

Celebrating Cinco de Mayo



Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

ABOVE: Rigoberto Cantu, who heads up the popular group Los Cadetes de Linares of Monterrey, Mexico, performs Sunday in downtown Watsonville during the Cinco de Mayo celebration. BELOW: Garbed in traditional Mexican attire, Azul Monet Garcia, 2, enjoys playing with a doll during the event.

Cinco de Mayo

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Thousands enjoy music, food and fun

By TARMO HANNULA
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The 22nd annual Cinco de Mayo celebration unfolded in downtown Watsonville Sunday as several thousand people flocked to the alcohol-free, family-oriented event that featured five live bands and plenty of authentic Mexican cuisine.

With a section on Main Street closed to motor traffic at Watsonville Plaza, the four-and-a-half-hour free event included more than a dozen food stands, jump houses, information booths and kids' activities. Maria

Chacón of Promociones Cha! Cha! Cha! has helped head up the event for the past 18 years.

The celebration commemorates the Battle of Puebla, in which a 4,500-member Mexican army of men, women and children defeated better-equipped French troops on May 5, 1862. Though heavily outnumbered, the Mexicans defeated an army that had gone undefeated for almost 50 years. Under the rule of Emperor Napoleon III, French forces invaded

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ABOVE: An enormous crowd fills Main Street to take in live music. **BELOW:** Dancers take to the street to enjoy the live Mexican music.

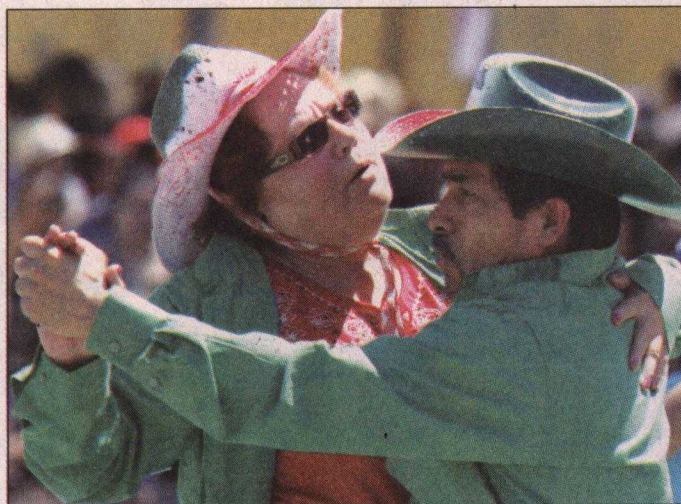
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Mexico under colonial guises, only to have their advanced army destroyed by the bravery of General Zaragoza and his army of Mexican irregulars, according to program notes by Fiestas Patrias de Watsonville who sponsors the event.

"We're missing Oscar Rios, who has headed this event up for 22 years," said Carlos Landaverri, who helped emcee the event. "But we have great sunshine, great live music and a huge crowd. We couldn't ask for anything better. For these folks, this event is a family tradition. There are so many families here having a good time and there's no alcohol and no smoking."

By 2:30 p.m., when the popu-



lar band Los Cadets de Linares from Monterrey, Mexico, took the stage, the crowd pressed forward and filled an entire block of Main Street.

"These guys are real good — they're popular everywhere,"

Landaverri said. "Just look at the crowd swelling."

Other performers included the White Hawk Dancers, El Mariachi Eleazar Cortez and Friends, Midnight Thieves, Los Sagitarios and Banda Guanajuatence.



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Francisco Javier Alvarez, lead singer for Los Sagitarios of Zacatecas, Mexico, treats the crowd to popular Mexican music from the 1980s.