa; samba and capoeira (a form of martial arts dance) from Brazil; Franco-Haitian dances; and from Cuba, casino (which is similar to salsa), cha cha and rumba.

To accompany the dancers, ensemble co-director Mark Lamson teaches students to play the Afro-Cuban tumbadora, the conga drum. He also teaches the bombo, companas and shekere.

In the Brazilian tradition, Lamson teaches the



Patriceann Mead, founder of the Palomar College World Drum and Dance Ensemble, danced with the group.

surdo, repinique, tamborim, agogo, ganza and caixa drums. And those are just some of the percussion instruments students will become familiar with in the class, he said.

The ensemble and class rehearses on Fridays with an option to join Mead's Survey of World Dance class Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. In that class, ethnic dances are introduced from Mexico, Japan, Bali, the Middle East, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and even Ireland.

Mead's objective is to "create an environment that gets the students to be right there in the moment of the music and the dance," she said. "I hope to create a place where students can be accepted and find a place in the world of folkloric dance."

Mead said not all students feel that they fit in-



Mark Lamson (left), co-director of the Palomar College World Drum and Dance Ensemble, accompanied a performance at the college's Howard Brubeck Theatre. *Courtesy photos*

"I am trying to create an environment where everyone is participating, where there are no observers."

PATRICEANN MEAD, Palomar College dance instructor

to Western forms of classical dance like ballet. The world dance class teaches what may be a new way of movement and thought for North County residents.

"In those cultures, everyone dances — children dance, older people dance, married people dance," Mead said. "It includes everyone."

What Lamson and Mead also hope to accomplish with their drum and dance group is to recreate the idea of community as seen in the more traditional societies they study.

"What's lost in our culture is that we don't have a community form of dance, where there aren't performers," Mead said. "I am trying to create an environment where everyone is participating, where there are no observers."

Lamson agreed. "Our culture yearns for that, for a communal music participation."

Lydia T. Contreras, who has taken the class since 1998, said she has a passion for the African oral traditions she has studied with Lamson and Mead.

"With these dances, you hear the rhythm. Once you know the steps, your body just goes with it," Contreras said. "It fills a gap in my life."

Just as it does for Silva, who has now been settled in San Marcos for about a year.

"It's something I can relate to in my country, something that I do at home," Silva said. "Now, I am not so homesick."

The Palomar World Drum and Dance Ensemble class begins Aug. 31.

The class counts as 1 1/2 units of college credit. The cost is \$11 per unit and the class is open to the public. For more information, call Mead at (760) 744-1150, Ext. 2969.

Lamson also coordinates a drumming and dancing class for youth ages 8 to 21 for the non-profit group Soul Beat. For more information, call (619) 231-3146.

Do you have an idea for a class story? Contact Victoria Carlborg at (760) 476-8214 or victoria.carlborg@uniontrib.com.