personality

# TYLLER IS TERRIFIC

By Allan Leopold
Photographs by Hy Chase

When I first walked into Jorge Tyller's apartment at the Montecito, I was amazed at how tiny he is, for his stature as a dancer in the fabulous Folklorico Mexicano makes him look at least ten feet tall onstage. Born February 17, 1949, in Sonora Hermosillo, Mexico, he is a bronze, wiry 24-year-old who speaks in halting English.

Isabel, his mother, died when he was six and he carries her picture with him wherever he goes. His father, Daniel, taught him how to dance and was his faithful mentor until his death five years ago. As a child, he would sneak out of school at night and furtively creep up to where the Sonora Indians were holding their traditional folk death ceremony: the Deer Dance. He watched, his heart throbbing wildly in his throat, and memorized through the flickering fire every step and rhythmic beat of the fascinating ritual. At the age of thirteen, he began to dance it with Amalia Hernandez' *Ballet Folklorico of Mexico City* and ever since he has stopped the show with his electrifying performance all over the world. Paris rose to its collective feet and gave him a standing ovation. Nureyev was in the audience and rushed backstage in admiration. Thus began a close personal friendship that has lasted through the years and is going stronger than ever now. Jorge tells it: "When he come back, I spoke no Russian. He speak no Spanish. But we talk with our hands and our hearts and we understand. We become good friends. We go everywhere together. We go to the London Museum. We go to other ballets. We dance at the Palace of Fine Arts in Mexico City together. Seven months ago I tell Rudolph I dance the Russian ballet, *The Little Box*, from the Moiseyev Company version. He say: 'Oh yes? Show me how you do it.' And I did. He say: 'It's good!' And, for fun, we dance it together in his suite in London. I went to Russia in 1967 and danced there for five months in Moscow and Leningrad. Then I go to Prague, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Australia and New Zealand."

"How do you keep from burning your hands and feet in the fire in *Sacrifice of an Aztec Princess?*" I asked.

Jorge smiled.

"The audience think no fire. I think no fire. So we both pretend it no hurt."

That may very well be but Jorge still showed me a badly burned wrist caused by the fire's heat on his heavy turquoise Indian bracelet.

"How did you happen to leave the Ballet Folklorico?"

"I no leave. My grandmother, she die. I am alone. I feel I must rest for a little while. I have dance for eleven years with no stop. I go to think. To forget everything. I go to Acapulco. There the man from Ema Pulio's Folklorico Mexicano of Acapulco find me. He come to my hotel. He beg me to dance for Ema. Ema, she friend of mine and she ask me to dance with her. I no leave Ballet Folklorico. I just help Ema for now. We have no contract. Just handshake."

I wanted IN TOUCH readers to learn about Jorge Tyller, the personality behind the dancer, so I asked him questions about his height and weight and ran into unexpected problems in the area of feet and pounds.

"How tall are you?"

"168 metres."

"How much is that in feet?"

Jorge shook his head. We were clearly out of our depth.

"How much do you weigh?"

"61 kilos."

You'll have to take my word on this but my guess would be 130 something in pounds.

"What are your favorite foods?"

"Soups and Chinese food and fish. I love all the fish family. Oysters, lobster, shrimp, crab. In Acapulco the crab or *almeges* are as big around as your fist."

"How about you and sports?"

"I love horseback riding, sailing, water-skiing and tennis. I can't play soccer or football because it hurt my feet."

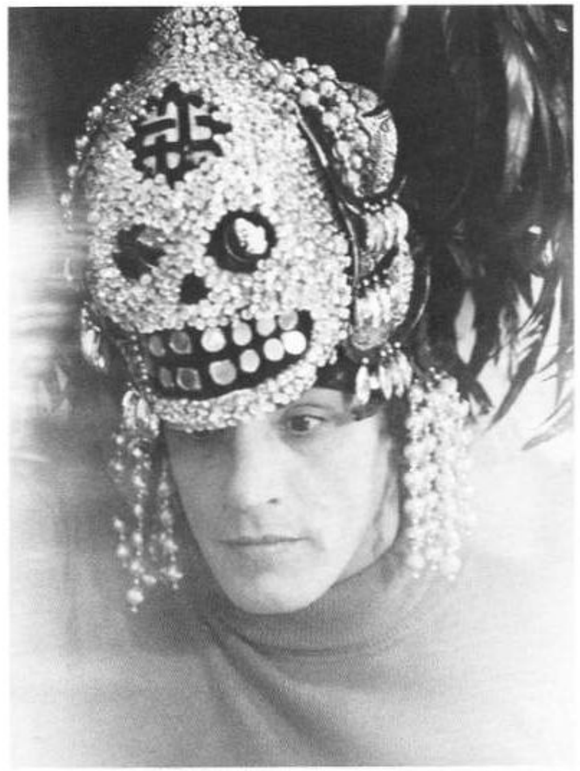
"Do you do any weight-lifting?"

"No. Dancing is all the exercise I need."

"Any favorite colors?"

"Blue, red and black."

"Who does your hair?"



"I do my own. And I style the other boys in the company."

I suddenly decided to give Jorge a Rona Barrett-type zinger:

"Any comment for my readers regarding your love life?"

Jorge pulled his knee up under his chin on the sofa and his brown eyes twinkled.

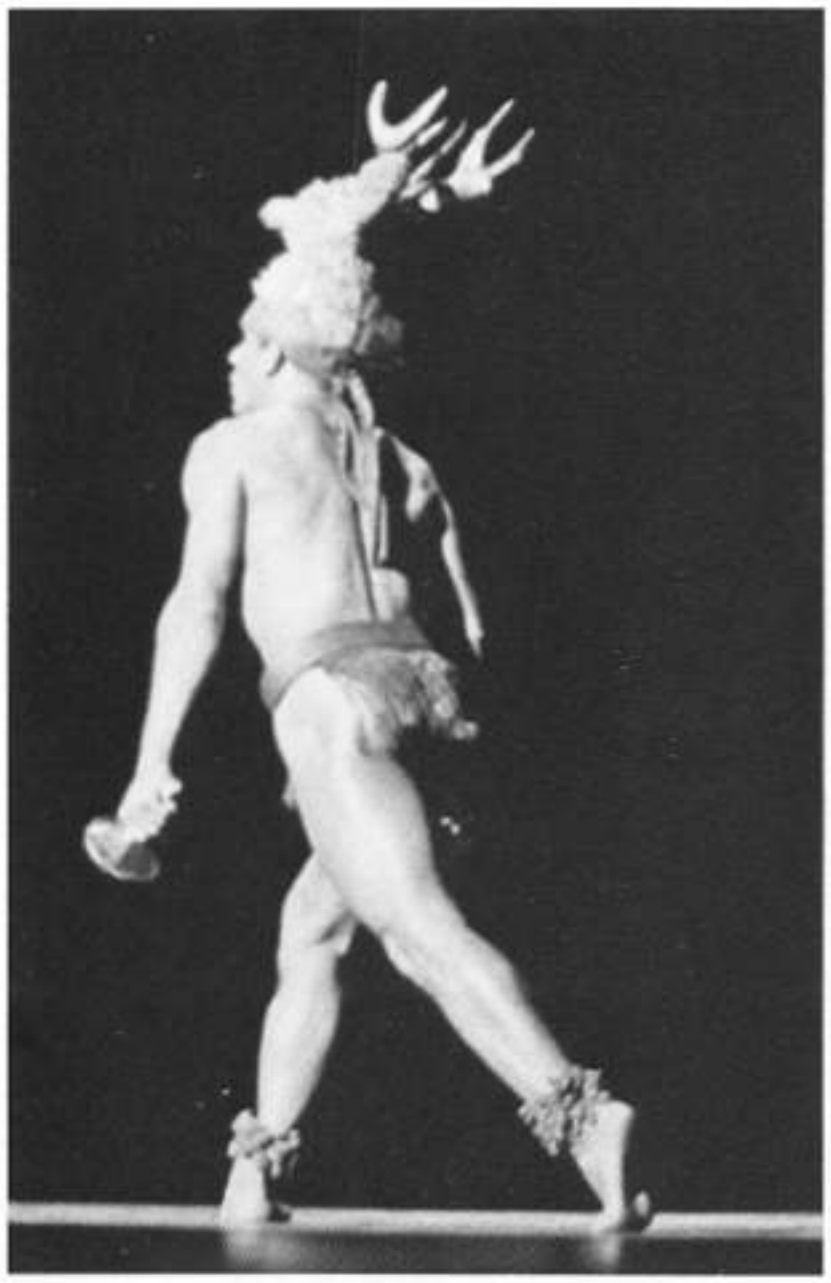
"To find someone to love is important but sex as sex to me right now is not important . . . maybe tomorrow I might find the right person. But, for today, I live by myself."

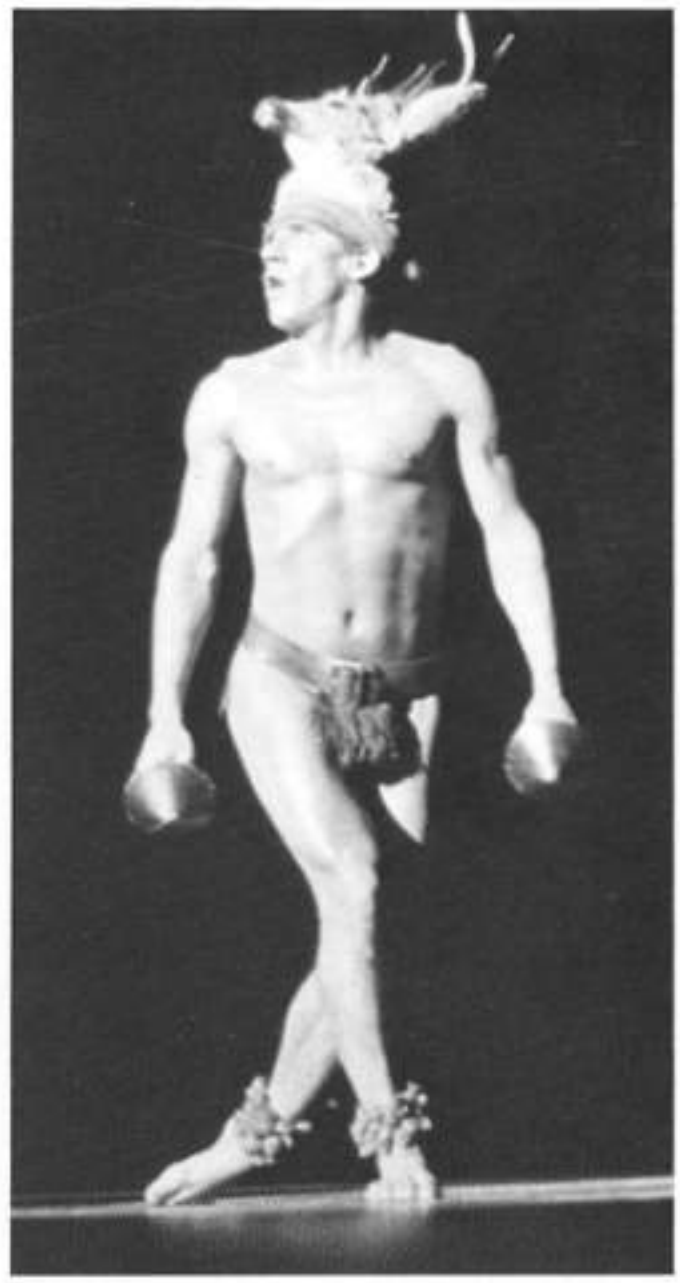
"How do you find Southern California?"

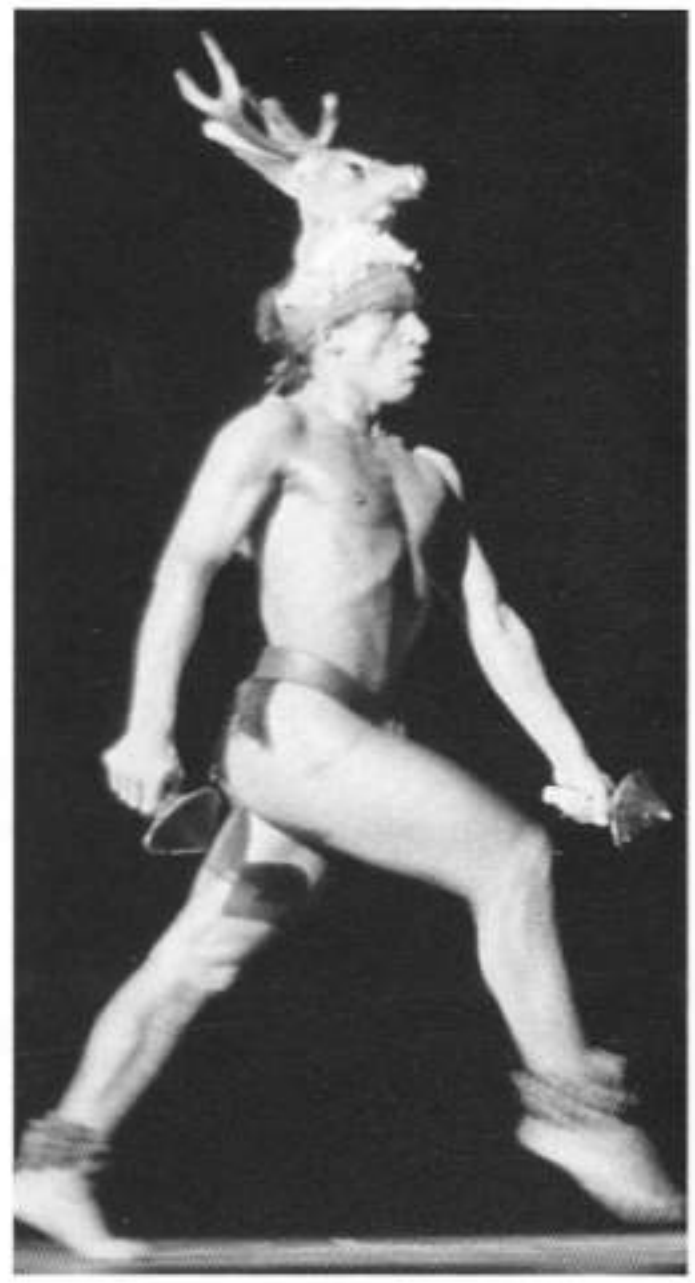
"I was here in 1971 at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion and twice at the Hollywood Bowl with the Ballet Folklorico in 1965 and 1967. I like your beaches. I've been to Laguna and Santa Monica and I love Carmel because of the beauty there. I take the sun whenever I can."

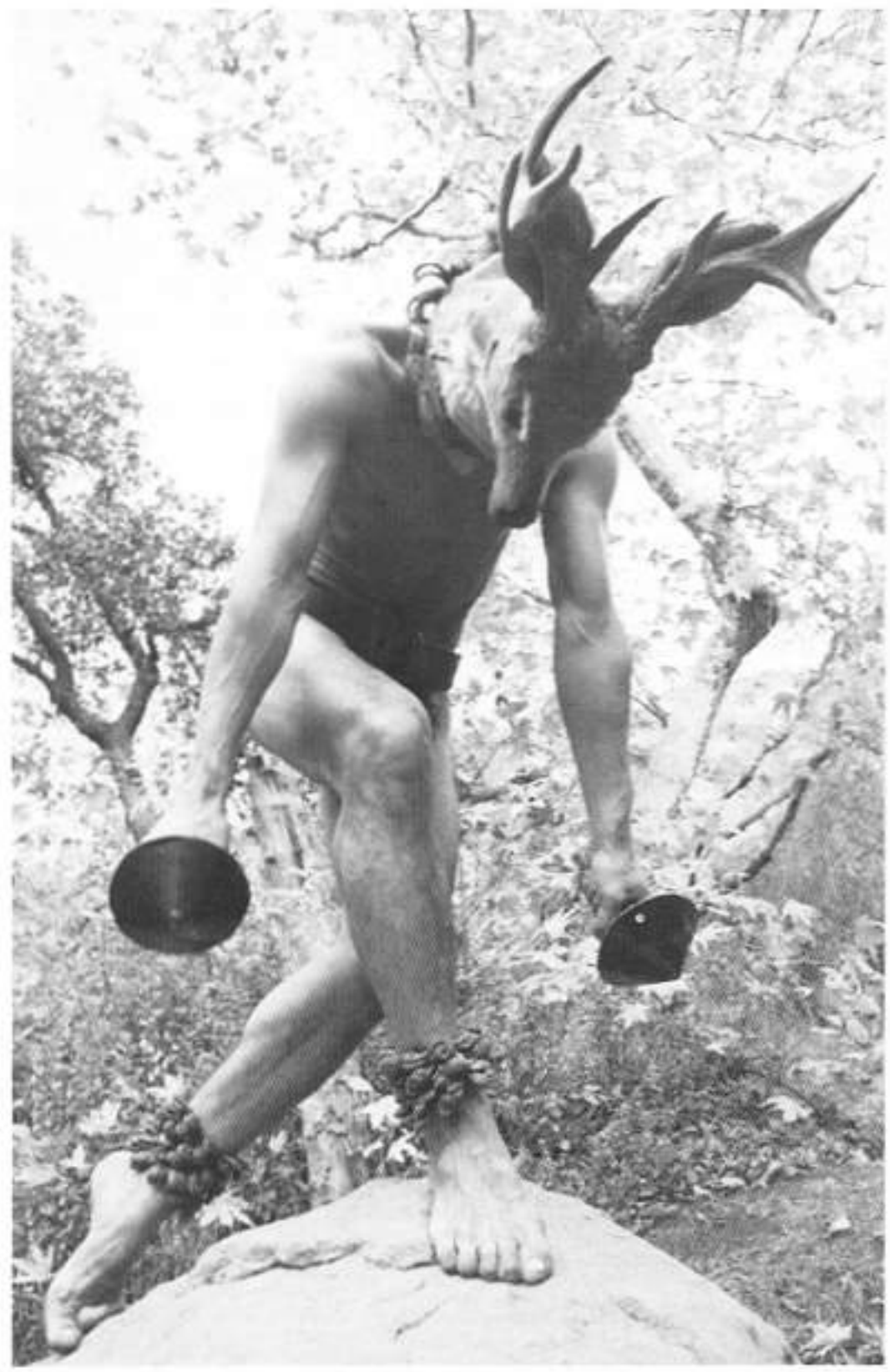
I always close my interviews with star dancers by requesting advice for beginners. Here is Jorge Tyller's:

"Start when young. Never stop dancing. Be dedicated in your feelings and love to dance because dance is love. You can feel it in all your audiences and they give it back to you. If you don't feel this love, don't try to be a dancer. When I die, I'd like to die dancing."









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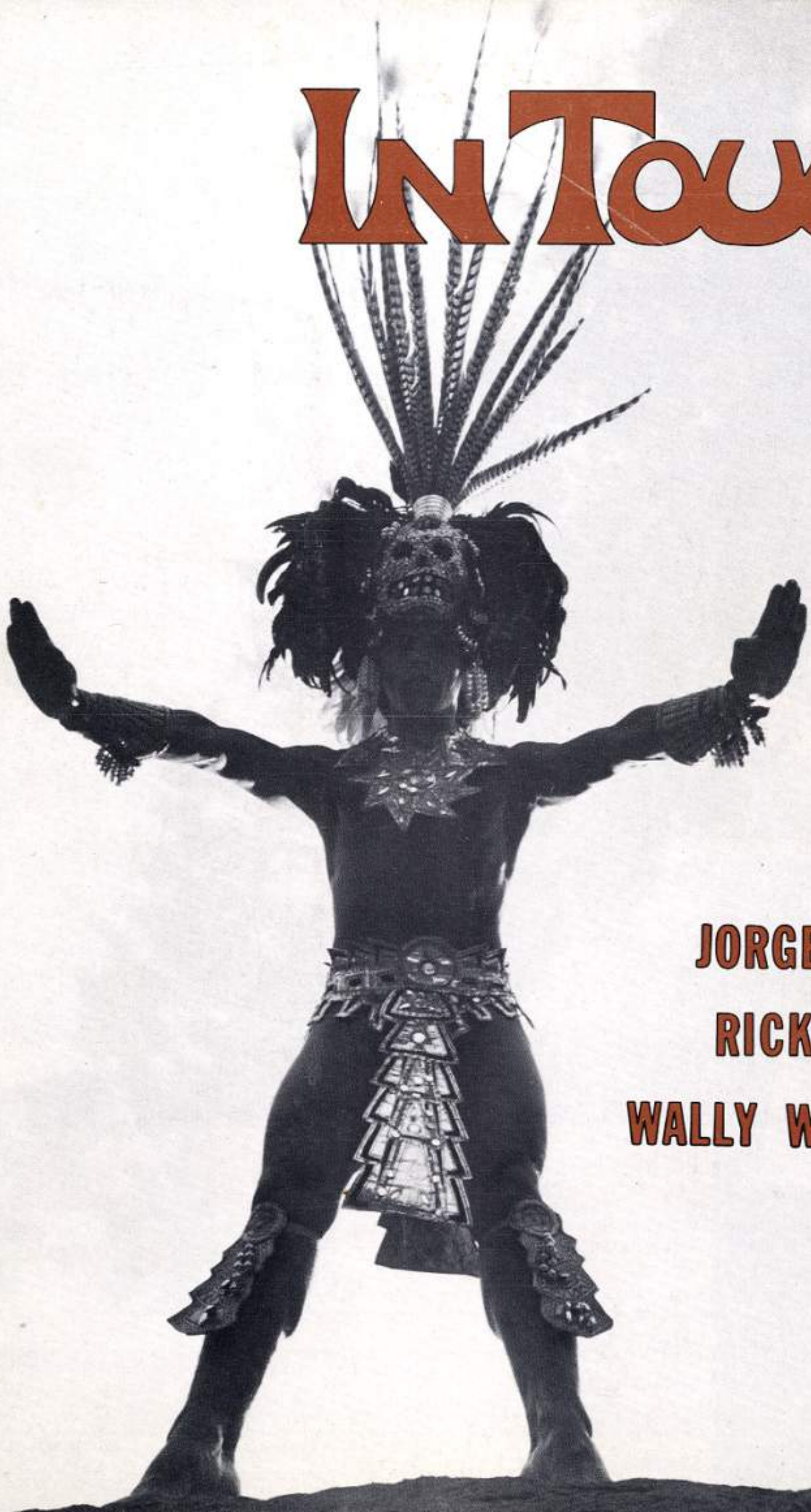

JORGE TYLLER

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