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Fiesta Mexicana

Sones de México





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Dear Fellow Teachers,

On behalf of all of us in Sones de México Ensemble Chicago, I would like to welcome you to our special TPAC presentation of Fiesta Mexicana. We have been working hard with the TPAC team to make sure that you and your students get the most from this experience. We hope that these materials will help you introduce your students to music, dance and to Mexican culture.



Like the U.S., Mexico has a strong national identity, but at the same time, it is also a diverse country with many ethnic and regional differences. Thus, there is no single Mexican music "style." Sones de México Ensemble specializes in regional folk music and dance styles (i.e. "son") from various parts of Mexico, each with unique instruments, singing and playing styles. Some of the material may be familiar to you and some may not. Expect a grand tour through Mexico's musical cultures and the magic world that surrounds them. We will explore Mexico's Native, European, and African roots and visit an exciting world of animals and myths in Mexican folklore with everyone's participation welcome!

Teachers have an important role in making Fiesta Mexicana more than an entertaining show by turning it into an educational opportunity. This guide has some ideas to help you, but of course, you should also explore your own creative ways to enhance your students' experience. You should convey to your students that only when we understand more about the meaning of a cultural song or a dance, may we truly share it with the people who produce it.

Enjoy!

Juan Díes

Ethnomusicologist, Executive Director Sones de México Ensemble

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TPAC Guidebook by Juan Díes and Sandy Tipping with editing by Lattie Brown.



crest of the Mexican flag

A note from our Sponsor - Regions Bank

Regions is proud to be a part of the Middle Tennessee Community. We care about our customers, and we care about our community. We also care about the education of our students.

That is why we are proud to support TPAC's Humanities Outreach in Tennessee Program. What an important sponsorship this is - reaching over 25,000 students and teachers - some students would never see a performing arts production without this program. Regions continues to reinforce its commitment to our community and education and, in addition to supporting programs such as HOT, we will have over 76 associates teaching financial literacy in local classrooms this year.

Thank you, teachers, for giving your students this wonderful opportunity. They will certainly enjoy the experience. You are creating memories of a lifetime, and Regions is proud to be able to help make this opportunity possible.



Jim Schmitz
Area President
Middle Tennessee





About Sones de México

Sones de México Ensemble Chicago is a unique group of seasoned Mexican folk musicians and educators. The group specializes in *son*, a rich and lively Mexican music tradition and its many regional styles.

Bob Tarte of *The Beat* magazine (Los Angeles) says, "After 13 years in the U.S., these overachievers bring so much authenticity to the regional folk styles, so much virtuosity to the orchestral excursions (on which they play over 50 all-acoustic instruments), and so much fun to everything they touch, that you can't help but surrender to their creativity."

Today, Sones de México travels around the country presenting concerts, accompanying professional dance companies, playing clubs, and offering lectures and workshops.

From its inception Sones de México has taught and performed for thousands of children in cities around the U.S. The group embarks on a journey through Mexican music and the magic world that surrounds it. Children begin by learning about the four sacred elements of nature for the Aztecs: Water, Earth, Fire, and Wind. Then they learn songs about different animals that inhabit the Mexican ecosystem, like the acamaya, the crocodile, the legendary mermaid, a mouse, a buzzard, a duck, and even a cat! They also clap Mexican rhythms and learn the difference between a slow and a fast tempo. First and foremost, they learn how fun it is to play and dance Mexican music.

The ensemble has recorded three commercially available CDs. Their most recent release, entitled **Esta Tierra Es Tuya** (This Land Is Your Land), was nominated for both a Latin GRAMMY® for Best Folk Album of 2007 and a GRAMMY® for Best Mexican/Mexican-American Album of 2007. The group has been featured on NPR's "Morning Edition," PRI's "The World," and "A Prairie Home Companion" with Garrison Keillor. The other titles, **¡Que Florezca!** (Let It Bloom) and **Fandango on 18th Street**, are available from the group's website, www.sonesdemexico.com, iTunes and other outlets.

THE ENSEMBLE:

(pictured at right in order, photos by Todd Winters)

Victor Pichardo, music director

Juan Dies

Lorena Iñiguez

Juan Rivera

Zacbé Pichardo

Javier Saume





About this Concert

page 4



With lively rhythms, powerful melodies, and colorful dancing, the ensemble Sones de México (SOH-nahs deh MEH-hee-koh) takes students on a journey through Mexico's colorful history in a program entitled *Fiesta Mexicana*. Students will experience an ancient Aztec ceremony celebrating the four elements, meet a Tex-Mex mouse who finds himself in a bit of trouble, and hop on a human train with a rosy-cheeked old woman who likes to dance. Sones de México brings these characters to life in an atmosphere of high-spirited fun, while a dancer dressed in vivid colors literally puts a jump in their steps.

In Mexico, *son* is a term used to define a large family of regional music and dance styles. Each region has its own brand of *son*—*gusto*, *son jarocho*, *son huasteco*, etc.—each with its own repertoire, instruments, and dancing and singing style. Sones de México believes in both perpetuating and renewing the regional styles of music and dance known in Mexico as *son* (SOHN). This concert will highlight the regional variations as well as the diverse ethnic roots of Mexico that have influenced *son*: pre-Columbian, European, and African traditions.

Son is played and danced in a fandango --a dance fiesta-- often from sundown until sunrise or longer. It is also a playful time where tradition becomes fluid: rules are made and broken as old forms are applied to new experience. After the fiesta, tradition is passed on quietly, as the events of the fandango crystallize in the memories of the participants, becoming new lore for future resurgence. We call this a living tradition.

**Sones de
México at the
Grammies!**





WHAT IS MEXICAN SON?

Excerpts from Fiddler Magazine Fall 1998

This musical genre, found throughout Mexico and other parts of Latin America, is not easily defined. In Mexico, different regions are known for different varieties of *son*, each with its own instruments, rhythms, dances, and performance traditions. Characteristics of the *son* do exist but are not limiting. For example, normally, the violin carries the melody. However, there are regions where the *son's* melody is strong but the violin is not one of the main instruments.

"Let's play a *guacamaya*!"

Mexican *sones* are not set in musical notation, precisely because they are not always played exactly the same way from one time to the next. In some regions, it is common to hear someone say "Let's play a *guacamaya*," rather than say "Let's play the *guacamaya*." By giving the *son* a generic term rather than a specific title, musicians mean that the *guacamaya* (parrot) they are going to play right now is different than the one they might have played yesterday or the *guacamaya* that other musicians might play. Nevertheless, it is the same *son*.

Each *son*, instead of being a piece of specific music, belongs to a musical subgroup. There is a rhythmic-harmonic base, a melody to start out with for the melody instrument (equivalent to the statement of that *son*) and a cyclical phrase of accompaniment that is repeated several times like a refrain which people sing, giving a base to the creation of a variety of melodic figures. The *son* is used as a musical pretext to dance to or to say certain things: courting verses, anecdotal verses, verses of popular wisdom etc.

Dancing

In a live performance, a *son* that is only 3 or 4 minutes in a recording may actually go on for an hour in order to give plenty of couples the opportunity to take their turn on the wooden dancing platform (*tarima*). Since it is usually small, the *tarima* does not provide room for many couples to dance simultaneously. Often they line up two-by-two to step up and show off their *zapateado*, or pounding footwork, one couple at a time, staying on the little platform during at least one verse and its corresponding musical interlude. The footwork, somewhat like tap dance, is part of the improvisation with the *tarima* serving as a percussion instrument blending with the musical group.



Sones from some regions have a combination of 3/4 and 6/8 time called *sesquiáltero*. But there are *sones* where the rhythm changes. To experience the musical essence of the *son*, try feeling the rhythm of the famous phrase from West Side Story: "I like to live in A-mer-i-ca."



The United Mexican States

Did you know that Mexico is also referred to as the United Mexican States? Just like the United States of America, Mexico is organized as a union of separate states. Also like America, each state has its own individual cultural character and history that is still related to the larger overall country. For Mexico, this is particularly evident in the differing *son* of each region.

The United Mexican States

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Aguascalientes | 13. Jalisco |
| 2. Baja California | 14. México |
| 3. Baja California Sur | 15. Michoacán |
| 4. Campeche | 16. Morelos |
| 5. Chiapas | 17. Nayarit |
| 6. Chihuahua | 18. Nuevo León |
| 7. Coahuila | 19. Oaxaca |
| 8. Colima | 20. Puebla |
| 9. Durango | 21. Querétaro |
| 10. Guanajuato | 22. Quintana Roo |
| 11. Guerrero | 23. San Luis Potosí |
| 12. Hidalgo | 24. Sinaloa |



Mexico is nearly three times the size of Texas and borders that state and three others, California, Arizona, and New Mexico.

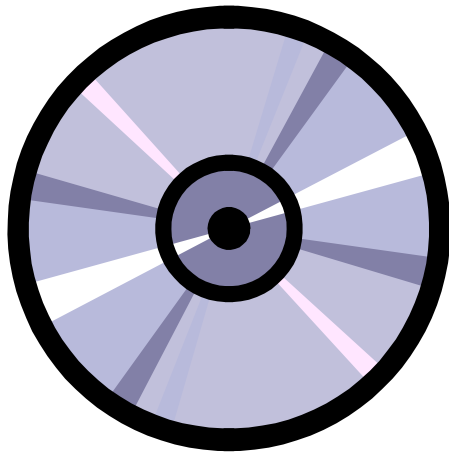


- 25. Sonora
- 26. Tabasco
- 27. Tamaulipas
- 28. Tlaxcala
- 29. Veracruz
- 30. Yucatán
- 31. Zacatecas
- Capital - Distrito Federal



Fiesta Mexicana Program

Mexico has diverse ethnic roots stemming from its indigenous cultures as well as Europe and Africa. Some of the songs you will hear in the Fiesta Mexicana concert highlight these influences. Listen to some of these selections on the listening CD.



Fiesta Mexicana Listening CD

- | | |
|---|------|
| 1. La Pasion | 2005 |
| 2. Xipe | 2005 |
| 3-4. La Pasion/ Xipe | 2009 |
| 5. La Acamaya | |
| 6. El Trenecito | |
| 7. La Bamba | |
| 8. Donna Sabina Narrative - introduction to El Trenecito (Play for students only AFTER the concert) | |

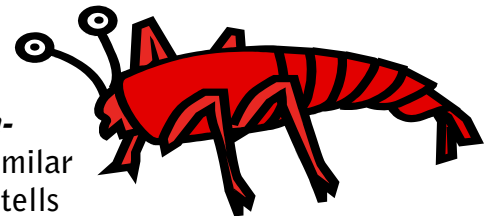
Xipe

The Aztecs were the dominant tribe of native people's in Mexico when the Spanish colonizers arrived. They were warriors, poets, astronomers, and creators of a great empire. They also established one of the most accurate calendars the world had known, with 365 days and adjustments on leap years and on 52 year cycles. Their language, *nahuatl*, is still spoken by more than one million people in Mexico today. Many words in modern Spanish, and a few words in English, like "chocolate" and "tomato," have a *nahuatl* etymology.

Xipe is an Aztec ritual piece that serves to awaken the senses, inviting all to make tribute to Mexico's native cultural roots and the sacred elements of Aztec cosmology: Water, Earth, Fire, and Wind. Dancer, Lorena Iñiguez calls upon the energy of these elements in a ritual dance where she faces the four sacred directions: North, South, East, and West. On her head, she wears a feathered headpiece called *copilli*. Incense —called *copal*— is burned, the conch shell—called *caracol*—is blown, and the *huéhuetl* and *teponaztli* beaten, accompanied with the strumming of the *concha*—a guitar made on an armadillo shell—, and the ankle shakes of the *ayoyotes*—made with dried seeds from a plant sown on a leather strip.

La Acamaya

Buried in the banks of a Mexican river in the Huasteca region lives a small, ugly-looking relative of the shrimp known locally as "**La Acamaya**." When children don't behave, they are told about "**La Acamaya**" similar to the way American children are told about the bogey-man. The song tells about dangerous magical creatures that inhabit the waters: a crocodile, a mermaid, and *la acamaya*, warning children to be careful when they bathe by the river or at the beach. In the chorus the children in the audience can respond with a fretful "uy, uy, uy" - "ay, ay, ay".





El Trenecito

In the Mexican state of Michoacán, the Purépecha Indians celebrate a festival where a series of comical or satirical dances known as "old men dances", *Danza de Los Viejitos* are performed. The selection chosen for this program is a circle dance called *El Trenecito* (The Little Train), and it is used to teach the meaning of tempo in music (i. e. "fast" tempo vs. "slow" tempo). The audience is asked to summon "Doña Sabina" (who is actually one of the musicians in costume). She emerges wearing a hat with multicolor ribbons, a cane, a straw wig, a mask carved from white wood representing a smiling, rosy-cheeked old man, and lively, forceful foot-tapping. About 8-10 volunteers from the audience are asked to form a train-like chain by holding hands together. The music begins in a slow 2/4 meter and the audience is asked to follow the beat with hand-claps. As the train speeds up around the room the tempo increases too, and the clapping must get faster to keep up with the train.



WANT TO KNOW MORE? There are 3 theories attempting to explain the origins and/or meaning of this piece: (1) that it begun in the 16th century to make fun of Spaniards' rosy-cheeked complexion; (2) that it portrays a pre-Hispanic, humorous attitude that the Purépecha people have towards their elderly, and (3) that it dates back to an Olmec worship of *Huehuetéotl*, the "Ancient" or "Elderly God" who was the purveyor of fertility —the colored ribbons in the hat representing the rays of the sun, the cane stands for the sowing stick, and the forceful tapping is the rain.

La Bamba

The show culminates with two versions of this festive Mexican standard, one American rock'n'roll arrangement popularized by California-based 1950s teen idol, Ritchie Valens, the other in the original Veracruz folk style. The audience is invited to clap along to the beat: 1-2-3-(pause), 1-2-3- (pause), ..., etc. and everyone may get up and dance to this song stomping the beat with their feet on the floor. The song has as many verses as the performers can improvise. When they can sing no more, they all sing together "Ay, te pido de compasión que se acabe La Bamba y venga otro *son*." [I beg you please to finish this song and play something else!] With this the show ends.



WANT TO KNOW MORE? The style of the music reflects yet another example of Mexico's African heritage brought via the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean. Although most of Mexico was cultivated on a hacienda system (Spanish patronage over the indigenous population), a number of African slaves were brought to the coastal plains of Tabasco, Campeche, and Veracruz to plant sugar cane and coffee from plantations. These slaves eventually escaped to form their own inland communities and leave their mark on the people and the music. Recognition of widespread African roots in Mexico have only been acknowledged in recent years. Africanism in Mexico is still a young science.



Arpa - a 36+ nylon string harp used for music from Veracruz, Guerrero, and Michoacan

Ayacaxtli - Hand shakers used by dancers

Ayoyotes - Ankle shakers made from seeds sown to a piece of leather

Bateria - a five piece drum set with a snare drum, bass drum, three toms and cymbals

Cajón - a wooden box drum

Cencerro - a metal cow bell used to keep the beat

Concha - steel string guitar or mandolin made from an armadillo shell

Flauta - a flute made with reeds or clay

Güiro - a gourd carved with ridges which are scraped with a stick or a comb

Guitarra - a six string guitar with nylon strings

Guitarrón - a six string fretless bass guitar

Huehuetl - large Aztec war drum carved from a tree trunk

Jarana huasteca - a five string rhythmic strumming guitar used in the Huasteca region

Jarana - an eight string guitar used for strumming in Veracruz

Mandolina - an eight string member of the lute family

Marimba - a percussion instrument with bars of wood struck with mallets

Quijada de burro - a donkey jaw bone which can be scraped or rattled with unique effects

Requinto - a four string lead guitar used in Veracruz

Tamborita - one small, two headed drum used for gustos from Michoacán and Guerrero

Tarima - foot stomping platform

Teponaztli - slit drum made from a section of bamboo or other wood

Vihuela - a five string guitar used for rhythmic strumming in central Mexico

Violin - a four string fiddle bowed and used in many styles of Mexican music

Tololoche - an upright bass



The Instruments



Concha ↑



Requinto



Teponaztli



Tarima ↓



Marimba ↓



Guitarrón ↑



Huehuetl





The Instruments



Look at all the different instruments the Sones de México musicians play! Not all of the instruments pictured will be included in this concert, but look for the ones that will be, listed on page 9. This photograph allows you to see and compare the different sizes.

Students:

Group the instruments pictured above into instrument families.

Strings

Percussion

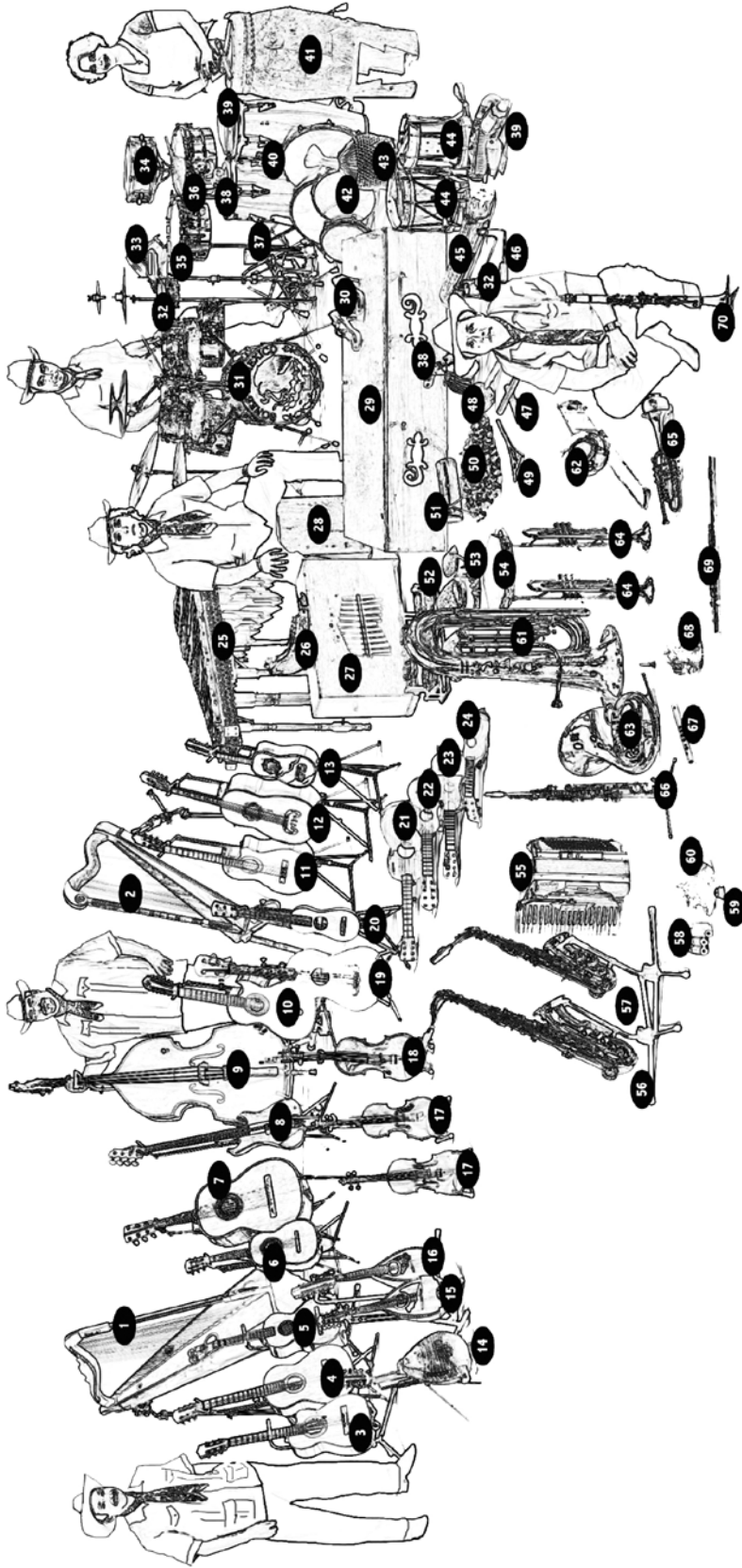
Woodwinds

Brass

Are there any that don't seem to fit anywhere?



The Instruments



- | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1 Pianeco Harp | 8 Electric Bass | 15 Mandolin | 22 Jarana Segunda | 29 Tarima | 36 Tumbales | 43 Cabassa | 50 Ayoyotes | 57 Alto Saxophone | 64 Trumpet |
| 2 Jarocho Harp | 9 String Bass 3/4 | 16 Tercordio | 23 Jarana Primera | 30 Dance Shoes | 37 Cencerro de pie | 44 Tamborita | 51 Teponaztli | 58 Clay Triple Flute | 65 Muted Trumpet |
| 3 Tres Cubano | 10 Bajo Sexto | 17 Violin | 24 Mosquito | 31 Drum Set | 38 Maracas | 45 Rain Stick | 52 Tortoise Shells | 59 Ocarina | 66 Soprano Saxophone |
| 4 Guitarra Sexta | 11 Classical Guitar | 18 Viola | 25 Marimba | 32 Cow Bells | 39 Güiros | 46 Vbra Slap | 53 Deer Antlers | 60 Aleccocoli | 67 Reed Flute |
| 5 Guitarra de Golpe | 12 Huapanguera | 19 Leona | 26 Donkey Jaw | 33 Bongos | 40 Congas (junto & tumbadora) | 47 Claves | 54 Pandero Jarocho | 61 Tuba | 68 Conch Shell |
| 6 Vihuela | 13 Jarana Huasteca | 20 Requinto Jarocho | 27 Marimbol | 34 Snare Drum | 41 Huehuel | 48 Ayacaxtli | 55 Accordion | 62 Trombone | 69 Transversal Flute |
| 7 Guitarrón | 14 Guitarra Conchera | 21 Jarana Tercera | 28 Cajón | 35 Woodblock/redova | 42 Plena Drums | 49 Tarahumara Shaker | 56 Tenor Saxophone | 63 French Horn | 70 Clarinet |

Students:

Which familiar instruments have unfamiliar names?

Try to pronounce them! Find a friend who speaks Spanish to help you.

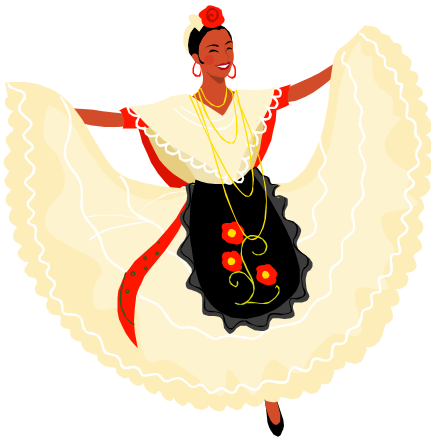


Sones De México's *Fiesta Mexicana* provides a marvelous opportunity to integrate music in regular classroom instruction.

Use the accompanying listening CD, as a jumping-off point to explore the following areas:

- * Movement (young kids – gross motor) and spatial awareness (personal vs. shared space)
- * Aural evaluation (fast, slow, loud, quiet, one, many, following directions)
- * Cross cultural awareness (the difference in dance styles, new / unusual instruments)
- * Creation and improvisation (and modification / revising)
- * Sequencing / patterning / charting / representation
- * Form and structure in song and English story (beginning, middle, end)
- * Mapping and geography of Mexico

Fiesta!



A great way to add to the concert and study experience is to hold a celebratory party – your own school-wide Fiesta Mexicana! By using a fiesta as a final extension activity, teachers can gather different ideas from students about what they have learned about all aspects of Mexican culture.

A school-wide fiesta could include a piñata (created in art class or general classroom), dancing to music (either improvised dance in the classroom or a formal, established Mexican folk dance taught in music or PE), food and drink, stories etc. It gives the students an opportunity to anticipate the event by preparing different aspects of the fiesta in advance and will help to maximize the impact of the unit.

You might want to also consider:

Advertising – have the children prepare posters advertising the fiesta and hang them around the school.

Games and Stories – can be found in the library or on the internet. Ask your librarian to help in finding story resources of traditional Mexican folk tales or games.

Piñatas – can be purchased at party stores for a minimal amount, or you can make your own. Students will enjoy creating papier-mache piñatas that can be filled with treats, candies or other keepsakes. Ask your art teacher for advice and tips or to help out.

Dancing – PE and music teachers or even parents of students at your school may know traditional Mexican folkdances that can be performed in large or small groups. Ask if they would teach the dances to students as a schoolwide activity.





Artwork inspired by *La Pasión* and *Xipe*

(for K-2 but can be adapted for older students)

La Pasión is a piece of music that has a dream-like and reflective quality to it. *Xipe* has a much more exuberant and joyful quality. Using visual art, students can demonstrate an understanding of contrast by listening and drawing their representations of what they hear.

Use Tracks 1
and 2 on the
Listening CD

This is a very simple activity, but provides an easy way to interact with Sonos de México in a classroom setting. Color plays an important role in Mexican culture.

OBJECTIVE: Students will demonstrate an understanding of contrast through the use of different colors, scales, shapes and styles in their artwork.

MATERIALS: blank paper, colored pencils / crayons, CD player

- * Play *La Pasión* while students listen. Ask the students to verbalize their reactions to the music, using prompting questions if needed. - "What images pop into your head when you listen?" "What mood does the music put you in?"
- * Ask students to choose a few colors to use that they feel go with the music.
- * Ask students to listen and draw along with *La Pasión*; they can draw or doodle whatever they wish. Reassure older students that it does not have to be representational, but can have simple squiggles and patterns and lines. Encourage them to move their hand to the music as they draw if they wish.
- * Help students to understand there are no good, better, best drawings; since this is creative reaction to the music, each drawing is personal and unique.
- * Repeat the process with *Xipe*, asking students to verbalize their reaction to listening the first time. Encourage them to contrast the two songs (use describing words.)
- * Listen and draw along with *Xipe* – don't spend a long time.
- * Help students observe what happens and notice if and how the color choices, images, types of drawing differ from the first piece.
- * Make an art-gallery exhibit of all the drawings. Have the students view the gallery as they listen to each piece of music. Be sure the students notice the individual choices made by each artist.



Artwork by Juan Dies' s mother,
Rosa Maria C. Dies



Different types of Communication in Music (for various grades spanning 1st - 6th)

Within any musical performance, there is a dialog-like interplay between various instruments and performers. This activity looks at three different kinds of musical communication.

1. - Musicians must communicate with each other, especially playing Mexican *son*. It is not notated (written-down) so there is no sheet music or charts that the musicians are all following together. They must develop ways to communicate with each other as they are playing. Ask students to pay attention to see if they can tell during the performance who acts as the musical leader. Does the leader change for each piece or remain the same?
2. - Each instrument has its own voice, and they sometimes seem to be having their own musical conversation during the course of the piece.
3. - The musical communication goes on with the audience all the time. Sometimes the group is obvious in what they are saying to the audience: through directly speaking with them or through the lyrics of a song. But sometimes the music is saying something that words can't express.

OBJECTIVE: Students will experience various types of communication and interplay fundamental to music.

MATERIALS: CD player

1. To explore musicians communicating with each other, start with a simple game. Students are practicing to be award winning student communicators; they must be able to lead and follow expertly.

- * Have students stand (at their desks / tables is fine) and give them a few simple verbal instructions to warm-up ("Put your two hands on your head," "tap foot," etc.) Continue with various instructions, transitioning to voiceless instructions. Use the same verbal commands at first and then begin to add new ones. If students are older, make each new command more and more subtle.
- * Pick one action that is easily repeatable (waving, stepping in place.) Get the children to repeat the action (verbally if they are younger, non-verbally if older) with you exactly to your beat. It is fine if it takes a bit for them to get in sync with you. Once the class is moving all together, begin to alter the tempo by going more slowly or quickly. Observe how well they can follow and stay with you.
- * Have the children evaluate – how did we do? Was it easy or hard to follow instructions without words? What was easy? What was hard? Did everyone perform each command in the same fashion and at the same time? What happened when the class did the same motion and changed speeds?
- * Pass the leadership to the students. Depending on the age of the class, the game can be done in pairs, trios, quartets or one student can lead the entire group.
- * Create a small version of the previous activity, giving each student a chance to lead. By giving control to the students, they begin to experience the need for clear signals and good focus and attention. Switch leaders often, and encourage them to try to follow so well that no one can tell who is the leader.

**Listen to Track 6
on the Listening CD**

* Listen to *El Trenecito*, Track 6 on the accompanying CD. Ask students to listen for changes in the music, especially tempo changes. Remind them to watch how the musicians communicate, how they listen to each other with focus and attention so they can play together so expertly. Share with students that the members of Sones de México are such expert and talented musical communicators that they have won awards.



2. Each instrument has its own voice, and they sometimes seem to be having a musical conversation during the course of the piece.

- * Listen to Track 3, *La Pasión/Xipe* (the 2009 recording.)

Listen to Tracks 3/4 on the Listening CD

* Ask students to listen to the communication between the various “voices” of the instruments.

- * Ask them to describe what they heard. They may use emotion adjectives to help describe what they heard. Encourage them not to translate it; not to try to imagine any words that the instruments are saying. Just as word-for-word translation of a sentence from another language into English does not perfectly express the meaning, so trying to capture the language of music into spoken dialogue will not capture the meaning.
- * At the performance, one more communicator will be added, the dancer. In Mexican *son*, dance is an integral element. What do you learn from her movement? Can you describe it like you describe music?

3. Being an audience member for a live performance is a special experience. Musical communication is not just one-way; the performers hear and feel the response from the audience, and that becomes part of the performance. This selection demonstrates some very specific methods that the musicians use to communicate with the audience. What else does the music itself communicate?

- * Listen to Track 5, *La Acamaya*.

Listen to Track 5 on the Listening CD

- * Discuss what students heard from the musicians and felt from the music while listening to the CD. Read the description on page 7. Does the music suit the concept of the little “bogey-man” creature?
- * After the performance, compare the experience of listening to the CD to that of the live concert. What were the main differences? What are the strengths of a live performance?

Is Music Really a Universal Language?

We have all heard that “music is a universal language” that can bring people from different cultures together. Indeed, music is a welcoming entry point to other cultures.

However, beautiful as the idea of a “universal language” may be, we find that it can become a barrier to learning about other cultures, as music may also have many intricate “languages” and meanings that we should not overlook.

For example, we may hear a tune that makes us happy and want to laugh and dance, only to find out later that what we heard is a more serious song meant to be listened to with respect and reflection by the people in the tradition. On the listening CD, *La Pasión* is like that, meant to be listened to with reflection.

Our role as music educators is not only to perform the music, but also to express its meaning.

Juan Díes
Ethnomusicologist,
Executive Director
Sones de México Ensemble



Listen to Track 1 and 2 and then 3/4 on the Listening CD

Mexican *son* is a musical form that is constantly re-interpreted. It is grounded in cultural tradition, but each group puts their own stamp on the music to make it come to life. Even year to year and concert to concert, the music will change and grow as the performers do.

Listen to the recordings of *La Pasión* and *Xipe* from 2005 (Tracks 1 and 2.) Next listen to the same two tunes *La Pasión/Xipe* recorded in 2009 (Tracks 3/4 on the CD.)

- * What differences do you hear?
- * Are there changes in tempo (fast or slow), instrumentation, dynamics (loud or soft)?
- * What about the "emotional" feel of the music? Do the musicians play with a different mood in the two versions?
- * Which do you like better and why?

Listen to Track 7 on the Listening CD

La Bamba is something of an unofficial national anthem for Mexico. It is an improvisational Afro-Mexican song. Lyrics may change from one performance to another.

- * Listen to this recording by Sones de México.
- * Follow along with the translation on the next page.
- * Does it mean what you thought it would?
- * Find some other versions of *La Bamba* on the web. There are many on YouTube.
- * How is each version different?
- * What remains the same?
- * Learn the rhyming pattern and try writing your own in verses English or Spanish.

Topics to Research and Discuss

- * Ethnic and Historical Influences on a Culture and its Music - What do you consider your cultural music?
- * Living Traditions - what does this mean? What living traditions do you have in your life?
- * Regions of Mexico - what do you know about the different states of Mexico? Pick one and research it.
- * Mexican Dance - how is dance central to the Mexican culture and to that of the U.S? What is the difference between folk dancing and popular dancing?
- * Music Across Generations - Mexican *sones* engage all the generations in a community. What in the culture of the U.S. has that ability?



La Bamba Translation

TRANSLATION:
from Sones de México

1. Para bailar la bamba,
se necesita
una poca de gracia,
pa' mi y pa' ti.

CHORUS:

Ay arriba y arriba,
y arriba iré
yo no soy marinero
por tí seré, por tí seré,
por tí seré.

2. Eres como una rosa,
de Alejandría
colorada de noche,
blanca de día.

3. Yo les canto la bamba,
sin pretensión
pues me sale de adentro,
del corazón.

4. Cuando canto la bamba,
me siento ufano
porque se que es el himno,
veracruzano.

5. En mi casa me dicen,
el niño bueno
porque tengo una novia,
que está muy cuero.

6. La mujer que yo quiero,
es dominicana
porque baila la bamba,
veracruzana.

1. If you dance to La Bamba,
you'll surely need
(A) bit of grace (and) good intentions,
for you and me.

CHORUS:

Ay arriba y arriba,
y arriba iré (up and up and up I'll go)
I was never a sailor
That's what I say,
that's what I say, that's what I say.

2. You are just like a rose,
from far away
That looks red in the evening,
and white today.

3. When I'm singing La Bamba,
I feel a spark
'Cause it comes from within,
deep in my heart.

4. When I'm singing La Bamba,
I feel the blues
Because this is my anthem,
from Veracruz.

5. In my house they all say,
I am so prude
Because I have a girlfriend,
that looks so good.

6. Yes, the woman I love,
is Dominican
And she dances La Bamba,
like no one can.

7. Dime niña bonita,
vamos a donde
donde la luna sale,
y el sol se esconde

8. Yo a las morenas quiero,
desde que supe
que morena es la virgen,
de Guadalupe.

9. Ay te pido te pido,
de corazón
que se acabe la bamba,
y venga otro son.

TRANSLATION:
from Sones de México

7. Come on sweet little girl,
let us go 'round
Where the full moon is rising,
and the sun goes down.

8. I love women with dark skin,
since heard say
That brown skined is the Lady,
of Guadalupe.

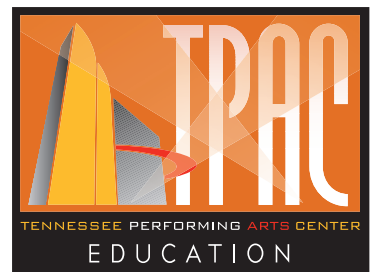
9. Now I beg you for mercy,
the time has come
Let us finish La Bamba,
do another song.

PREGÓN (a long lyric solo) hasta el cielo mas alto,
Ay, ay-ay-ay-ay-ay yo volaré, yo volaré,
Es la bamba mi hermano, yo volaré.
un canto negro Bamba, bamba...
que ya todos lo bailan,
con grán esmero
Veracruz y Chicago, lo han zapateado
para honrar la memoria,
del cimarrón
que en la sierra cantaba,
con su tambor
al ritmo de la bamba,
y del corazón
ay arriba y arriba,
y arriba iré

TRANSLATION:
from Sones de México

PREGÓN (a long lyric solo)
Ay, ay-ay-ay-ay-ay
It's La Bamba my brothers,
of African blood
It was danced by our mothers,
with greatest love
Veracruz and Chicago,
have tapped the dance
To remember the story,
of fugitives
Who sang deep in the forest,
with rustic drums
They were writing La Bamba,
deep in our hearts
I will climb to a mountain,

and reach the sky
To the highest of Heavens,
yes I will fly, and I will fly,
and I will fly.
Bamba, bamba...



TPAC Education
PO Box 190660
Nashville, TN 37219
615-687- 4288



Visit us online at www.tpac.org/education