

Midwest Clinic 2022



A Mariachi Presentation for Music Educators

What is Mariachi Music?

- Simply put: It is perhaps the most popular form of Mexican folklore music.
- Traditional complete mariachi ensembles consist of violins, b-flat trumpet, guitarron, vihuela, guitar, and harp
- Mariachi ensembles typically play a repertoire of songs that can range from songs from mariachi singers, traditional Mexican folk songs, and compositions made popular by professional mariachi ensembles



Ensemble Set-up

- **Two sections in a Mariachi group:**
 - **Armonia** (guitar section): vihuela, guitarron, guitar, Mexican harp (diatonic, tuned to a certain key signature).
 - Harp is optional
 - **Melodias:** violin, trumpet, voice (traditionally everyone has to sing).
- **Minimum size for a group would be 4 students (one guitarron, one vihuela, one violin, and one trumpet).**
- **There is essentially no maximum number you can have in a mariachi. I have seen ensemble that have up to 90 students.**
- **Some mariachi educators would say that without a guitarron or vihuela you do not a true mariachi**



Who can be a mariachi?



Starting a mariachi can be intimidating, let's go over some FAQs

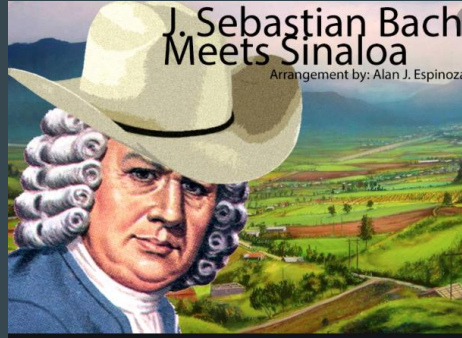
“I don’t know how to speak Spanish...”





I myself did not know Spanish growing up. There many Mexican American students who do not know the language and will find this class as a way to connect and learn about their musical traditions. From my experience, you do not have to know the language to enjoy the music. Translating lyrics is a great way to engage a lesson giving an opportunity for ELL students to contribute to class discussion.

“But I am not Mexican...”



You do not need to be Mexican to play mariachi correctly. Just like you don't have to be German to play Bach, to execute and perform mariachi authentically just takes commitment (kind of like all genres of music, am I right?). Mariachi is not limited to only those who have Mexican descent.

Mariachi FEVER!

Mariachi has a rich cultural identity. Anyone can be a mariachi. Anyone can discover a new found love for this music. Mark Fogelquist termed the word “mariachi fever”, as the enthusiasm students have when they fall in love with the music.



*Mark Fogelquist, retired
mariachi educator*



Another testimony of the **FEVER!**



Mariachi los Gavilanes de Monaco Middle School in Las Vegas.

Mariachi influence in the United States:

Making an impression on American culture



Mariachi

- Mariachi Los Rams: https://youtu.be/6RjU_VrVzJQ
- Elvis Presley singing “Guadalajara” with Mariachi Vargas: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gk3LXQxmJ6k>
- Mariachi Sol de Mexico performing “New York, New York”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YnyN_jPn-W4
- Linda Ronstadt on Sesame Street: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gsyK-BekeTI>

How to get started?



How to get started!

- Review instrumentation
- Uniforms: the benefits of having and not having “*traje de charro*”
- Books/sheet music
- Possible ways to incorporate a mariachi in an already established band/orchestra program.
- The local community



Unique Instrumentation

Vihuela

- Vihuela is a five stringed small version of the classical guitar
- Strings from top to bottom are: A, D, G, B, E
- Tuning much like a guitar except that the A, D, and G are an octave higher.
- Played with either a finger pick or bare hand.
- All nylon strings.
- Higher timbre so that it can be used without amplification
- The high timbre of the instrument is to provide a high (more "treble") contrast with the guitar.. The guitar and vihuela together creates a colorful balance of timbre.
- The guitar and vihuela are strummed and played in intricate rhythms that create the section called the "**armonia**" which translates to *harmony*.



NOTE: In a professional mariachi there is usually only one vihuela player, 1-2 guitar players (no more than 2), and one guitarron player. However, student groups will most likely have way more than this which is perfectly acceptable.

Unique Instrumentation continued....

Guitarrón

- Acoustic bass played in octaves
- Requires a specific technique called the “**JALÓN**” which translates to the word *pull*, that no other guitar-like instrument uses.
- The technique is a specific pull of the strings using the thumb and index or middle finger.
- String order from top to bottom is: A, D, G, C, E, A.



Mariachi History

Mariachi! The history in a nutshell.

- Mexican folk music that originates from the rural areas of Nayarit Mexico in the early 19th century.
- Farmer communities would gather in festive celebrations that often had performances by local musicians
- The word mariachi, therefore, was used to describe these parties. The term was later used to describe the music that was performed in these social functions.
- There is a common misconception that the word mariachi comes from the French word marriage. This has been discredited, for historical evidence has shown that use of the mariachi predates the French arrival.

• REFERENCE: Clark, Jonathan. "A Brief History of the Mariachi Tradition". Marshall Cavendish Corp, 1996. http://www.sobrinio.net/mer/entry_on_the_word_mariachi.htm



Mariachi! The history in a nutshell.

- Folks groups began organizing themselves and move to Mexico City for better performance opportunities at the beginning of the 20th century.
- 1942, Mariachi Vargas incorporates the trumpet for the first time into the mariachi ensemble.
- During World War II, the US and European film production declines. This gives Mexico the spotlight to produce films that got internationally recognized. In these films, the protagonists was typically a ranchera mariachi lead-singer.
- As result, the "mariachi" became a symbol of Mexican music and culture.



The most notable icon of the mariachi



- The word suit translates to “traje”
- We will use the word “traje” to refer to the suit

Trajes De Charro



What is a **charro**?

A charro is essentially a Mexican horseman, horsewoman, horseperson.

For lack of a better term, a charro can be summed up as the Mexican cowboy style.

Let's compare suits!



These are band uniforms.

Marching band uniforms are crafted and designed with unique colors.

This gives the band a unique identity

Mariachi suits are represented in the same way



Mariachis use different kinds of suit designs and colors to stand out.

This gives a mariachi group a unique look and makes them look different than other groups.



What does a full suit consist of?



Standard mariachi suit will consist of:

-Jacket

-Pants

-Boots

-Mariachi bow tie called **Moño**

To suit or not to suit???

- Finding a mariachi suit maker may be difficult and costly. However, this suit does provide incentive for students to join and can be used a recruitment tool.
- Not having suits it perfectly fine as well as it is more practical and ideal. Alternatives can be to wear a white dress shirt, black bottoms, dress shoes, and moño (Mexican bow tie).



Literature/Curriculum

- Not a lot of literature for a school ensemble. You have to be resourceful to find quality music. A lot of unpublished music is circulated between mariachi educators, so reaching out to a mariachi educator is helpful.
- Repertoire consists of a range of simple folk tunes to complex musical arrangements that require advanced techniques.
- Method books that is worth getting is "Mariachi Mastery" by Dr. Jeff Nevin.
 - Includes all mariachi instruments and arrangements.
 - Dr. Nevin has his PhD in composition and writes for professional and school ensembles.
 - Mariachi Mastery includes warp-ups for specific pieces.
- "Simplemente Mariachi" is another Method Book but is not as thorough as Mariachi Mastery.
- JW Pepper has some arrangements available as well!
- Mariachi song lyric library: <http://www.mariachi4u.com/lyrics/>



Literature: Choosing repertoire

Ranchera: a song in 3/4 or 2/4 time signature. Usually features a solo singer. Simple rhythms for guitar and guitarron.

Cielito Lindo in 3/4 example:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=svU-gQPZrvE>

Alla en Rancho Grande in 2/4 example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y5OJOushLcs>

Bolero : in 4/4 time with eighth note rhythms made by the armonia. Usually features a solo singer and is achievable for student ensembles.

Cerca del Mar: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=joj6_lw9BmM

Son (for more advanced groups): a specific style of song that has syncopated rhythms made by the armonia. Eighth notes are swung in a mariachi style that mimics the gallops of a horse.

El Relampago: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yYpK18im4o4>

The image displays three musical scores for songs in Spanish. The top score is for 'Los Laureles' by José C. Rodríguez, featuring a melody in 3/4 time. The middle score is for 'El Jinete' by José C. Rodríguez, featuring a melody in 2/4 time. The bottom score is for 'Volver Volver' by José C. Rodríguez, featuring a melody in 4/4 time. Each score includes a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a common time signature (C). The scores are written for a single melodic line, likely for a solo singer or a single instrument.

Rehearsal pointers

- The most challenging task you will find is teaching four very different families of instruments simultaneously. (guitars, violins, trumpets, and voice).
- All the traditional ensemble pedagogy is transferrable to mariachi; for good musicianship is good musicianship!
- Guitars will almost always require the least amount of work to develop technique. This is because guitarists generally do not have to worry about tone. The armonia section is analogous to percussionists in a band, where they often have to sit and wait for everyone to learn their parts.
- First trumpet parts have ranges that are usually in the range of a C in the third space of the staff and above. You would want to carefully select your first trumpet. Do not be afraid to simplify parts.
- Ideally you want everyone in your mariachi to sing. Much like a choir, you would want to establish this rule and set the expectation for everyone to sing.
- Many pieces are written for solo singers. You want to ensure that they are practicing healthy singing habits, and watch for diction, phrasing, and intonation much like any trained vocalist.



The Model of Possible Classes: Mariachi as a second year option

Dr. Jeff Nevin's Recommendation



- Ideally, it would be great to have the beginning instruments separated by class: beginning mariachi guitar, beginning mariachi violin, beginning mariachi trumpet and then have the whole group rehearse together after school or in another period. But having this is unlikely.
- Therefore, beginning mariachi is not necessarily needed because the fundamentals to these instruments really require their own specific technical development. Trumpet can be taught in beginning band, beginning violin learned in orchestra, beginning guitar learned in guitar class.
- Dr. Jeff Nevin recommends have a mariachi class for **2nd year students** so that students can focus on mariachi and not learning fundamentals.

How did I start my mariachi program?



- Ask and you shall receive.
 - I put my intentions of starting a mariachi since day one.
- My administration supported the idea upon hire.
 - Admin support is extremely helpful!!
- Bargain you classes: I took out intermediate orchestra and made it a mariachi class option.
- I was fortunate enough to receive the Holland Opus Grant from my school, and used part of that money to pay for quality mariachi instruments.
 - <https://www.mhopus.org/grant-guidelines/>
- I connected with the Mariachi Clothing Company to help purchase authentic mariachi instruments from Mexico.
 - <https://www.mariachiclothingcompany.com/>
- A little bit of luck to be honest.

Currently Mariachi Programs



TMEA All-State Mariachi

- There are several reputable mariachi school programs in the states of Arizona, Texas, California and Nevada.

Proper Cultural Representation: The 3 R's

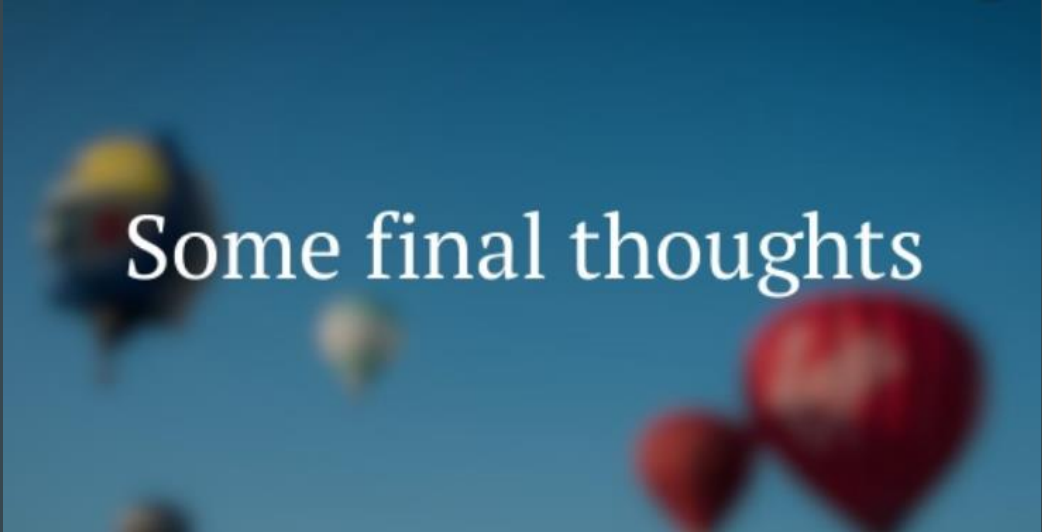
- **Research** and listen to mariachi music and become familiar with mariachi artists (list of mariachi artists in notes)
- **Reach out** to a mariachi educator and musician and ask plenty of questions.
- **Respect** the music by continuing to improve your skill and knowledge of this music (the learning never stop!).



The Mariachi Community



- There are thriving mariachi communities throughout the United States.!
- All it take is reaching out!

A blurred background image showing several hot air balloons in various colors (yellow, red, white) against a clear blue sky. The text "Some final thoughts" is centered over this image.

Some final thoughts

From my teacher standpoint:

“It is only ever about the students”

- I believe every individual has a place for music in their lives.
- The relationships you develop with your students are central to cultivating a successful and inclusive learning environment.
- *“Take the ‘me’ out of it.”* Always teach to help others.
- Hard work always works!



We are teachers of music. **The more the merrier!**



My own personal journey in becoming a music teacher has taught me to adapt!

I learned to teach band, choir, and orchestra because I knew that as a music teacher I should not be limited to being only mariachi. I learned to adapt and seek the skills I needed to become a well rounded teacher. In that pursuit I discovered a lot of personal and professional growth.

My advice to any aspiring teacher is that it is absolutely worth changing your music program to fit the needs and interest of your students. We are not just teachers of our specialty, but instead music advocates that want to help children discover the joy of music. My point here is to advocate that **having a mariachi can add richness to your program** where it will provide another way for students to learn and enjoy music.

My mantra: How many kids can we have playing/learning music? **The more, the merrier**