

Mariachi in Your Studio
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A Brief History of Mariachi Music

- Mariachi music originated in the region that encompasses the Mexican states of Jalisco, Michoacán, and Colima
- The precursor to the modern mariachi dates back to the late 19th century
- With an increase in nationalism, mariachi music is catapulted to the forefront of popular culture as a vehicle to unite all regions of Mexico
- The music is featured in radio and film and taken abroad
- Original configuration: Either *guitarrón* or harp as bass instrument, two violins, and *vihuela*
- By the 1950s, the mariachi as we know it today had been established: six violins, two trumpets, *guitarrón*, *vihuela*, and guitar. *The flute is not part of the standard instrumentation of the mariachi.

Who Should You and Your Students Listen to?

- Familiarize yourselves with the following artists. As you listen to them, you will notice that each artist tends to focus more on a certain type of song that the mariachi interprets.
 - Lucha Reyes
 - Lola Beltrán
 - Amalia Mendoza
 - José Alfredo Jiménez
 - Jorge Negrete
 - Pedro Infante
 - Javier Solís
 - Miguel Aceves Mejía
 - Antonio Aguilar
 - “Charro” Avitia
 - Vicente Fernández
 - Juan Gabriel
 - Aída Cuevas
 - Beatriz Adriana

- Linda Ronstadt
- Nydia Rojas
- Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán
- Mariachi Nuevo Tecalitlán
- Mariachi Sol de México
- Mariachi Reyna de Los Ángeles

Important Things to Consider

- Language: Studying the Spanish language is critical. The ability to correctly pronounce lyrics is important, but understanding the meaning of the lyrics is what will bring the music to life. INTERPRETATION IS EVERYTHING.
 - Public school language classes for the students—make the experience interdisciplinary
 - Adult school language classes for instructors/older students
 - Online language classes
- Understand the sociocultural significance of the music.
 - Folk music
 - Origins lie in lower class society
 - Themes vary from heartache, celebration of life, patriotism
 - Learn the nuances of the various musical genres that the mariachi plays

Different Styles of Singing for Different Songs

- *Rancheras*
 - Can be in 2/4 (polka), 3/4 (valseada), 4/4 (lenta)
 - Simple melodies that often repeat or alternate between verse melody and refrain melody
 - Themes mostly lie in heartache
- *Sones*
 - Song form native to the mariachi
 - Alternates between 3/4 and 6/8
 - Syncopated rhythms
 - Verse melody, refrain melody
- Bolero
 - Most subdued song type that the mariachi interprets
 - Requires more vocal control
 - Many songs require the singer to build vocal intensity as song progresses
- Huapango
 - Borrowed from the *Huasteca* region of Mexico (northeastern region of the country)
 - Falsetto singing is used for effect
 - Requires strength and control of both chest and head voices

More to Consider

- Singing always requires use of the chest voice. The only time the head voice is used is for effect, primarily in singing *huapangos*. The head voice should not be regularly used, even when singing softer *boleros*.
- Not everyone will have the voice to interpret all types of songs. Play up the students' vocal strengths and carefully choose repertoire.
- Vocal exercises can help increase chest voice range.
- Always warm up before singing
- Do not overexert the voice attempting to sing something so intense
- Get out of your own way. Basic technique remains the same no matter what one is singing. The interpretation is what changes.

Useful Resources

- The Vocal Coach Series: vocalcoach.com
- Vocal Interpretation Class with José Hernández (founder and director of Mariachi Sol de México): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=komCC5dan8k&t=224s>
- Vocal Technique with Heriberto Molina (lead singer of Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán for 30 years): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPNKrJ-Fph0&t=794s>
- Musical examples:
 - Mariachi Sol de México: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fXnCHifJ0E&t=67s>
 - Mariachi Nuevo Tecalitlán: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=doJci9_IV4
 - Mariachi Reyna de Los Ángeles:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVHuVtFXsU8>
 - Lucha Villa: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_rygl5X95Q
 - Lucha Reyes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5PfeogQcSQk>
 - Javier Solís: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8XywiBCOlue>
 - Pedro Infante: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJbOIFywJFk>
 - Jorge Negrete: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L4na8NodbF8>

For additional resources, please contact me. I have several files of diction exercises relevant to mariachi singing on PDF that I would be happy to share.