### Creating a Mariachi Program That Works: There Is A Method to This Madness!

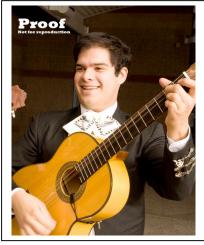
The Clark County School District (Las Vegas, NV) Comprehensive Mariachi Program The Midwest Clinic December 20, 2007 10:00 AM Williford Room, Chicago Hilton and Towers Marcia Neel and Adam Romo, Presenters Larry Mason, CCSD Board of School Trustees, Co-presenter Mariachi Nuevo: The Members of the Clark County School District Mariachi Faculty, Co-presenters Jose Hernandez, Director, Mariachi Sol de Mexico



Mariachi Nuevo



Marcia Neel



Adam Romo

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www.musiceducationconsultants.net



José Hernandez

#### Building the Standards-based Mariachi Curriculum The National Standards for Music Education and the Mariachi Curriculum

#### 1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music

- a. Students are exposed to solo singing and *coros* (chorus)
- b. Students perform a variety of genres of Mexican music such as *rancheras, boleros, sones, and huapangos*

# 2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music

- a. Mariachi incorporates playing with singing
- b. Students perform a variety of genres of Mexican music such as *rancheras, boleros, sones, and huapangos*

### 3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments

- a. Students can improvise the strummings of a given song
- b. Violin and trumpet sections improvise interludes
- c. Performances of songs can be improvised giving all students solo opportunities

### 4. Composing and arranging music within specific guidelines

- a. Composing using mariachi instrumentation
- b. Arranging parts to standard mariachi repertoire
- c. Use of appropriate mariachi song style
- d. Use of music technology: Notation Software Programs

### 5. Reading and notating music

- a. Sight-reading skills
- b. Aural/dictation skills

### 6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music

- a. Specific mariachi performance styles
- b. Distinguishing mariachi performances
- c. Compare and contrast a variety of recordings (ex: *La Negra*)

### 7. Evaluating music and music performances

- a. Conferences
- b. Festivals
- c. Showcases
- d. Concerts
- e. Recordings
- f. Video-recordings

# 8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts

- a. Ballet Folklórico
- b. Performance Techniques/Styles
- c. Story Telling
- d. History

#### 9. Understanding music in relationship to history and culture -- Mariachi is. . .

- a. Mexico's Pre-eminent Folk Music
- b. A Bridging of the Generation Gaps
- c. Tradition and History

#### BEGINNING MARIACHI VIOLIN CLARK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT SECONDARY MARIACHI PROGRAM

Course Scope:

This one-year course is designed for the student who is interested in learning to play mariachi violin. It includes the development of skills necessary to become independent as a musician. This course emphasizes the place of mariachi music in Mexican musical heritage. It concentrates on the development of note-reading skills, aural skills, rhythmic patterns, intonation, and tonality inherent to Mariachi music. The importance of sustained group and individual effort is stressed. A progression of fundamental and technical proficiency is expected.

- 1. To develop performance skills necessary for independence as a string player in Mariachi music.
- 2. To develop performance skills necessary to create an ensemble sound.
- 3. To demonstrate a knowledge of music fundamentals.
- 4. To recognize form in Mariachi music (i.e. ranchera, son, bolero, polka).
- 5. To develop a broad knowledge and appreciation of Mariachi music and the Mexican culture.
- 6. To develop skills necessary to improvise simple melodies, variations, and accompaniments.
- 7. To develop an awareness of position playing, movable scales, and transposition.
- 8. To demonstrate an awareness of the relationship between music and other disciplines.
- 9. To discriminate with regard to the quality of composition and performance of music.
- 10. To demonstrate an awareness of the regional and historical variations of mariachi music.
- 11. To develop attitudes that encourage lifelong musical participation.

#### BEGINNING MARIACHI GUITAR/VIHUELA CLARK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT SECONDARY MARIACHI PROGRAM

#### Course Scope:

This one-year, elective course is designed for students with no previous Mariachi guitar/vihuela experience. Students will receive guidance and direction in solving problems related to playing the guitar/vihuela on a beginning level and will learn many of the different styles, skills, and techniques required to become a successful musician. Areas of concentration include: correct posture, note reading, aural skills, flat picking, singing songs, rhythmic patterns, chord study, finger picking styles (when appropriate), melody construction, musical forms, tablature notation, improvisation, and performing experiences. This course may be repeated for credit.

- 1. To develop correct posture and hand position.
- 2. To identify the parts of the guitar/vihuela and string designation.
- 3. To demonstrate proper care and maintenance of the guitar/vihuela.
- 4. To develop an awareness of correct tuning of the open strings.
- 5. To understand the history and origin of the guitar/vihuela.
- 6. To demonstrate a knowledge of music fundamentals.
- 7. To recognize form in Mariachi music (i.e. ranchera, son, bolero, polka)
- 8. To learn basic chords, scales, and bass lines in first position.
- 9. To learn proper strumming, finger style, and flat picking techniques.
- 10. To demonstrate proper placement of movable "E" and "A" type barre chords.
- 11. To develop an awareness of position playing, movable scales, and transposition.
- 12. To demonstrate an awareness of the function of tablature as it relates to the guitar.
- 13. To improvise using short melodic phrases, variations, and chord progressions.
- 14. To become aware of career opportunities in music.
- 15. To demonstrate an awareness of the relationship between music and other disciplines.
- 16. To demonstrate and awareness of the regional and historical variations of Mariachi music.
- 17. To incorporate traditional rhythms used in Mariachi music into musical performances.

#### MARIACHI ENSEMBLE I CLARK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT SECONDARY MARIACHI PROGRAM

Course Scope:

The Mariachi Ensemble I course is offered for the purpose of allowing students to perform in an ensemble which has a selected membership and which specializes in performing beginning level Mariachi ensemble literature. Students will earn one credit for participating in this year-long course. This course may be repeated for credit.

- 1. To demonstrate an understanding of the form and structure of Mariachi music.
- 2. To demonstrate, through performance, proper habits in the areas of Mariachi music playing techniques.
- 3. To correctly perform nuances inherent to Mariachi music.
- 4. To further develop skills to compose and arrange music.
- 5. To develop individual playing skills through participation in a Mariachi ensemble.
- 6. To evaluate performances through learning a self-evaluation process.
- 7. To prepare students for post-secondary Mariachi performance experiences.
- 8. To develop attitudes enabling continued participation in musical experience throughout life.
- 9. To explore career opportunities in the field of music.

#### MARIACHI ENSEMBLE II CLARK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT SECONDARY MARIACHI PROGRAM

Course Scope:

The Mariachi Ensemble II course is offered for the purpose of allowing students to perform in an ensemble which has a selected membership and which specializes in performing advanced level Mariachi ensemble literature. Students will earn one credit for participating in this year-long course. This course may be repeated for credit.

- 1. To demonstrate more complex examples of the elements of Mariachi music.
- 2. To demonstrate more complex examples of the elements of Mariachi music.
- 3. To demonstrate, through performance, proper habits in the areas of advanced Mariachi playing techniques.
- 4. To demonstrate appropriate interpretation of nuances inherent to the various styles of Mariachi music.
- 5. To further develop skills to compose and arrange music.
- 6. To demonstrate individual playing skills through solo performance.
- 7. To apply specific musical criteria in evaluating their own musical performance and those of similar or exemplary models.
- 8. To prepare students for post-secondary Mariachi performance experiences.
- 9. To realize the possibilities of continuing involvement with Mariachi music throughout life.
- 10. To realize all of the components of a successful performance.
- 11. To further develop the understanding of the relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside of the arts.
- 12. To demonstrate knowledge of the historical period and cultural diversity of the music performed.

#### **EQUIPMENT STANDARDS**

According to the *Opportunity To Learn Standards for Music Instruction*, published by MENC, the equipment standards in music are intended to. . .

"... specify the physical and educational conditions necessary in the schools to enable every student, with sufficient effort, to meet the content standards in music. [While these equipment standards] focus on the learning environment necessary to teach music, it is important to note that the ultimate objective of all standards, all school curricula, and all school personnel is to help students to gain the broad skills and knowledge that will enable them to function effectively as adults and to contribute to society in today's world and tomorrow's."

### **BUDGET - BUYER BEWARE!**

#### Instruments:

Like with all other instruments, there is a wide variety of quality in mariachi instruments. The CCSD prefers to purchase quality instruments which will not need to be replaced so often. Vihuelas and guitarrones are purchased from **Candelas Guitars** (Los Angeles) since they provide a quality instrument and wonderful price breaks for school-based mariachi programs.

### Uniforms:

- White Shirt
- Black Pants
- Moño (\$15)
  - o Refer to Internet Resources

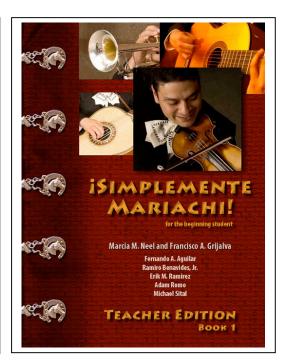
Meet the authors. Ask questions. See the Teacher's Edition Take it home, start your program this January1 The authors will be at the booth to help you start your own program.

# **!Simplemente Mariachi!**

A Standards-based Curriculum Method for Mariachi Education

Booth 6 & 7 Continental Ballroom

Northeastern Music Publications, Inc. P.O. Box 517 Glenmoore, PA 19343 1-866-385-8446 (toll free in U.S. and Canada) Voice: 610-942-2370 Fax: 610-642-0660 www.nemusicpub.com email: info@nemusicpub.com



### UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS AND WORKSHOPS

February 27-March 1, 2008:       Creating the Mariachi Program That Works – There is a Method to this Madness!         Location:       ASTA National Conference         Albuquerque, NM       www.astaweb.com		
April 9, 2008: (2:00 PM-5:00 PM)	Classes on Mar Location: M	achi! A Series of Round-Robin Mini-Master iachi Instruments MENC National In-service Pre-conference Focus Session Milwaukee, WI www.menc.org
July 7-11, 2008:	Location: "	achi Program at Your School (3 Credits through Villanova University) The Gig" located at The National Music Center and Museum 301 K Street NW Washington, DC 20001 www.yamaha.com/mariachiworkshop
July 14-18, 2008:	Location: V	achi Program at Your School (3 Credits through Villanova University) Villanova Universtiy Philadelphia, PA
July 27-30, 2008: (Exact Date TBA)	Creating the Mariachi Program That Works There is a Method to this Madness! Location: Texas Bandmasters Association Convention San Antonio, TX www.texasbandmasters.org/conventions/2008/index.cfm	

# ¡Simplemente Mariachi!

The simple method for teaching the vibrant music of the Mariachi tradition

- Based on the National Content Standards for Music Education
- ♪ Students begin playing on day one of instruction
- ♪ Extremely user-friendly with clearly stated lessons on uncluttered pages
- Skills that students are expected to know and be able to demonstrate are identified
- ♪ Detailed instructional pictures and fingering charts for each instrument are included
- New concepts and vocabulary are presented in separate text boxes
- Specific *Strategies for Success* are provided for effective teaching and student learning
- Designed to be used in a variety of learning settings
- ♪ Excellent resource for community based organizations
- Suitable for first year study with elementary, middle and high school students or with adults

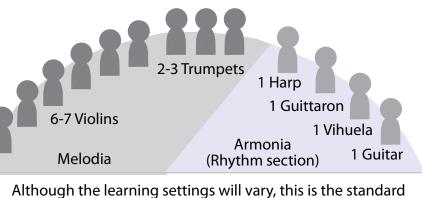
## The Singing Tradition:

- » Since it is characteristic for Mariachis to sing as well as play, each lesson includes vocal material.
- » Easy-to-learn Spanish lyrics with English translation add another dimension to the lessons.
- » A pronunciation guide is provided at the end of the teacher and student books.

### Mariachi Repertoire:

- » Students are introduced to original and standard mariachi repertoire.
- » Various mariachi song forms, based upon specific rhythmic combinations, are presented
- » By the end of the Level I book, students can be expected to play songs made up of the notes of the G, D, C, and F scales for strings and A, E, D and G for trumpet.

- Mariachi History- Historia de Mariachi is included in both teacher and student books. The authors believe that students should learn about the rich traditions associated with this genre as well as the music itself.
- Standards-based Lesson Plans for school classroom settings are included on the teacher edition CD as PDFs. These can serve as the core of the required school district lesson documentation.



instrumentation found in the modern Mariachi ensemble.

### FREE INTRODUCTORY MENC MARIACHI MEMBERSHIP

Simply complete the tear-out application included in the Appendix and mail it to: MENC, 1806 Robert Fulton Drive, Reston, VA 20191.

# General Organizational Tips and Instrument-Specific Information

This section has been provided to assist teachers with the "how to" of important instrumentspecific information regarding the learning process. It contains information on everything from how to take the instrument from its case to creating a sound.

At the very beginning of the school year however, the most important facet of instruction is to provide successful playing experiences. It is thus recommended that the teacher start by modeling the proper instrument playing position and demonstrating the first three notes to be taught.

Over these first several class sessions, it is important for the teacher to:

- » Demonstrate proper instrument, playing, and rest positions.
- » Demonstrate the proper procedure for students to use to enter class.
- » Communicate daily expectations.

# **Tuning the Instruments**

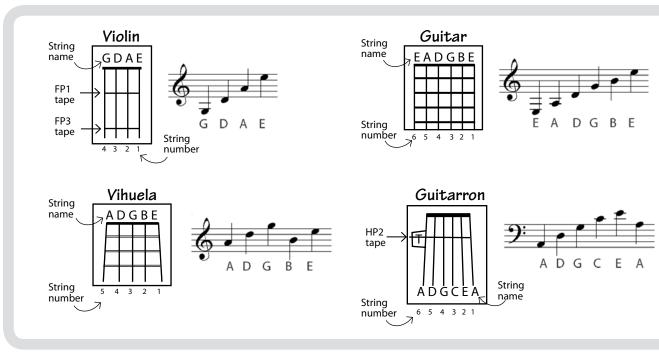
Teachers should take the time to tune the instruments so that they are ready to play before the students come into class. Accurately tuned instruments are vital to student success. Various methods can be used to insure proper tuning: V

The TRUMPET is a Bb instrument so it is notated a whole step above the string instruments thoughout this method.

Although they are heard one octave lower, the GUITAR notes are written in the treble clef.

The VIHUELA is played similarly to the guitar except that is has only five strings. The notes are written in the same register as the guitar. Because of its unique tuning, the open G sounds one octave higher.

- » Electronic tuners. Manufactures are making tuners for stringed instruments in particular, but one will need a chromatic tuner for the trumpet. The chromatic tuner will also help the non-fretted instruments to play all notes in tune.
- » Matching the strings or notes to the piano (provided the piano is in proper tune).
- » Listening for or learning the sound of the perfect 4th or 5th, major 3rd or octave between strings.
- » Tuning forks or pitch pipes.



continued on next page

# **Taping the Instruments**

It is recommended that teachers put pin striping tape at designated locations across the fingerboards of the violin and guitarron. This will serve as a reference point for both the teacher and student and help with intonation. Students can be expected to play in tune so long as the teacher continues to insist on it.

### VIOLIN

Thin tape should be used as an adhesive guide for the violin to mark the first finger placement (**1FP**) and third finger placement (**3FP**) on the fingerboard.

To ensure proper placement of the tape guides:

- » 1FP Tape: Place the first finger on the open D string on top of the first adhesive guide. The resulting pitch should be E natural.
- » 3FP Tape: Place the first finger on the open D string on top of the second adhesive guide. The resulting pitch should be G natural.

### **GUITARRON**

Thicker tape should be used as an adhesive guide for the guitarron to mark the location of the interval of a whole step above the open string pitch.

To ensure proper placement of the first tape on the fingerboard of the guitarron:

- » Pull the open LOW A string.
- » Press down on the adhesive guide and replay the string. The resulting pitch should be B natural.

 $\checkmark$ 

The GUITARRON is not a "precise" instrument in that each one varies from the other. Because of this uniqueness, the hand placements cannot be specified exactly. The placements described will be approximate and the student must learn to listen acutely in order to make minor quick adjustments to ensure playing in the center of the pitch.

### **Placements**

Students will quickly pick up the terms: FINGER PLACEMENT (FP) for the violin HAND PLACEMENT (HP) and THUMB PLACEMENT (TP) for the guitarron. Once students have learned where the various

placements are located on the respective fingerboards, the teacher will be able to teach new notes with greater ease.

# Learning the Style

As with any other ensemble, listening is a major part of learning to play mariachi. Have recordings of quality ensembles playing as students enter the room. This will not only help with ear training, but it will also acquaint students will the unique rhythms and sonorities that are characteristic of the mariachi style. See appendix for resources.

## **Recommended Accessories**

- » VIOLIN- shoulder rest (can be made from upholstery foam), chin rest, rosin, and cleaning cloth.
- » TRUMPET valve oil, slide grease, cleaning cloth and snake.
- » GUITAR flat pick and classical guitar neck strap.
- » VIHUELA (index) finger pick, and classical guitar neck strap.
- » GUITARRON over-the-shoulder electric bass strap. Teachers should ensure that strap buttons are installed on the instrument.

# Practicing

PRACTICE TIME charts are included at the end of each lesson in the student book.

Students should start practicing 5 to 10 minutes, rest and play another 5 to 10 minutes. Gradually add more practice time to build endurance. Each time they complete the lesson, they mark an X on the chart.

# **LESSON 4 PLAN**

### CONCEPTS

Measure and Measure (Bar) Line Half Rest Stepwise and Skipwise Intervals Whole Note Dynamics: Forte Singing and Playing: *Frijolitos Brincando* 

Mariachi History: **The Instruments of the Mariachi Ensemble-The Violin** 

### NATIONAL MUSIC CONTENT STANDARDS

- 1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- 2. Playing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- 5. Reading and notating music
- 9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture

### The teacher will:

Review G, F#, E, D, and C fingerings for strings: A, G#, F#, E, and D for trumpet Review proper bow hold Review bowing technique Introduce the terms measure and measure (bar) line Introduce the half rest Introduce steps and skips Introduce the whole note Introduce forte as a dynamic marking Introduce Silvestre Vargas, one of the most famous mariachis of all time was Silvestre Vargas whose instrument was the violin.

### THE STUDENT WILL:

Play G, F#, E, D, and C concert pitches Demonstrate an understanding of half rest Play a whole note Demonstrate the ability to play *forte* Sing and play *Frijolitos Brincando* Name a famous Mariachi violinist

# WHAT TO DO

- 1. Review fingerings for G, F#, E, D, and C (strings); A, G#, F#, E, and D (trumpet).
- 2. Ask students to play the notes individually (solo).
- 3. Review proper bow hold.
- 4. Review bowing technique.
- 5. Review the terms measure and bar line.
- 6. Introduce the half rest.
- 7. Introduce steps and skips.
- 8. Introduce the whole note.
- 9. Introduce forte as a dynamic marking.
- 10. Play all the songs.
- 11. Sing and play Frijolitos Brincando.

# **STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS**

To review, ask students to play stepwise from G down to C and back up to G. Use a comfortable tempo. Have each student perform this mini-scale individually using the same rhythmic pattern and tempo. Check for proper finger placement to ensure good tuning on the string instruments. On the violin, check bow hold and bowing technique.

Using Visitando La Plaza, review the terms measure and bar line. Ask students to count the total number of measures; count the number of beats in each measure. Draw their attention to the fact that each measure contains the same number of beats.

In *Un Pasito Silencioso*, the HALF REST is introduced. Be sure the students connect the HALF NOTE and the half rest as taking up the same amount of time. Ask students to look at the measures to see how many beats are in each then play through the song.

Before playing *Brincando Con Mis Vecinos*, introduce the concept of STEPWISE and SKIPWISE motion. Have students:

- » Play a mini-scale from G down to C once again and ask if they are playing steps or skips.
- » Identify whether the intervals in measures 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7 are steps or skips. Write additional examples on the board such as C up to D, F# down to D, E down to C, F# up to G.

In *La Calle Ocupada*, reinforce the concept of 4 beats per measure. A WHOLE NOTE equals 4 beats and takes up the whole measure in 4/4

INTERVAL - distance in pitch between two notes:

- STEPWISE intervals which step from one note to the next. E steps up to F#. F# steps up to G. D steps down to C.
- SKIPWISE intervals which skip a note when moving up or down. C skips up to E. G skips down to E.
- DYNAMICS how loud or soft to play:

f (forte) = loud.

SOLO - playing alone.

WHOLE NOTE - an open note head with no stem.

1 whole note  $(\mathbf{o}) = 4$  beats = 4

HALF REST - 2 beats of silence. The half rest sits on the third staff line.

time. Students tend to release whole notes early, so monitor that they hold the note for 4 full beats.

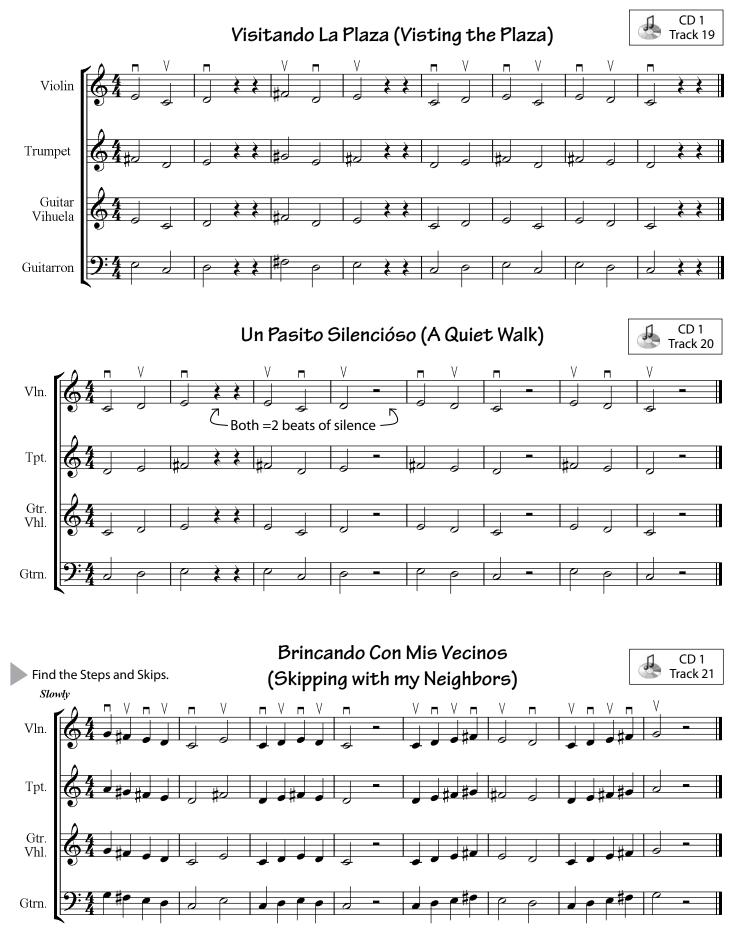
Before playing, *Brinquitos*, ask students to say aloud the number of beats that are in each measure. Point out that there are only 3 measures that do not contain skips and ask students to identify them by the correct measure number.

Before playing *Frijolitos Brincando,* introduce FORTE (*f*) and explain how to play with increased volume by doing the following:

- » Violin increase bow speed.
- » Trumpet ensure that sufficient breath support is used and that all of the air is going into the mouthpiece and none "leaking" outside of the mouthpiece.
- » Guitar/Vihuela strengthen the picking/ plucking motion.
- » Guitarron strengthen the pulling motion.

*Frijolitos Brincando* incorporates all of the new elements from this lesson. Before playing, ask students to respond to the following:

- » How many measures are in the song?
- » Which measures contain skips?
- » Which measure contains a step?
- » Which measure contains a half rest?
- » Which measure contains a whole note?
- » At what dynamic level is the song played?





# **LESSON 9 PLAN**

### CONCEPTS

Trumpet: B natural Violin and Trumpet : Playing with accompaniment Guitar and Vihuela: D Major and A7 Chords in 4/4 and ¾ time; Down Strum, Golpe Strum and Chord Charts Guitarron: Playing in the key of D Major Ranchera Valseada Form: A Song Form of the Mariachi Style Singing and Playing: *Toca, Toca en Re* 

Mariachi History: **The Instruments of the Mariachi Ensemble-The Guitarron** 

## NATIONAL MUSIC CONTENT STANDARDS

- 1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- 2. Playing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- 3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments
- 5. Reading and notating music
- 6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music
- 9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture

### THE TEACHER WILL:

Strings: Review A, B, and C# from Lesson 8

Trumpet: **Review** D# from Lesson 8; **Introduce** B natural

Violin, Guitarron and Trumpet: Review hand instrument position

Guitar and Vihuela - **Introduce** D Major and A7 chords in 4/4 and 3/4 time; introduce down strum, and golpe strums

Guitarron – Introduce the concept of serving the ensemble as the bass

Introduce the Guitarron as one of the two most characteristic instruments of the modern mariachi ensemble

# THE STUDENT WILL:

Play G, F#, E, D, C, C#, B, and A concert pitches
Play melody with chordal accompaniment
Guitar and Vihuela - play Major and A7 chords in 4/4 and <sup>3</sup>/4 time;
Play down strum, and golpe strums
Guitarron – play the bass part as an ensemble instrument, different than the melody part
Indentify the chareacteristics of *Ranchera* Valseada form
Sing and play *Toca, Toca*

ACCOMPANIMENT - music played in support of the melody

ARMONIA - the rhythm section (specifically the Guitar, Vihuela, and Guitarron) of the Mariachi Ensemble.

CHORD - a combination of three or more notes sounded at the same time.

IMPROVISATION - make up music as you play.

STRUM - brushing your fingers over the strings. Strum symbols are written directly on the staff.

DOWN STROKE (guitar and vihuela) - strumming the the strings in a downward direction.

GOLPE STRUM (guitar and vihuela) - a hard, crisp striking downward strum pattern.

# V STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

### **Teaching the Golpe Strum**

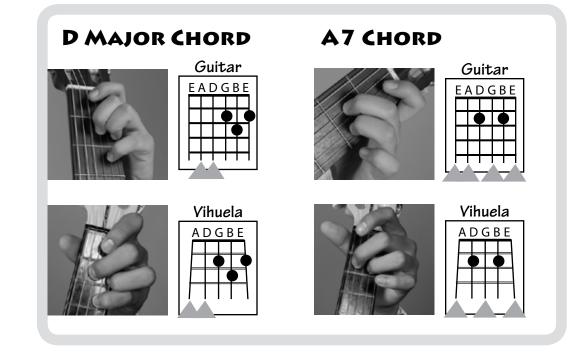
Have guitar and vihuela students use the pick to strike all of the open strings with a single, striking motion using a steady beat of half notes. Do this repeatedly until students become comfortable with the striking motion.

Point out that the strum notation indicates the duration of the chords being played and is the same as standard notation. In Exercise 1, the strum notation is the same as half notes.

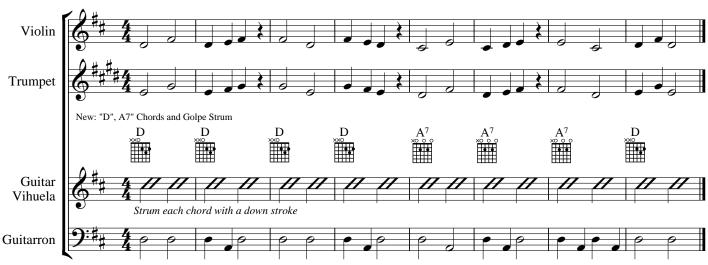
### **Playing Golpe Strums**

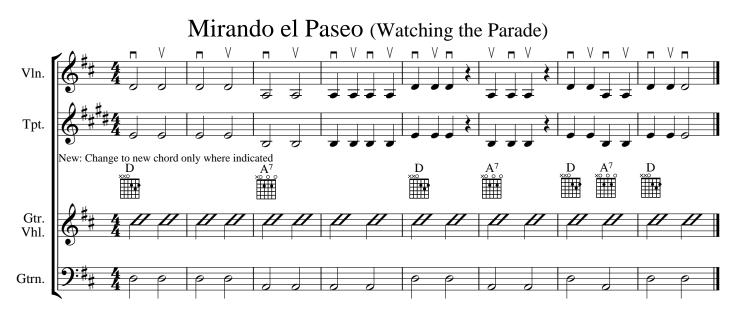
Vihuela students should use wrist action only.

Guitar students should use the wrist action as well, but with more arm. The right hand, however, should never pass beyond the top edge of the guitar.



# Lesson 9 Melodia con Acordes (Melody with Chords)





Vals del Fandango (Celebration Waltz)

New: Ranchera Valseada Form: Characterized by guitarron playing on beat 1 with guitar and vihuela playing on beats 2 and 3



# Andando en Chapla (Walking in Chapala)









Translation: See the colors, see the colors that cover the meadows all over in springtime. See the colors, see the colors that cover the flowers and birds in the sun light. See the colors, see the colors that shine from the rainbow above,

See the colors shining from the rainbow that light up the sky and fills it with love,

see the colors shining from the rainbow that light up the sky and fills it with love.