

Mariachi Mania Units Materials

Lesson Plan -List of handouts

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Where does the word ‘Mariachi’ come from?!?!???

Theory I: In Mexico, love songs to women dominate the Mariachi repertory. Since women are held in high regard (at times compared to the Virgin Mary) it can be said that the combination of the name María (Mary) and the Nahuatl language word suffix ‘chi’ make up the word ‘mariachi’.

Theory II: The word ‘mariachi’ comes from the French word for marriage (‘Mariage’). The French invasion of Mexico in the last half of the 1800s was not a popular event. The indigenous people they encountered in Mexico despised the French. The author of this theory holds that when French soldiers encountered Mexican weddings, Mariachi groups were performing at the ceremonies and/or receptions. The soldiers would ask, “what are those groups?” and they would be told that the groups were “mariachis”. The French soldiers assumed that the word was taken from the word “Mariage”.

Theory III: The word is the name of a tree located between the cities of Guadalajara and Jalisco. The wood from this tree was used to make guitars and the *tarimas* (podiums) for dancing.

Theory IV: The word ‘mariachi’ always existed amongst the Cocu Indians in the Jalisco region.

1. Read the theories above carefully, which one do you find most plausible? In a paragraph, explain why you would pick that one instead of the others.

2. Make up your own theory about the origins of the word ‘mariachi’. Make sure it sounds convincing. Use evidence to prove your theory.

Theory V – Your theory: _____

Source: Richard Obregon, *Ph.D., University of Arizona School of Music*. Talk given at the University of Arizona, Center for Latin American Studies. Outreach Workshop 3/22/04

Origins and Evolution of Mariachi Music

Origins

The origins of the mariachi itself (the group, culture, music, etc.) are difficult to trace. Although the indigenous tribes of Mexico made music with flutes, drums and whistles, there is no clear link between the indigenous music and the mariachi. Differently from indigenous music, mariachi music from its conception had a uniform look and a uniform sound. Almost two centuries old, mariachi music is world famous, and its production has been continuous and prolific, particularly in the Mexican state of Jalisco. The city of Cocula in the state of Jalisco is recognized as the birthplace of mariachi music.

Mariachi music is one more example of the *mestizo* folklore of Mexico. The word *mestizo* means the mix of cultures to create something new and unique to a place. The instruments originally used by the mariachi were introduced by the Spaniards - violins, guitars, vihuelas, harps, etc. However, mariachi music is a Mexican creation. These instruments were intended to be used during masses but the criollos (Mexicans of Spanish descent) began using them to make popular music as well, much to the despair of the priests, since they were used to accompany some of the more scandalous, satirical or anticlerical couplets of the times.

Evolution

Traditionally, mariachis have been strolling folk orchestras. They were originally composed of stringed instruments only –*guitarra* (guitar), *guitarrón* (or large guitar), *violin*, and the small four stringed *vihuela* (since then Mariachi music has evolved continuously, moving in space and time and making changes along the way). By the 1920s innovative mariachis introduced cornets and trumpets, including the little horn instrument now disappeared, the *chirimía*. At this time, mariachis began spreading outside of the state of Jalisco and many discarded the harp because it was impractical for travel and replaced it with the *guitarrón*. Today, many mariachis have both harps and *guitarrones* (plural of *guitarron*).

Sources:

Rodriguez, Gregory. 2000. *The History of the Tucson International Mariachi Conference*. Library of Congress Bicentennial, 1800-2000: Local Legacies Report.

Richard Obregon, *Ph.D. University of Arizona School of Music*.
Talk given at the Center for Latin American Studies Outreach Center Workshop for Educators. 3/22/04

Mariachi musicians began traveling outside the state of Jalisco. These mariachis were the pioneers of mariachi music as we know it today, each adding to the genre new degrees of sophistication.

Cuarteto Coculense

Also known as “Violines del Cerro” and “Mariachi de Justo Villa”, this group was from the town of Cocula, in the state of Jalisco, Mexico. This group was the first mariachi to travel outside of Cocula. They were invited to Mexico City in 1905 to take part in the inauguration ceremonies of Mexican president Porfirio Díaz. This marked the beginning of Mariachi travel outside of the state of Jalisco. The group was admired for its folkloric look (sombrosos, ponchos and matching muslin pants and shirts). They were also the first group to make a Mariachi recording, using the old Edison wax cylinder acoustical method.

Mariachi Coculense de Cirilo Marmolejo

This group may have made more significant contributions to the genre than any other group in early Mariachi history. This group was the first group to perform at the famous Temampa Bar in Mexico City’s Plaza Garibaldi, first to appear in a legitimate stage show at the Teatro Iris in Mexico City, the first group to appear in a sound movie, the first group to make an electric recording, first group to perform outside of Mexico at the 1930 Chicago World’s Fair, and the first group to record in the United States. Mariachi Coculense traveled to Mexico City in 1920 and they remained there and never returned to Cocula, Jalisco. The nephew of Cirilo Marmolejo, José, would eventually join this group and then lead his own.

Mariachi Tapatío de José Marmolejo

José Marmolejo was the first to demand that the members in his band be trained Maestros (musicians with the ability to read and write music). Mariachi Tapatío was also the first group to have a full-time trumpet player. This group set very high standards for performance, which are still part of the tradition today. Mariachi Tapatío held regularly scheduled rehearsals, which was not a common thing in the mid-1930s for mariachi groups. Many of the musical elements which were part of this group filtered down to other groups to become the standard for Mariachi performance.

Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán

Mariachi Vargas is the most famous mariachi in the world and the standard today by which all groups are still measured. Under the direction of Gaspar Vargas’ son Silvestre, this group became the epitome of ensemble performance and manners. Silvestre expanded the number of musicians in the group and exploited all of the recording possibilities for the Mariachi band in Mexico. Mariachi Vargas has appeared in well over 250 films and recorded with such icons as José Alfredo Jiménez, Vicente Fernández and Lucha Villa.

Source: Handout by Richard Obregon, *Ph.D. University of Arizona School of Music*

- **Look at a map of Mexico. Copy the silhouette of the map in the space bellow. On your map, a) place Mexico City; b) color the state of Jalisco; and c) mark down the city of Cocula.**

- **True or false? If false, please correct the statement in your own words.**

Mariachi music is Spanish because the instruments used in Mariachi were brought to Mexico from Spain. **T F**

Mexican indigenous music is rich and uses a variety of instruments. **T F**

Mariachi music is similar to the indigenous music from Mexico. **T F**

Criollos were from Spain but lived in Mexico. **T F**

- **Design a timeline that shows the evolution of Mariachi music. Include the pioneer mariachi groups and the contributions made by each one. Don't forget to be specific about changes in the use of instruments etc. Be creative. Make sure you include the following:** violin, guitarrón, guitarra, harpa, chirimía, vihuela, trompetas, Cuarteto Cocolense, Mariachi Cocolense de Cirilo Marmolejo, Mariachi Tapatío, Mariachi Vargas, Mariachi trumpet, films, first mariachi recording, Chicago World's fair, charro suit, first band to travel outside Mexico, first band to travel outside Cocula, scheduled rehearsals, criollos, maestros.

;;;From Jalisco to Tucson!!!

Mariachi Vargas, the most famous mariachi in the world visited Tucson for the first time in 1983. Why? Because Tucson is one of the most important Mariachi centers in the world!

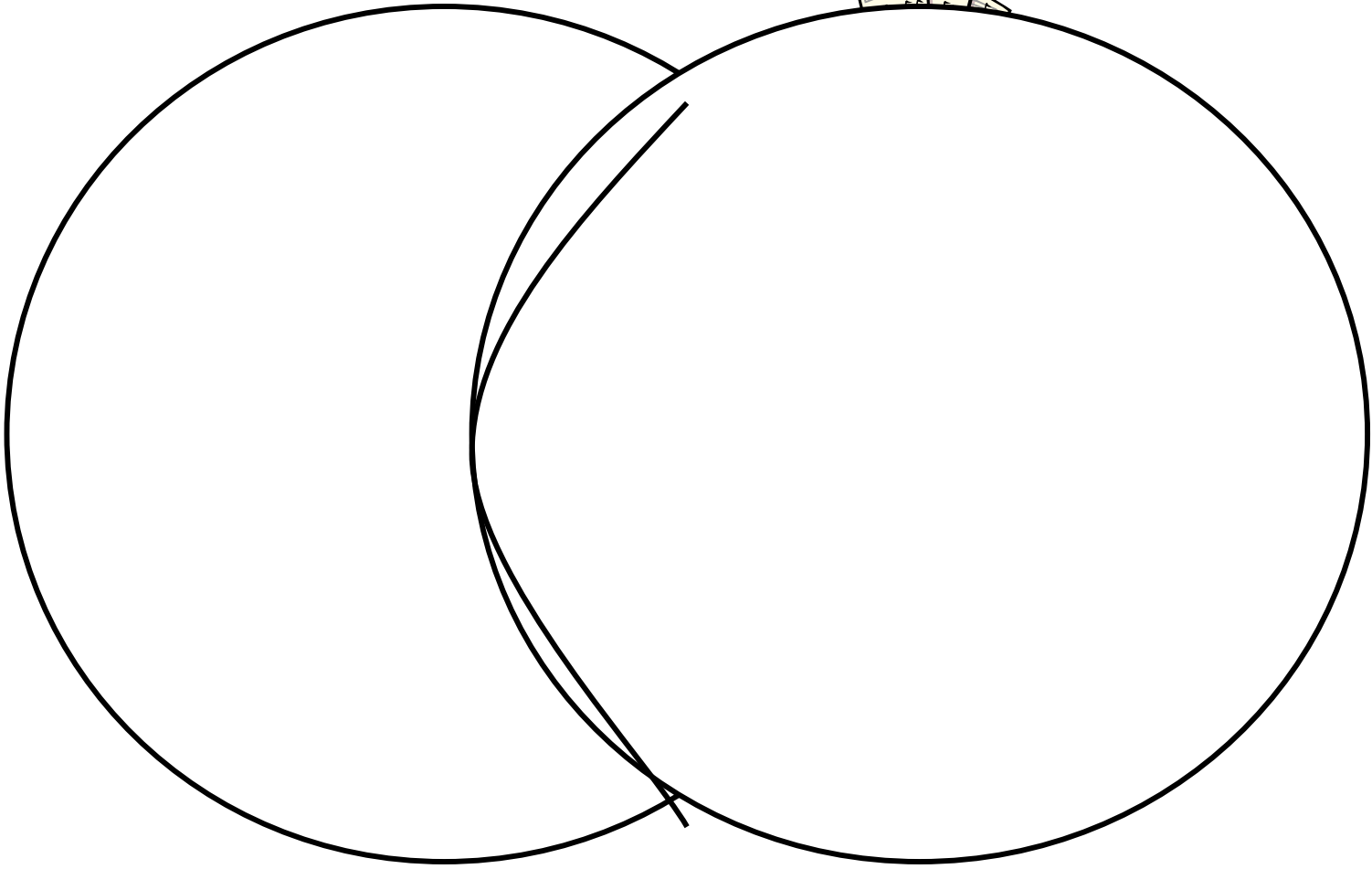
The tradition of Mariachi was revived in Tucson during the 1960s with the famous “Los Changuitos Feos” (The Ugly Little Monkeys). Although there had been Mariachi groups in Tucson during the 1950s, it was really Los Changuitos Feos that would put Tucson on the international mariachi map.

Started by Father Charles Rourke, Los Changuitos Feos was intended as a neighborhood project for Mexican Americans. Rourke’s intentions for Los Changuitos Feos was to provide interested Mexican American youth with a rewarding experience that also helped build pride in their culture. The Ugly Little Monkeys almost immediately attracted the interest of local Anglo Americans. The group became so popular that eventually, Anglo patronage helped establish a college scholarship fund for the group. This group consisted of very young musicians. Many of the Changuitos grew increasingly successful and their musical talents helped pay for university educations. Some members of the group moved on to create new groups as adults, such as Tucson mariachis ‘Mariachi Cobre’ and ‘Mariachi America’. It was a new generation of Mexican Americans who saw the importance of maintaining the mariachi tradition in Tucson. They and members of the Tucson community worked together to encourage the first Tucson International Mariachi Conference. A member of Mariachi Cobre, Ruben Moreno, explained:

There were so few venues for mariachis to play back in the 70s. After the golden era in the 60s, the interest started to fall off. Mariachi conferences revived here in the United States and my theory is because the second and third generation Mexican American kids wanted to recapture what they lost. They were removed from home. The grandparents were still from Mexico. They told them stories, stories that would move you to tears. I mean the connection between grandparent and parent, and what they can do to revive Mexican culture –well, the mariachi music became that, and that’s why in this moment it was even stronger than in Mexico where they took it for granted. Over here, because we were removed from Mexican culture, we had to preserve it because that’s all we had. This wasn’t Mexico anymore...And there was something missing and will always be. It’s soul, it’s heart...Family and the music reinforce soul and heart. So, the third/fourth generation Mexican Americans, embraced mariachi music to remind them of their Mexican roots because the lyrics said things

Source: - Rodriguez, Gregory. 2000. *The History of the Tucson International Mariachi Conference*. Library of Congress Bicentennial, 1800-2000: Local Legacies Report. Pp.1-2

Mariachi Music vs. Country Western Music
Handout #5



Recommended Sources

- *How Music Came to the World* by Hal Ober and Carol Ober.
A retelling of the traditional legend, where the god of the sky persuades the god of the wind to journey in search of music
- Rodriguez, Gregory. 2000. *The History of the Tucson International Mariachi Conference*. Library of Congress Bicentennial, 1800-2000: Local Legacies Report.

On the Web

- http://www.mexconnect.com/mex_guadalajara/marhis.html

A brief history of Mariachi

- <http://www.mariachi.org/>

The most comprehensible, complete webpage . This page has links to pages on the general history of mariachi (<http://www.mariachi.org/history.html>) the history of women in mariachi music (<http://www.sobrino.net/mpc/womenmariachi/>), and to a large list of mariachi groups, including the official webpage of ‘los Changuitos Feos’ (<http://www.loschanguitosfeos.org/files/name.htm>) and ‘Mariachi Cobre’ (<http://www.mariachi-cobre.com/history.html>).

- <http://www.tucsonmariachi.org/>

Homepage of the Tucson International Mariachi Conference.

Discography

(provided by Dr. Richard Obregon, Ph.D., University of Arizona, Department of music)

- *Rubén Fuentes 1944-1994*, Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán, Mercury
- *20 Éxitos del Mariachi Silvestre Vargas*, Orfeón
- *20 Éxitos Mariachis*, Mariachi Nuevo Tecalitlán, Mediterráneo
- *Las Tres Señoras*, Juan Gabriel, EMI Records
- *Canciones de Siempre*, Mariachi Los Camperos de Nati Cano, Peer South Productions
- *Canciones de mi Padre*, Linda Ronstadt, Asylum Records
- *33 Éxitos. Lo Mejor de José Alfredo Jiménez*, RCA
- *15 Éxitos. Rancheras de Javier Solís*, CBS International
- *Huapangos de Rubén Fuentes*, Miguel Aceves Mejía, RCA Mexicana

All recordings can be purchased or ordered from: Yoly's Music Shop (Tucson, AZ)

5650 S. 12 Ave., Tucson, AZ 85706, (520) 746-1877
2980 S. 6th Ave. #150, Tucson, AZ 85713 (520) 620-0830

