



Teacher Guide

Mexico Beyond Mariachi is a research-based project that brings the wide variety of Mexican artistic expression that exists beyond the popular image of the mariachi musician to schools and performing arts centers.

The company performs art-in-education residencies, lecture demonstrations, community celebrations, as well as full-scale productions.

Many people think that the Mariachi band of musicians, wearing the traditional sombrero and outfit from the state of Jalisco, is all there is to Mexican music, dance and culture. The ensemble's mission is to encourage students to look beyond that stereotype and into the fascinating story and history of the Mexican people. The concert brings audiences on a journey that begins over 500 years ago with the Aztec civilization and continues chronologically demonstrating how time, geography, climate and foreign influence have effected folk traditions up to the present day.

The Program:

Mexico Beyond Mariachi is a candid and delightful interactive arts program that showcases the vast cultural expression of our neighbor to the south. Each region of Mexico has its own traditional language, arts, rituals, celebrations and costumes. Your students will be immersed in an experience that mirrors a Mexican marketplace, one filled with colors, sounds and movement.



Students Will

- Experience a performance by professional musicians with a wide range of experience and who have received training in working with young people
- Recognize the roles of both performers and audience members
- Ask the artists open-ended questions about the music, dance, culture and their careers
- Experience the sounds of a wide variety of instruments, some familiar, others less so, and see how each is played
- Increase understanding of the connection between music and dance
- Follow a journey from the traditional arts of the ancient Mexican Indians to the contemporary folk arts of present day Mexico
- Explore the variety of cultures that exist across Mexico
- Be able to recognize the influence of geography, climate and other natural assets on cultural expression and the development of traditions including music, dance, dress and more, over time
- Be able to compare and contrast their own culture with another, deepening their understanding of their own culture and the role they play within it
- Gain vocabulary and language skills related to music and culture
- Develop their skills of observation, active listening, recall and analysis
- Become (more) familiar with the Spanish Language and hear, probably for the first time, words from the indigenous languages of Mexico
- Connect with individuals of other cultural backgrounds through the art forms of music and dance
- Increase their understanding of how music, dance and many different art forms can strengthen a sense of community.



Teachers Will

- Learn from and collaborate with professional artists
- Have the opportunity to draw on a professional music and dance performance in their classrooms
- Gain skills and experience in presenting traditional cultures to their students
- Find new ways of integrating music, foreign language and world cultures into existing curriculum
- Obtain new resources for teaching about music, as well as Mexican culture and history
- Use the students' experience of professional performance to further understanding of musical traditions, and cultural development over time.

Using an articulate and balanced mix of English and Spanish this standards-based arts program can be tailored to meet your classroom goals. The presentation can be augmented by single workshops or residencies of varying lengths to enhance students' study of music, world cultures, social studies, foreign languages, and English/Language Arts.



Resources to prepare for and follow up the *Mexico Beyond Mariachi* experience:

The Instruments:

Percussion:

- Huehuetl - (way-way-tl) Large wooden drum sacred to the ancient Aztecs
- Teponaztle - (Te-po-nas-tleh) Log drums that come in different sizes
- Turtle Shells (played with deer antlers, they sound like a marimba)
- Rainsticks (by rotating the instrument it makes the sound of water cascading down)
- Donkey Jaw (Yes! by scraping the teeth you can make sounds)
- Tarima (small wooden box on which dancers make rhythm patterns with their shoes)

Wind Instruments:

- Ocarinas – Flutes made out of clay
- Sopranino Recorder - High pitched recorder
- Wind Whistle- Whistle made out of clay that makes the sound of wind
- Conch Shells-You blow into them like a trumpet, in ancient times were used as a means of communication

String Instruments:

- Violin – European string instrument played throughout Mexico
- Jarana Jarocho - a small guitar of 4 to 8 strings played in the state of Veracruz
- Vihuela - a small guitar with a “belly” in the back played throughout central Mexico.



Books:

For teachers:

The Mexico Reader: History, Culture, Politics
Gilbert M. Joseph and Timothy J. Henderson (2003)

For Students:

Mexico, Elain Landau, New True Books 2008 (grades 3-6)

A Family in Mexico, Tom Moran, Lerner Publications, 1987. (grades 3-6)

Fiesta! Mexico's Great Celebrations, Elizabeth Silverthorne, Millbrook Press, 1992 (grades 1-8)

Pyramid of the Sun, Pyramid of the Moon, Leonard Everett Fisher, Mac Millan Publishing, 1988. (grades 4-6). Tells the history of the ancient peoples who lived in Mexico before Spanish colonization.

Musicians of the Sun, Gerald McDermott, Simon & Shuster, 1997 (grades k-3)
Tells the story of an Aztec myth, Lord of the Night sends Wind to free the four musicians that the Sun is holding prisoner so they can bring joy to the world.

Music:

Los Folkloristas
CD – “El Son Mexicano”

Los Vega
CD – “En Otros Tonos”

Sones De Mexico
CD – “Fiesta Mexicana: Mexican Songs”

Websites:

http://www.historylink101.com/1/aztec/ancient_aztec.htm

<http://www.ancientsites.com/aw/Post/261968>

<http://www.mesoweb.org>



Suggested Pre and Post Performance Lessons

Prior to the performance:

- Introduce students to the names of the instruments played by the musicians of *Mexico Beyond Mariachi*. Ask questions to determine which they are familiar with and which are new to them, and what their expectations of the sounds might be.
- Introduce the classes of instruments played by the ensemble.
- Have students listen to recordings of Mexican music. Ask them to describe the sounds, feelings and thoughts they experience.
- Have students identify on Map of Mexico the different states, bordering countries and large bodies of water.

Following the Performance:

Discussion

- Ask questions to see whether students recognized the instruments: Were the sounds what they expected? Which instruments were they most surprised by? Which did they like the best and why?
- Ask prompting questions about the overall experience of the performance such as: What did it make them think about or feel? Was the music familiar or new to them? Were the musicians and dancers communicating their feelings? Were they relating to each other? What was your favorite part? Why? What part didn't you like? Why? What did you learn about Mexico? What did you learn about music and dance? What did you learn about the life of an artist? How was this performance similar or different to any others you have seen?
- Discuss the different European cultures that have influenced Mexican music and dance.



- Compare and contrast the cultural traditions of the places the students' and their families come from and those of Mexico presented during the performance.
- Discuss the students' own interests in music, dance or other traditional art forms. Do their families participate in any? Do they? If so, where did they learn the skills and/or craft of that art form?
- Discuss the differences between live and recorded performance: What was it like to experience the music and dance live? How was it different than seeing and hearing it on TV, the movies, the internet, etc? Which type of experience is more enjoyable or interesting? Which did they respond to more fully?
- Discuss the artists: What were they like? Were they surprised by anything about them? What did they learn from them that they could not have learned from anyone else?

Writing

- Have students write about the topics you held in class discussion (as outlined above) or complete some of those as writing assignments using the discussion questions as writing prompts.
- Have students write a journal or draw a picture about the performance and/or workshop.
- Have students write in their journal about their own cultural heritage with leading questions such as; Who am I? Where do members of my family come from? What special holidays and celebrations do we hold? What foods do we eat during those? How are music, dance or other art forms (i.e. storytelling) part of those celebrations?
- Have students compare and contrast their prior experience with music and dance with that of the *Mexico Beyond Mariachi* performance.



- Have students write about the similarities and differences in their own traditional arts and those presented in the performance and discovered during class discussion and research.
- Have students write about the similarities and differences between the performance of traditional arts and any contemporary performances they have experienced.

Research and Reading

- Read a book related to Mexico (such as those listed above or others in your school or public library).
 - Research the different festivities in Mexico including Cinco de Mayo, Day of the Dead, September 15 - Independence Day and Las Posadas.
 - Research the geography and climate of the different regions of Mexico.
 - Research the traditional arts practiced by people of their own cultural heritage.
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Mexico Beyond Mariachi

Is currently on the roster of teaching artists of:

Young Audiences New Jersey & Eastern Pennsylvania
Midori & Friends, NYC
Arts Connection, NYC
Community Works, NY
Manhattan New Music Project, NYC

Has ongoing collaborations with

Museo del Barrio, NYC
City Lore, NYC
Green Meadows Farm, New York & Florida
Teatro Si, New Jersey
Theater in the Park, NYC

We have also performed and curated events for:

Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC
Newark Museum, Newark, NJ
Queens Theater in the Park, NYC
Central Park Conservancy, NYC
New York Botanical Gardens, NYC
New Jersey State Museum, Trenton NJ
Rosendale Theater, Rosendale NY

Artist Biographies

Peter Basil Bogdanos (narrator, percussionist, strings) - **Executive Director**

A multi-percussionist by profession, he has dedicated himself to the investigation and teaching of rhythms from around the world. Currently, Mr. Bogdanos is working with arts organizations in the tri-state area, sharing his knowledge and passion as a performing and teaching artist in schools as well as at major events and festivals through the Northeast. He is the Executive Director of *Rhythm of the Arts* and *Mexico Beyond Mariachi*.

Alda Reuter (dance, flutes, percussion) - **Artistic Director**

As the daughter of a well-known ethnomusicologist, Alda comes from a family of artists who celebrate the culture and traditions of Latin America. As a dancer as well as an accomplished percussionist, she is always exploring the close relationship between music and dance. As the artistic director of *Mexico Beyond Mariachi*, she brings an appreciation of folklore, culture, and traditions of Mexico through music and dance to thousands of young students and audiences of all ages.

Juan Lucero (string instruments, dancer, voice)

Juan was exposed to the music and dance from his native Puebla, Mexico from a very young age. As a teenager he started playing string instruments such as guitar, vihuela, jaranas and 'bajo sexto' (a type of Mexican bass). As a dancer he has worked with several dance companies in the NYC and NJ area including Calpulli and Jarana Beat.

Sinuhe Padilla-Isunza – Musical Director

Sinuhé Padilla-Isunza was born in Mexico City in May 1978. He grew up in an environment of constant artistic activity, and in 1986 began his first studies in corporal expression, music and dance, disciplines he has continued practicing and studying in various forms to this day. He currently lives in New York, where founded his own recording label, [Jarana Records](#), producing a number of different artists.

Claudia Valentina

Equal parts singer, dancer and designer, Claudia epitomizes the *mélange parfait* of modern New York. In 2003 she co-founded [Calpulli Mexican Dance Company](#) to honor her Mexican heritage and pass on cultural learnings. With them, she taught in schools, began a children's program and toured the country for four years, appearing at numerous venues, including Queens Theatre in the Park, and in 2006, alongside her daughter in Carnegie Hall's revered Isaac Stern Auditorium.