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From Fiesta to Festival: Mariachi Music in California and the Southwestern United States

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Ethnomusicology

by

Lauryn Camille Salazar

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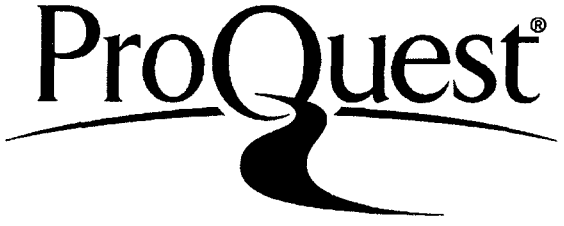

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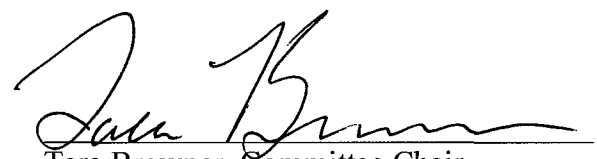

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

From Fiesta to Festival: Mariachi Music in California and the Southwestern United States

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnomusicology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2011

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Considered one of the great genres of Mexican music today, mariachi music has become a legitimate American musical genre. Through archival and field-based research, I examine early antecedents of mariachi music in California in addition to looking at the American innovations of festivals, publishing, and education programs in the United States and their impact on the mariachi tradition as a whole.

Mariachi festivals (chapter 4) perform an integral role in the transmission and dissemination of the mariachi musical tradition through student-oriented workshops,

performances, and large-venue concerts featuring professional ensembles. Largely organized by nonprofit community groups that seek to promote cultural awareness and support social programs in their local communities, these festivals provide educational opportunities and cultivate a sense of Mexican-American cultural pride while showcasing the music to a diverse audience. The emerging publishing industry (chapter 5) is directly related to the proliferation of festivals and education programs throughout the United States. In grappling with how to actualize mariachi music through transcription and notation, mariachi educators and publishers have utilized a wide variety of approaches, which has resulted in a lack of standardization. While the use of written scores is becoming more widespread, the abilities to learn aurally and improvise remain vital skills for all practicing mariachi musicians.

Understood as a mode of social justice and civic engagement, educational programs (chapter 6) are seen by the Mexican-American community as a means of helping its youth, who, according to various statistics, underperform academically and share disproportionately large high school dropout rates when compared to other ethnic groups. Participation in educational programs such as those centered on mariachi performance, have been shown to encourage higher academic achievement. This dissertation aims to understand the developments within the mariachi tradition that have taken place in the United States. By focusing on important key topics such as mariachi festivals, the publishing industry, and the education movement, I endeavor to show the ongoing growth of the tradition in the United States and its increased importance in broader American society.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Considered one of the great genres of Mexican music today, mariachi originated as a rural music in the western central region of Mexico.[1] The state of Jalisco is generally believed to be the birthplace of mariachi; however this claim is contested, with counterclaimants locating its origins in the nearby states of Colima, Nyarit and Michoacán (Jáuregui 1991:113). There is no doubt that by the late nineteenth century mariachi music had its stronghold in Jalisco (ibid.:117). By 1905, rural mariachi musicians began performing in Mexico City, which started the transformation of mariachi music into a popular urban genre (Rafael 1999:6). Through radio, and later film, mariachi music became the national musical symbol of Mexico. By the end of the 1940s, it had established itself as a major representation of ethnic pride for Mexican-Americans in the United States.

The revival of interest in expressing musical heritage in second and third-generation Mexican-Americans can be directly associated with the creation of professional mariachi ensembles, academic pedagogy programs, and mariachi festivals north of the border. While these events provide a cultural outlet for many student mariachi groups at the elementary, high school, and college level, they also offer a mechanism whereby students compete for prizes and receive instruction by the world's best mariachi musicians.[2] In the Southwestern United States and California some

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[1] The term mariachi has many meanings depending on the context in which it is used. Mariachi can describe an ensemble, a musician and a genre. In Los Angeles, most mariachi musicians have accounts of non-Mexicans wanting to hire three mariachis only to have three different mariachi ensembles arrive consisting of five to seven musicians each, when really only three musicians were expected by the client.

[2] Professional mariachi groups exist in Mexico as well; however, their involvement in mariachi festivals and education programs is a fairly recent development, with the single exception of the oldest and most

mariachi groups have even replaced school bands. What is now known as the "academic mariachi educational movement" has been gaining momentum since the 1990s, and these programs have the potential to transform the tradition, while at the same time improving Mexican-American high school retention rates.[3] With Mexican-Americans currently having the highest high school dropout rate of all ethnic minorities and historically have a record for low academic achievement, there is significant motivation for school boards to establish mariachi programs in their schools.[4]

This educational movement is considered by some to be controversial, and some mariachis trained in the traditional manner view these programs negatively because of their potential to impact the mariachi tradition. At the same time, school districts often grapple with the problem of finding teachers who are both sufficiently versed in the mariachi tradition and meet state teacher education requirements, since many mariachi musicians possess neither college degrees nor teaching credentials. Given that traditional mariachi repertoire and instrumentation are not standardized, the task of designing a curriculum is a widespread problem. Moreover, there is a trend among school districts to hire band teachers who are unfamiliar with the mariachi tradition to teach mariachi classes.[5]

Through its inclusion in academic settings and the widespread acceptance through sold-out mariachi festival concerts, mariachi is very much a part of the mainstream

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famous professional mariachi group, Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán. They have existed since the 1890s (Sheehy 1999:47).

[3] While I do not know who coined this phrase, I first heard it used in a lecture at the 2002 Las Cruces Mariachi Festival by a festival organizer who was welcoming us to the event. Since then, I have heard academics and mariachi educators such as, Daniel Sheehy, Mark Fogelquist, Jeff Nevin and many others use this phrase in their written work and lectures.

[4] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2001).

[5] During the 2005 Sweetwater International Mariachi Conference in Chula Vista, CA, I met two band teachers who were teaching mariachi classes in Ventura County.

musical culture, especially in the Southwestern United States. Although not strongly represented in far-reaching media like radio and television, the inclusion of live mariachi music for family, community, and public celebrations is a pervasive aspect of the ever-growing Latino culture that exist in this country. It is popular among Mexicans and Mexican-Americans living in the United States, and other ethnic groups living in areas with a large Mexican population have also embraced mariachi for their social events as well. Having performed as mariachi musician in Southern California for close to ten years, I have participated in performances for corporate events, weddings, anniversaries, baptisms, serenades, and divorce celebrations for clientele who were not Mexican or Latino. The most memorable was for a large Hindu wedding where the groom, who had been raised in South Gate, California, always expected he would hire a mariachi to play for his wedding. Additionally, many of my friends who play mariachi full-time have performed for Jewish Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, as well as for many other events not normally associated with mariachi music.

As a transnational genre, mariachi's popularity is continuing to grow, and in many ways it is even more popular in the United States than it is in Mexico. Professional mariachi groups are given pop star status and revered for their talent—a situation I have never encountered in Mexico. This is especially evident throughout the various mariachi festivals that take place throughout the nation. Students given the opportunity to interact with their mariachi "heroes" often seek guidance on their playing and general advice about life as a mariachi. It is not uncommon for students to ask their favorite mariachi to sign their instrument with permanent marker, proving that they did in fact work with that individual.

Important developments such as the growth of mariachi festivals and the emergence of academic mariachi education programs have resulted in the birth of a

mariachi publishing industry. This is an American innovation and is changing the ways in which mariachi music is disseminated and learned. Although mariachi is a legitimate genre in its own right, these changes are the impetus for the process of legitimization that the genre is undergoing in American mainstream culture. It is in this context that I view mariachi not as a musical and cultural foreign import from Mexico, but rather as an evolving American genre. The changes that occur in the United States are impacting, albeit slowly, the tradition in Mexico.

The goal of this dissertation is to understand the developments within the tradition that have taken place on the American side of the border. Each subsequent chapter should be viewed as a case study on a specific issue or aspect of the genre. By focusing on important key topics such as mariachi festivals, the publishing industry, and the education movement, I aim to show the ongoing growth of the tradition in the United States and its increased importance in American society.

Without a doubt the most important and interesting development is that of mariachi education programs that are being used for the purposes of social justice and civic engagement. They are seen as means of helping Mexican and Mexican-American youth, who, according to various statistics, underperform academically and share disproportionately large high school dropout rates when compared to other ethnic groups. Therefore, a large part of this dissertation is devoted to examining this education movement. In many ways, this educational movement, mariachi festivals, and the budding publishing industry have become intertwined with each other. The remainder of this introduction will serve to frame the mariachi in terms of the education movement and give a preliminary account of the primary issues that will be the focus of later chapters.

General Overview

Although mariachi music is linked to nationalism and is a source of pride for Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, it has been stereotyped as representing the music of the lower socio-economic classes (Sheehy 1999:65).[6] Other negative associations such as womanizing and *machismo*, or male chauvinism, have also been tied to the genre (ibid.:61). Many of these stereotypes were often portrayed in the Mexican *charro* or cowboy movies of the 1930s and 1940s with famous actors and *ranchera* singers Pedro Infante and Jorge Negrete (ibid.:46).

Historically, mariachi musicians have the reputation of being drunken womanizers (ibid.:61). This stereotypical reputation has been so prolific in the past that no "respectable" person would have ever considered becoming a mariachi.[7] There is a strong association between *machismo* and male mariachi musicians, with machismo describing a male state of mind where the man is in charge of everything within his grasp.[8] A popular saying that illustrates this attitude is, "en mi casa yo mando" (in my house I rule). In general, the term *machismo* is considered derogatory and is associated with womanizing, fighting and drinking (Muñoz 1996:20), and these three characteristics are also associated with the mariachi lifestyle. Since early mariachis were hired for parties and also employed by taverns, they were culturally associated from their initial origins with drinking, and characteristic depictions of mariachis from the time usually

[6] Throughout this dissertation, I use the terms Mexican-American and Chicano interchangeably. In many Chicano Studies writings, the term Chicano most commonly refers to a person born or raised in the United States of Mexican heritage.

[7] Over the years, I have heard many mariachis at mariachi festivals discuss the various stereotypes associated with being a mariachi musician.

[8] This sentiment is also the subject matter of many songs.

included a drunken musician with a bottle of tequila in one hand and a woman on his arm.[9]

Fortunately these images have begun to change, particularly since the 1970s and 1980s, during which time mariachi music has become extraordinarily popular in the United States (Fogelquist 2002:73). This phenomenon can be directly linked to the creation and proliferation of professional mariachi groups, academic educational programs, and mariachi festivals. These festivals provide Mexicans and Mexican-Americans with a venue to display their cultural pride and heritage in a non-threatening and positive environment. Moreover, educational workshops that challenge the negative stereotypes associated with the mariachi are offered at the festivals, thereby legitimizing the tradition. Collectively, these educational workshops have substantially assisted in elevating the status of mariachi music to that of a true art form, resulting in a source of great ethnic pride. This sense of pride has made mariachi music and mariachi festivals an indispensable tool for the maintenance of Mexican and Mexican-American culture and traditional art forms.

Literature Review

Surprisingly little scholarly research on mariachi music exists, particularity as it is performed in the United States, even though mariachi music is an integral part of various life cycle events for Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. With this music being an important part of various festivities, particularly for baptisms, weddings, birthday parties, funerals, Catholic masses, and indeed any type of celebration, a study on the meaning of mariachi as performed and received north of the border is sorely needed in

[9] This type of depiction is shown on a Mariachi Sol de Mexico's *Acapulco Girls* CD cover from 1998. It features a woman in a bikini with a violin in between her legs.

order to fill a serious scholarly void. In terms of studies completed on Latin American music, traditional musics of Mexico proper and their performance in the United States have largely been ignored.[10]

Numerous books and articles briefly mention mariachi, and many of them discuss the genre on a superficial level; therefore, a thorough review of relevant literature is also a brief one. Thematically, texts with information on mariachi can be divided chronologically into three groupings, with a first group composed of texts from 1930 through the late 1960s, a second from circa 1970 through 1990, a third from 1990 to the present. The first period is characterized by a preoccupation with "pure," rural folk music, and in most cases these authors treat mariachi music in a cursory manner, sometimes taking a derogatory tone in their descriptions. Rubén Campos's *El Folklore y la Música Mexicana: Investigación acerca de la cultura musical en México (1525-1925)* (1928),[11] Miguel Galindo's *Historia de La Música Mejicana* (1933),[12] Otto Mayer-Serra's *Panorama de la Música Mexicana: Desde la Independencia Hasta la Actualidad* (1941),[13] Vicente Mendoza's *Panorama de la Música Tradicional de México* (1954),[14] Gabriel Saldivar's *Historia de la Música en México* (1934),[15] and Robert Stevenson's *Music in Mexico: A Historical Survey* (1952) are all examples of books about Mexican music that are more concerned with pre-Columbian and Mexican classical music. Saldivar, a historian, describes classical music from the 1800s through the 1920s, and his book ends with a mention of traditional genres such as mariachi, yet only one paragraph is devoted to the genre. Mendoza's book provides a detailed account of pre-Columbian

[10] There is a much larger body of scholarship pertaining to Caribbean and South American musical genres, as well as some literature on Chicano and Tex-Mex regional genres.
[11] *Mexican Folklore and Music: Investigation of Musical Culture in Mexico (1525-1925)* (1928).
[12] *History of Mexican Music* (1933).
[13] *Panorama of Mexican Music: From Independence to Today* (1941).
[14] *Panorama of Traditional Mexican Music* (1954).
[15] *History of Music in Mexico* (1934).

music, including many pictures, lyrics and copies of surviving transcriptions of early music, and yet only one page is given to the description of mariachi. These two books are representative of this period of scholarship on Mexican music.

In works from the second period (1970-1990), more attention is given to the role of music and culture. In this period, mariachi begins to receive more scholarly attention; however, it is not the main focus of any one study. Juan Garrido's *Historia de la música popular en México* (1974),[16] Claes Geijerstam's *Popular Music in Mexico* (1976), and Hermes Rafael's *Origen e Historia del Mariachi* (1983)[17] discuss various aspects of mariachi music in a more significant way than previous works. Geijerstam's text includes an entire chapter on mariachi, portraying it in a derogatory way and denouncing it for being too commercial and static. In Geijerstam's opinion, mariachi music is not worthy of note and is in danger of disappearing. The history of mariachi music in Mexico is the main focus of Rafael's book. Of singular importance is his discussion of the controversy over the origin of the word "mariachi," and Rafael makes it clear that the origins of the mariachi are unknown and will remain a controversial topic.

Comprising the final segment of literature are works from the 1990s to the present, Jesús Flores and Escalante Pablo Herrera's *Cirilo Marmolejo: Historia del mariachi en la ciudad de México* (1994),[18] Arturo Chamorro's *Mariachi antiguo, jarabe y son: Símbolos compartidos y tradición en las identidades jaliscienses* (2000),[19] Jesús Jáuregui 's *El mariachi: Símbolo musical de México* (1991)[20] and Brenda Romero's article "El mariachi en EEUU al final del siglo XX (2001)"[21] are works that focus entirely

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[16] *History of Popular Music in Mexico* (1974).
[17] *Origin and History of Mariachi* (1983).
[18] *Cirilo Marmolejo: History of Mariachi in Mexico City* (1994).
[19] *Early Mariachi, Jarabe and Son: Comparative Symbols and Tradition in Jaliscan Identities* (2000).
[20] *The Mariachi: Musical Symbol of Mexico* (1991).
[21] "The Mariachi in the U.S. at the End of the 20th Century" (2001).

on the mariachi tradition. Flores and Herrera's work is a book-length ethnography focusing on the life of Cirilo Marmolejo, one of the first rural musicians to migrate from Jalisco to Mexico City, where mariachi became popular in the 1930s. Chamorro's book is filled with musical transcriptions, as he tries to show the musical changes of various song forms from the nineteenth century to the present. He is largely concerned with the rural mariachi tradition, and gives special attention to indigenous Indian mariachi musicians. Currently, Jáuregui's book is the most comprehensive historical analysis of mariachi in Mexico.[22] Through rare photos of documents, he is able to show that the word mariachi had been in use before the arrival of the French in the 1860s. This is significant, since a false history attributes the word mariachi to the French word *mariage,* as mariachi is often associated with wedding celebrations. Beginning in 1862, Napoleon III tried to extend the French empire and establish political power in the Americas. While the United States was entangled in the Civil War, Napoleon III installed the Archduke Maximilian of Austria as the Emperor of Mexico. His reign was short-lived, lasting from 1864-1867. A more thorough discussion of the period will be given in the following chapter. Jáuregui also includes other photos that illustrate the various mariachi groups that were popular in Mexico City at the turn of the twentieth century. He also includes previously unpublished illustrations and photographs which chronicle the transformation of mariachi music from a rural genre to the national musical symbol. Finally, Romero's eight-page article provides a cursory look at mariachi music in the United States. In her article, the author lists various academic mariachi programs (e.g. the "Music of Mexico" course at the University of California, Los Angeles), and notes that as the Mexican-American

[22] This book is very difficult to locate, as only five hundred copies were ever published. His updated second edition published in 2007 is easily obtainable.

population in the United States continues to grow, the demand for these programs will increase.

Reviewing the literature on academic mariachi programs and mariachi festivals in the United States reveals that materials on this topic are scarce. Only four substantial sources specific to mariachi music in the United States exist. Steve Pearlman's dissertation "Mariachi Music in Los Angeles," completed in 1988, is an ethnography of the mariachi community of Los Angeles. Examining mariachi from an anthropological point of view, the author is primarily concerned with social networks and performance practice. Based on fieldwork in Los Angeles from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s, Pearlman's dissertation captures a particular era in the history of mariachi. Focusing on the relationship between mariachi music performance and concepts of social and cultural features of mariachi life, he situates the role of mariachi music within the larger Mexican community. Concerned with aspects of the mariachi lifestyle in addition to the motivations for one's desire to become a mariachi, he delves deeply into the culture of practicing mariachi musicians. While the first half of his dissertation deals with ethnography, the second half is concerned with the structure and context of mariachi music performance. Since its publication, however, two important developments have occurred in mariachi music: the increased presence of professional female mariachis and the growth of academic programs in Los Angeles.

Cándida Jáquez's dissertation "*Cantando de Ayer* (Singing of Yesterday): Performing History, Ethnic Identity, and Traditionalism in United States-based Urban Mariachi," completed in 2000, is concerned with the construction of the "urban"

mariachi. This dissertation focuses on contemporary mariachi music in Texas and the Midwestern United States. Jáquez discusses the importance of mariachi music in maintaining cultural identity for Mexican-Americans. While the author touches on historical narratives of mariachi music in Mexico and the United States, Jáquez focuses on contemporary practices. By exploring issues of ethnicity, cultural mestizaje and transnational relations, she explores the importance of mariachi music as a symbol of ethnic pride. Additionally, her dissertation is one of the first to include a discussion on the role of women within the mariachi tradition as well as the effects of *machismo*. Her discussion of gender politics exposes the complexities of *machismo* within a larger Mexican-American cultural context. She concludes that, "mariachi performance remains a living tradition for its cultural saliency in defining ethnicity, gender, class, and history vis à vis hegemonic interpretations of Mexican descent populations" (Jáquez 2000:abstract).

In his 2006 dissertation "Cultural Production, Legitimation, and the Politics of Aesthetics: Mariachi Transmission, Practice, and Performance in the United States," Russell Rodriguez provides an anthropological perspective on the transmission, practice and performance of mariachi music in both Mexico and the United States. Interested in the "politics of aesthetics" he examines the "intersections of race, gender, class, and culture as integrated in an understanding of practice, performance, and aesthetics to clarify the dynamic of the developing mariachi space" (Rodriguez 2006:vii). Interested in the process by which mariachi music has become an important genre representative of cultural pride, Rodriguez also interrogates the notion of the "traditional mariachi" through

the exploration of new public spaces and practitioners who diverge from the profile of the working-class Mexican male performer.

Finally, in his recent book, *Mariachi Music in America: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* (part of the Oxford Global Music Series), Daniel Sheehy offers a survey of mariachi music in the United States (2006). Each chapter represents a short case study of various issues pertinent to the American mariachi tradition. In chapter two, he discusses the history of the mariachi music in Mexico, and highlights various musical forms such as the *son* and *ranchera* song forms. The social life of mariachi music and musicians is the topic of his third chapter, wherein he discusses the developments of important professional groups and their performance spaces. In this section he focuses on Los Angeles, CA-based, La Fonda restaurant, where Mariachi Los Camperos de Nati Cano used to perform regularly from 1969 - 2007, and Cielito Lindo Restuarant in El Monte, CA, where Mariachi Sol de México de José Hernández performs. His fourth chapter discusses the various performing situations entailed in mariachi music, such as those that require an ability to improvise versus memorizing a set repertoire. Finally, his last chapter deals with the rise of mariachi festivals and educational programs. This textbook is designed to give students a broad overview of mariachi and how it is performed and learned in the United States.

Histories: A Brief Overview of Academic Mariachi in the Western United States

American scholars Mark Fogelquist, Daniel Sheehy, and Cándida Jáquez have all noted the importance of La Fonda restaurant and Mariachi Los Camperos de Nati Cano in

transforming the image of mariachi in the United States. Natividad "Nati" Cano was born in Ahuisculco, Jalisco in 1939, and moved to Los Angeles in 1959. After playing in mariachi ensembles backing many famous singers, he felt that mariachi could stand alone. In 1969, he opened La Fonda restaurant in Los Angeles, which featured his live mariachi ensemble Los Camperos during dinner shows. Since 1969, Los Camperos have enduringly inspired and influenced many of the mariachi groups in the United States (Sheehy 2006:44).

In 1961, Donald Borcherdt, an ethnomusicology graduate student at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), started a small student-run mariachi class at the university, and employed Jesús Sánchez, a mariachi musician, to teach the class. With this development, UCLA became the first academic institution in the United States to offer mariachi classes. In the 1970s, fellow graduate students Mark Fogelquist, Lawrence Saunders and Daniel Sheehy, to name a few, participated in the mariachi class at UCLA, named Mariachi Uclatlán and later Mariachi Nuevo Uclatlán. Eventually, Fogelquist took Mariachi Uclatlán off-campus, hired professional mariachi musicians and opened a restaurant featuring the group. As Mariachi Uclatlán became a professional mariachi ensemble, remaining students at UCLA created Mariachi Nuevo Uclatlán. In the late 1980s, UCLA hired the renowned Nati Cano to teach the mariachi class, and in 1992, Jesús Guzmán became co-instructor for the class. According to the UCLA ethnomusicology department website, Guzmán, the musical director for Mariachi Los Camperos, has been the principal instructor since 2000.[23]

During the late 1960s, as mariachi programs blossomed in California, similar programs were being established in Texas. Pioneers of the mariachi academic movement

[23]A detailed listing of all faculty members who have ever taught in the Ethnomusicology Department at UCLA is available through the department's website.

Belle and Juan Ortiz organized the first U.S. mariachi festival in San Antonio, Texas in 1979. In 1966, Belle, an elementary school teacher and pianist, began incorporating mariachi songs into her music classes, which were primarily populated with Mexican and Mexican-American students. She found that these songs engaged her students, and in 1967, acquired several guitars for her class. In an interview at the Bakersfield mariachi festival, Belle remembers that the male students in her class wanted to play guitar and the female students wanted to sing.[24] By the early 1970s, a full-fledged mariachi program developed, offering instruction in violin, trumpet, guitar, *vihuela,*[25] *guitarrón*[26] and in a few instances, the mariachi harp. The program became very successful, and Belle and her husband, a mariachi musician, were asked to start other mariachi programs in San Antonio and other parts of Texas. Belle explained that the success of the academic mariachi program was linked to her requirement that students maintain a passing grade point average if they were to remain in the program. According to Belle, unlike the school orchestra or band, which students thought of as "nerdy," the mariachi had a reputation of being "cool." While exact statistics are not available, every mariachi instructor that I have talked to either in formal interviews or informal conversations have all noted the positive influence participation in these programs has for their students. The potential of mariachi programs to improve academic success and retention has not been lost on the majority of mariachi educators I have interviewed over the years.

There exists a strong synergy between academic mariachi programs and mariachi festivals. Belle and Juan Ortiz organized the first San Antonio International Mariachi Festival in 1979, effectively launching a movement (Sheehy 2006:85). The Ortizes hired Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán, Mexico's longest-running and most famous mariachi, to

[24] Personal interview, September 18, 2004.
[25] The *vihuela* is a small five-string plucked guitar-like instrument with a concave back.
[26] The *guitarrón* is a large six-string plucked guitar-like instrument with a concave back.

headline a concert and teach the classes at the festival. In my interview with mariachi expert Jonathan Clark, he recalls that Mariachi Vargas refused the engagement at first because they did not identify themselves as teachers.[27] To alleviate this concern, Belle and Juan gave them a crash course in music pedagogy with a focus on mariachi performing styles. Following the model established by the Ortiz, most mariachi festivals today offer performance instruction. By 1983, festivals were inaugurated in Tucson, AZ and Fresno, CA, which are currently the longest running festivals in the United States.

Another important figure in the mariachi educational movement is Mark Fogelquist. After earning his M.A. in Ethnomusicology at UCLA, Fogelquist was hired as a bilingual teacher in 1993 to teach English as a Second Language in Wenatchee, Washington. Fogelquist recalls that most of his students were Mexican immigrants; many did not graduate from high school.[28] To change this situation, he decided to "sneak" in a mariachi program by using funding for bilingual education programs to buy instruments. As long as there were positive results (e.g. students scoring higher on achievement tests), the school allowed the mariachi program. Fogelquist's approach worked, making mariachi classes an instant success with both students and parents. Resistance came from other faculty, primarily from other music teachers who did not feel that mariachi was a legitimate music genre to be taught in schools. Nevertheless, the program eventually became so successful and popular that mariachi classes were offered throughout the school district. Although it was seven years before Fogelquist was invited to a music faculty meeting, the mariachi program became the gem of the school district.[29]

With his success, Fogelquist was hired in 2001 to start a mariachi program in Chula Vista, California. As in Wenatchee, the majority of the students in the Chula Vista

[27] Personal interview, August 25, 2005.
[28] Personal interview, July 16, 2003.
[29] Personal interview, July 16, 2003.

school district are Mexican or Mexican-American and have had a record of low academic achievement and high dropout rates, but unlike the situation in Wenatchee, the Chula Vista school board members are predominantly Mexican-American. They wanted a mariachi program and were willing to fund it. While Fogelquist does not offer exact statistics on student grade point averages, he maintains that the students in the mariachi program perform well in school and are more likely to graduate.[30]

As with any cultural movement, the mariachi academic movement is not without its problems. Javier Trujillo, the guitarist for the well-respected Mariachi Cobre, a group that has performed at Disney's Epcot Center since 1992, was hired by the Clark County School District in Las Vegas, Nevada in 2002 to establish mariachi programs. Trujillo has noted that finding qualified teachers for the classes is difficult, as most schools require teaching credentials, which entails at minimum a college degree. Since many mariachi musicians do not have college degrees, regular band or orchestra teachers, most lacking training in mariachi, are teaching mariachi classes in school districts across the Southwestern United States (Trujillo and Neel 2008:160) . For example, at the Chula Vista mariachi conference in 2005, I met with two band director-turned mariachi instructors from a struggling mariachi program in Southern California who attended the conference to learn as much about the tradition as they could. Most of their frustration stemmed from the fact that there is a paucity of educational literature about mariachi music in English. Likewise, a mariachi sheet music publishing industry is still in its infancy, and there are very few arrangements available. One company known for selling instruments, the San Antonio-based Mariachiconnection.com, also sells arrangements by local mariachis and mariachi instructors. Despite their apparent availability, the arrangements have been criticized for being poorly written and confusing. Laura Sobrino

[30] Personal interview, July 16, 2003.

who runs the website mariachi-publishing.com, is another example of a local mariachi who sells her own arrangements. Both Sobrino and Ray Benavides, the owner of mariachiconnection.com, admit that their arrangements are meant primarily for people who are already familiar with mariachi music, and thus are merely guides.

Mariachi music is not standardized, and each group plays the same repertoire slightly differently. Most mariachi educators I have interviewed either teach the music by ear or write their own arrangements. Music workshops at mariachi festivals frequently provide sheet music written by the musical director of the featured mariachi group. Mariachi music scores by professional mariachi musicians are highly sought after, and there exists a very strong underground trading scene for mariachi sheet music. To avoid a potential copyright debacle, most mariachi festivals do not give out or sell scores; instead, workshop participants only receive a copy of music for their specific part.[31] An additional reason for the lack of mariachi arrangements is the difficulty of transcribing mariachi music. The *son jalisciense*, an indigenous mariachi song form, is especially problematic because of its complex polyrhythmic nature in which a typical *son* alternates between the meters of 3/4 and 6/8. As a practical matter, most mariachi musicians prefer to write *sones* in 3/4 time, which in notation fails to capture the syncopated feeling of a *son*.

With a growing demand for academic mariachi programs, I believe that the budding mariachi publishing industry will expand in order to address the demand.[32] Many mariachis, however, fear that the creation of a mariachi publishing industry will lead to standardization and curb improvisation. If the new generations of mariachi

[31] As the TA for Jesús Guzmán, I have access to many his arrangements, and over the past four years I have received requests from other mariachis and mariachi teachers for his arrangements. Since these are not my arrangements I never give out his music.

[32] A few established music publishing companies such as Mel Bay are trying to tap into this new market, albeit with much difficulty.

musicians learn their music primarily from sheet music, will they learn how to improvise? How will this change in pedagogy affect the performance of mariachi in ten to twenty years? Who will determine who is qualified to transcribe the repertoire? These are the questions I will address in later chapters.

Theoretical Perspectives

Historically, Mexican-Americans continue to be a marginalized segment of the population (Acuña 1988:284-285), and many Chicano authors discuss the importance of traditional art forms in sustaining cultural identity (Davalos 2001: 125). George Lipsitz, while not a Chicano author, notes:

> Everywhere, cultural domination by metropolitan elites eviscerates and obliterates traditional cultures rooted in centuries of shared experience. For ethnic minorities, failure to assimilate into dominant cultures can bring exclusion from vital economic and political resources, but successful assimilation can annihilate prized traditions and customs essential to individual and collective identity. (Lipsitz 1990:133-134).

Several Chicano studies writers would agree that Lipsitz's observation is pertinent to the Mexican-American experience in the United States. Perceived racist anti-Mexican legislation policies of the past (e.g. the 1998 California-based propositions 187 and 209 and the current federal immigration policy) create an environment in which Mexicans and Mexican-Americans living in the United States face various forms of symbolic violence.[33] In his writings on domination, Pierre Bourdieu discusses the nature of symbolic violence, wherein the role of the dominator is naturalized. He observes that

[33] Proposition 187 was designed to deny health care, education and welfare benefits to illegal immigrants. A major concern for Chicanos was that this proposal would promote racism. This proposition was passed in 1994 but deemed unconstitutional in 1998. Proposition 209 ended affirmative action in state-funded schools and universities (1996).

"The dominated, often unwittingly, contribute to their own domination by tacitly accepting, in advance, the limits imposed on them" (Bourdieu 1997:169). For me, the wide acceptance and participation in academic mariachi programs and festivals can be understood as a mode of symbolic resistance to domination, since their very existence and popularity threatens conventional notions of assimilation. Racism and forced assimilation are weapons of the dominator to maintain the status quo of the dominated within the field or "structure" of power. An institution achieves symbolic profit by gaining cultural capital. Academia is an institution that is capable of bestowing legitimacy. Mariachi's entrance into the academy is a way of legitimizing both the music and the culture from which it came. Mariachi festivals catalyze the creation of mariachi academic programs in elementary schools, high schools and universities across the nation (Sheehy 1997:146-148).

Issues of taste and social class come into play as well. In the introduction to her book *The Making of Middlebrow Culture*, Joan Shelley Rubin discusses the emergence of the American middle-class and the rise of middlebrow culture. She cites Margarets Widdemer's 1933 essay for the *Saturday Review* saying that, "Margaret Widdemer—mobilizing a term first used by Van Wyck Brooks in the early years of the twentieth century—had identified the consumers of these novel kinds of cultural products as 'middlebrow'" (Rubin 1992:xi-xii). Rubin notes that according to Widdemer, the middlebrow consisted of "men and women, fairly civilized, fairly literate, who support the critics and lecturers and publishers by purchasing their wares" (ibid.:xii). She later says that, put simply, the middlebrow represents "the majority reader" (ibid.:xiii).

Although Widdemer talks about the middlebrow in terms of book of the month clubs established in 1926 to make "high" culture available to the public, Rubin expands upon her analysis. Following the end of the First World War, she notes that, "Americans created an unprecedented range of activities aimed at making literature and other forms of 'high' culture available to a wide reading public" (ibid.:xi). She goes on to say that "Colleges and universities, accommodating an expanding student body, augmented their curricula with extension programs in the humanities and the other disciplines, some offered on the new medium of radio" (ibid.:xii). For Rubin, middlebrow culture can be seen as a means of improving the quality of American life through some form of education in the first half of the twentieth century. While her analysis is primarily concerned with Anglo-American culture of this period, like most Americans, Mexican-Americans have also struggled with ways to improve their quality of life. Issues of representation and access, especially in the American educational system, are pressing concerns for the Mexican-American community. While traditionally considered "lowbrow" music, its entrance into academic institutions has elevated its status as a "middlebrow" tradition. Concerned with musical technique and adopting written Western notation as a medium for learning the music, the mariachi tradition is breaking away from its negative stereotypes. Through education programs and festival workshops, learning to play mariachi music has become accessible to the larger community. Building upon this interest, it is not surprising then that education programs and festivals are being initiated throughout the United States.

Other important issues which will be discussed in later chapters include historiography (chapter 3 and 6), transcription (chapters 5), intellectual property (chapters 5) and music education (chapter 6). In discussing early Mexican-American music in California during the nineteenth century in chapter three, I explore the antecedents of the mariachi tradition by situating its historical setting. Here I utilize two of Daniel Neuman's historical paradigms: "*reflexive music history,*" in which he describes "the history of music history," and "*interpretive music history*" in which "History is written to make a point and present an argument." In using these paradigms, I show that mariachi music has a much longer history in the United States than previously understood (Neuman 1991:269). The implications of this history and the discovery of an important artifact, namely a wax cylinder recording of a *son* recorded in 1904 in Los Angeles, change the way in which the history of mariachi music is understood.

The role of transcription and intellectual property is discussed in chapter five, and deals with mariachi festivals and the publishing industry. In this chapter, I discuss how the proliferation of mariachi education programs and festival workshops has led to increased demand for written scores. However, in a relatively new market, the ways in which mariachi music is transcribed is highly problematic, particularly given that there is no standard method by which to represent various musical ideas. Using the work of Tara Browner, Ter Ellingson and Charles Seeger on issues of transcription, I examine the dilemma of using a prescriptive vs. a descriptive approach in the transcription of mariachi music.

As the need for sheet music rises, issues of intellectual property also comes into

play. Due to the scarcity of existing resources, an illicit underground trading of mariachi scores has emerged, especially among those obtained at various festival workshops. Furthermore, certain individuals currently engaged in creating sheet music appear to be unaware of issues of copyright. In his article, "Ethnomusicologists, Archives, Professional Organizations, and the Shifting Ethnics of Intellectual Property," Anthony Seeger notes that "Copyrights on music and dance increasingly determine who gets wealthy and who does not in the performing arts" (Seeger 1996:87). At this point in time, the mariachi publishing industry is still relatively small and under the radar. Once the full potential for profit is realized, more attention will be given to this important issue. Additionally, the individuals who create highly sought after scores will need to learn what is involved in protecting their work.

Finally, in chapter six, devoted to music education, I discuss the role of music education studies and its application to mariachi. In her article "Ethnomusicology and Music Education: Crossroads for knowing music, education, and culture," Patricia Campbell argues that both music education and ethnomusicological theory and methods have had a profound influence upon each other. With increased interest in incorporated multicultural musics in K-12 classrooms across the United States, music educators are looking to ethnomusicology for resources. Additionally, she notes that for both music educators and ethnomusicologists "issues of mutual interest are emerging: cross-cultural perspectives of music cognition, the mind-body and music-dance dualities, children's music culture, the pedagogy of world music, and research approaches to the study of music, musical thought, and musical behavior" (Campbell 2003:21). At present,

instruction, the creation of curriculum and the quality of resources being used varies widely among mariachi education programs. One particular challenge for school administrators is finding teachers who possess both the practical experience and teaching credentials required by the state. School districts with successful mariachi programs have learned to be flexible in their hiring practices and manage to balance the expertise of professional mariachi musicians with credentialed music education teachers.

Research Methods

Having grown up listening and dancing to mariachi music from an early age, I have always seen it as a part of my life. However, it was not until I went to college in Minnesota that I realized its importance in my identity. After receiving a Mellon Minority Undergraduate Fellowship in 1999, I began to seriously study mariachi as my research topic for this fellowship. Initially, I set out to complete a summer bibliography project, only to encounter the great difficulty in obtaining written sources—leading me to the correct conclusion that there were few sources. Additionally, being based in Minnesota made finding and obtaining the existing sources extremely difficult. Taking my adviser's advice, I realized that any information concerning the mariachi tradition would require a substantial amount of fieldwork. Since I had been attending the San Jose Mariachi festival since 1992, when I was twelve, I already had a vast network of mariachi musicians to work with.

In the twelve years I have been researching mariachi music as an academic, I have carried out three summer trips to Mexico and have conducted both archival and field-based research in the Mexican states of Veracruz, D.F. (Mexico City Federal District), Jalisco, and Michoacán. Living in Los Angeles, a city that serves as a major hub of mariachi activity, I have been able to experience many internship opportunities, such as working out of Boyle Heights and also being a freelance mariachi musician since 2005. This experience of working as a mariachi has expanded my knowledge of the economic issues surrounding the mariachi tradition and also helped me grow as a musician. Armed with little actual harp-playing experience, and only knowing three songs, I received the education of a lifetime working out of the intersection of First Street and Boyle practically every weekend for an eight-month period in 2008. As a novelty, namely a female harp player, and by placing myself at the center of what amounts to the "mariachi day laborer" hub, I managed to get hired every time I went to "La Boyle." Playing for a wide variety of events as far south as San Diego, and all the way to Oxnard, has given me insight as to the clientele that hires mariachis; it turns out to be fairly diverse in terms of ethnic background and socioeconomic standing. Additionally, some jobs were more difficult than others. On several occasions I would arrive to a location along with a few other mariachis only to find out that a key member, like the *guitarrón* or *vihuela* player, was not going to show up. In those situations, I ceased to be a novelty "show piece" and I was expected to fill in the missing part. Constantly being on the spot, my ability to improvise, through stressful on-the-job training, improved my musicianship skills dramatically.

In addition to "on the job" training, attending mariachi festivals -- in many cases the same festival multiple times -- has proved an effective means of obtaining resources, networking, conducting interviews and getting the general "pulse" on the current issues facing the mariachi community. Since many of the larger, more established mariachi festivals offer multiple events for students, teachers and fans, a vast amount of research can be done in a concentrated period of time. Despite my lack of funds, the festivals have given me access to mariachi instructors in other states with whom I was able to establish regular communication. Not always able to visit prominent mariachi musicians who reside in Mexico, I was able to interview famous musicians such as Rigoberto Alfaro and Miguel Martinez (both former members of Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán), to whom I would not have had access if not for the festivals. Attending student showcases and competitions over a twelve-year period has allowed me to witness various trends in terms of repertoire choices and also see the development of numerous academic groups at the high school and college levels.

Most importantly, I have been able to develop real friendships with many of my informants. While I have conducted numerous formal interviews with many of them, it has become clear that after several years, I am now trusted with certain information and resources. I have known my key informants, namely Laura Sobrino since 1999 and Jesús Guzmán since 2002. For me, the most profound bits of information they have relayed, mostly through stories about their experiences, have come via informal conversations. Through their generosity and time, they have helped me network, introducing me to other important key players within the tradition. So while my field-based research has spanned

a twelve-year period, I am finally at the point where I can take a step back from my topic area and appreciate the humanity involved.

Dissertation Overview

In the chapter that follows, I give an overview of the mariachi tradition by detailing the roots of mariachi music as both a rural and an urban genre in Mexico. Through an examination of the more popular song forms, such as the *son jalisciense*, *jarabe*, *ranchera* and *huapango*, to name a few, I introduce the fundamental concepts of mariachi music and situate them within the American mariachi tradition.

The results of my archival research are the focus of chapter three, in which I investigate the emergence of mariachi music in California. Through historical narrative, I aim to illustrate how mariachi music has flourished as a transnational genre, and through comparative analysis explain the performance practices and cultural contexts by highlighting the unique conditions that have given rise to the educational mariachi movement in the United States.

Chapter four delves into the role of mariachi festivals. In this chapter I examine the correlation between academic programs and mariachi festivals, focusing on the Tucson Mariachi Festival, the San Jose Mariachi Festival, and the Chula Vista Mariachi Festival as case studies. These festivals provide students with an outlet to perform, and give them opportunities to learn from famous professional mariachi ensembles that are hired to teach and perform at each festival.

Chapter five is devoted to the issues of transcription and the budding mariachi music publishing industry. The mariachi music repertoire is massive and includes many song forms. I will focus on instrumentation and song forms taught in academic programs. As academic mariachi programs continue to thrive, the demand for a mariachi music publishing industry is inevitable. A few large companies are trying to tap this into this new market; however, due to the extreme difficulty of transcribing certain song forms (e.g. the *huapango* and the *son jalisciense*) and the lack of standardization in notating mariachi music, a comprehensive mariachi music publishing industry does not exist. In this chapter, I compare the transcriptions of two mariachi educators in order to demonstrate the diversity in current transcription practices.

In chapter six, I offer a detailed historical account of the academic mariachi movement, chronicling key educational institutions and festivals. Of central importance are UCLA—the first academic mariachi program—and the influence it has had on the emergence of other programs. I will also discuss the individuals whose contributions have been instrumental in the development of the academic mariachi movement. Additionally, this chapter examines the issues surrounding the education of Mexican and Mexican-American children in the United States. By focusing on the long history of racism, segregation and forced assimilation, I examine the relationship of marginalization and other forms of social domination to educational trends (e.g. underachievement, increased high school drop-out rates, etc.). Moreover, I will demonstrate the ways mariachi, as an alternative method of student retention, works to address poor academic performance. Many of the challenges faced by academic mariachi programs are also

discussed. With issues of curriculum development and teacher qualifications plaguing many school districts, a few colleges have instituted mariachi teacher training programs. I examine the politics of the creation of such programs and the tensions that arise between mariachi musicians trained in school programs and those who advocate traditional teaching methods.

Chapter seven, the concluding chapter, reviews the major issues discussed in the dissertation. The impact of various developments within the mariachi tradition is examined along with discussion of possibly future outcomes for the mariachi educational movement. There is no doubt that mariachi music in the United States is a vast topic with many research opportunities, and it is my hope that my dissertation will motivate other scholars to investigate additional aspects of the mariachi tradition as well.

Chapter 2

The Basics of Mariachi Music

Introduction

While the etymology and origins of the word "mariachi" are controversial, it is important to understand that in modern usage "mariachi" has multiple meanings, depending on the context in which it is used. As noted in chapter one, the word "mariachi" can describe a genre, a musician, and an ensemble. For those unfamiliar with the genre, the multiple meanings of the term can create confusion.[34]

The controversy surrounding the origins of the word "mariachi" stems from the nineteenth-century intervention in Mexico by the French and the installation of Archduke Maximilian of Austria from 1864-1867 (Duncan 1996:30).[35] For most of the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries it was believed that the word mariachi derived from the French word *mariage*, meaning marriage. Hermes Rafael's *Origen e Historia Del Mariachi* (1983) is devoted entirely to this issue.[36] Through linguistic analysis, he argues for the Coca, Huichol and Cora origin of the term, persuasively maintaining that the word mariachi has a Mexican origin. Lacking any concrete evidence to prove his assertion, Rafael relies on linguistic analysis to substantiate his claim. One of the first authors to

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[34] Throughout this dissertation I will try to be as clear as possible in using the term mariachi.

[35] Beginning in 1862, the French under Napoleon III tried to create an empire in Mexico under a puppet ruler, the Archduke Maximilian of Austria. 1864-1867 is known as the French Intervention. Since gaining its independence in 1821, Mexico had little political or economic stability. Several different political groups existed, each vying for power. Benito Juarez, a liberal, managed to gain control after borrowing heavily from Britain, France and Spain. In 1861, Britain, France and Spain signed the Treaty of London, in which they agreed they would "force" Mexico to pay its debts. As the United States was entangled in the Civil War, Napoleon III took this as an opportunity to gain a stronghold in the Americas. The French were eventually expelled from Mexico, and Maximilian was executed per Benito Juarez's orders in 1867 (Krauze 1997:177-188).

[36] *Origen and History of Mariachi* (1988)

challenge the French origin view, he situates the word mariachi in a pre-Columbian setting, linking its development to indigenous musical practices that were later influenced by the Spanish and African slaves to form a "new" mestizo musical tradition. By placing the origins of mariachi music in an indigenous context, its associations with a European colonial origin are abolished.

Basing his classification of the Coca language on "geographic, ethnographic, morphological and genealogical criteria" (ibid.:57-58), Rafael compares the word mariachi to words from the Cahita, Tarahumara and Coca languages. These three indigenous languages were known to have existed in what is now recognized as the state of Jalisco. Rafael determined that certain word endings such as *bacorihui, baciahui* and *cariacha*, signifying different place-names, sound similar to the word mariachi, especially when its syllables are examined *mar-ia-chi* (ibid.:60). While he makes persuasive arguments, the lack of concrete examples makes his arguments difficult to prove. Rafael's book caused a considerable stir, and his linguistic analysis continues to be scrutinized.

In 1852, Father Cosme Santa Anna, a Catholic priest, wrote a letter of complaint to the archbishop of Guadalajara describing drunken, disrespectful behavior carried out during public celebrations on Holy Saturday. He ambiguously refers to these hedonistic acts of drinking, gambling and crime as *mariachis* (Jáuregui 2007:16). The discovery of this document proves that the word mariachi was in use before the arrival of the French in Mexico. As noted in Daniel Sheehy's *Mariachi Music in America*, by the last few

decades of the nineteenth century, the word "mariachi" and its variant "mariache" appear frequently in written texts, but its use was not uniform:

> It seemed to indicate several things in different instances: the occasion at which local musicians performed with dancing (as in Santa Anna's letter); the music itself; the group of musicians playing; or the platform upon which people danced to the accompaniment of the music (Sheehy 2006:16).

Origins

The exact origins of mariachi music are unknown, and many theories exist. Many modern Mexican states such as Jalisco, Nyarit, Colima, Guerrero, Guanajuato, Zacatecas, Michoacan, and states as far north as Sinaloa and Durango claim the origins of mariachi music (Chamorro 2000; Jáuregui 1991; Rodriguez 2006; Serrano 1992). What is clear is that mariachi music originated within the central western region of Mexico. In his book *El Mariachi: Símbolo Musical de México* (2007), Jesús Jáuregui challenges the popular notion that origins of mariachi lie in the state of Jalisco. He says:

> En esta región se han compartido procesos históricos por centurias y, por tanto, se han realizado intercambios culturales durante un periodo prolongado. Los Portadores del conjunto de tradiciones musicales, distribuidas en esa amplia porción del territorio mexicano, sí han estado vinculados por una relativa y variable proximidad. Esta región del mariachi se encontraba intercomunicada tanto por vías marítimas como terrestres y, en algunas subregiones, por vías fluviales y lacustres. De hecho, los puertos de Acapulco, Manzanillo, San Blas, Mazatlán, Guaymas y, hasta 1848, los de San Diego y San Francisco, permitían el flujo humano y de mercancías dentro de la región y hacia otras tierras allende el mar (Jáuregui 2007:213).
>
> Historical processes have been shared in this region for centuries, and there have been cultural exchanges for a prolonged period. Carriers of these musical traditions, spread over the large portion of Mexican territory, have been linked by close communication. This region of mariachi was found and dispersed through intercommunication by land

> and sea routes and, in some sub-regions, inland waterways and lakes. In fact the port areas of Acapulco, Manzanillo, San Blas, Mazatlan, Guaymas, and until 1848, those of San Diego and San Francisco, allowed the flow of people and goods within the region and other lands beyond the sea (translation by the author).

In describing the flow of dispersion for mariachi music in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, he observes that while the "*zona nuclear*" (nuclear zone) of mariachi encompassed the modern Mexican states of Jalisco, Nayarit, and Michoacán, the "*zona extensa*" (extensive zone) of mariachi extended from the Oaxaca in the south all the way up to modern-day California, which during the time of Spanish and later Mexican rule was referred to as Alta California (ibid.: 213). Jáuregui goes on to assert that:

> La región del mariachi—en tanto portadora de una tradición—nunca tuvo límites fijos, sino contornos diluidos y cambiantes. La ilusión de un nombre regional—Jalisco—tiende a encubrir el hecho de que dicha delimitación sólo puede corresponder a trazos impuestos políticamente, pues no existen áreas homogéneas en términos culturales. Como todas las grandes manifestaciones culturales, el mariachi es una tradición profundamente macrorregional, cuya conformación no corresponde para nada con las circunscripciones dictadas por los avatares políticos (212).
>
> The Mariachi region—as the bearer of a tradition—has never had set limits, but diluted and shifting contours. The illusion of a regional name—Jalisco—tends to obscure the fact that the demarcation lines can only correspond to politically imposed [regions], since there are no culturally homogeneous areas. Like all major cultural events, mariachi is a tradition that is deeply macro regional, whose conformation does not correspond at all with the divisions imposed by political vicissitudes. (translation by the author).

In this way, Jáuregui is adamant to dispel the myth that mariachi is from only one region. As my own research shows, song forms such as the *son* and *jarabe* were among the songs and dances popular throughout California before the arrival of Anglos to the area. Figure 2.1 shows a modern-day map of Mexico. As we can see, the area from Oaxaca all the

way to California (not shown) is vast indeed. In chapter 3, a more thorough discussion of early Mexican music in California is given.

Figure 2.1: Map of Mexico. Public domain map by Alex Covarrubias

It could be argued the distant origins of mariachi music can be found at the time of first contact between the Indigenous peoples of Mexico and the Spanish conquistadores. It is well documented that professional musicians accompanied Hernán Cortés in 1519 (Stevenson 1952:51). According to ship manifests, these musicians brought with them Spanish harps, *vihuelas* and violins These instruments were immediately copied and played by natives, whose own musical traditions were already

highly developed (ibid.:51-52).[37] The importation of enslaved Africans into the region by the Spanish during the early colonial period added greatly to a process of musical *mestizaje*.[38] Prominent folklorist Vicente T. Mendoza notes that

> En la costa sur de la República Mexicana, abarcando los Estados de Nayarit, Jalisco, Michoacán, Guerrero y parte de Oaxaca, existe un género de música de origen español, injertado en la región aludida que es actualmente la manifestación musical criolla más clara y precisa. Dicha música es ejecutada desde hace muchas décadas por grupos instrumentales reducidos que reciben actualmente el nombre de "mariachi" (Mendoza 1943:87).
>
> On the southern coast of the Republic of Mexico, spanning the states of Nayarit, Jalisco, Michoacán, Guerrero and part of Oaxaca, there exists a musical genre of Spanish origin that when combined with music from that region, in actuality, is clearly and precisely a manifestation of Creole music. This music has been performed for many decades by instrumental groups known by the name of "mariachi" (translation by author).

It is clear that no single state or city can definitively claim that mariachi originated in one place.

Instrumentation

Most Mexican mariachi scholars note that the mariachi tradition we know today has its roots in the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century (Jáuregui 1991, 1999; Rafael 1983; Serrano 1992; Chamorro 2000). The mariachi tradition of the late nineteenth century to 1910 and the period from 1910 to the present

[37] The Spanish 16th-century *vihuela* and the modern Mexican *vihuela* are two completely different small, guitar-like instruments. The Spanish *vihuela* is no longer in use, except in Early Music settings. The Mexican *vihuela* features a concave back, whereas the Spanish *vihuela* has a flat back.
[38] *Mestizaje* describes a process of racial and cultural mixing.

can perhaps be better understood by situating it in a rural/urban dichotomy. As noted above, in his book *El Mariachi: Símbolo Nacional de Mexico* (2007), Jesús Jáuregui shows that mariachi music cannot be attributed to any one state, but that mariachi music, both rural and urban, is most heavily concentrated in the states of Nayarit, Jalisco, Michoacán and Colima, and can be found as far south as Oaxaca and as far north as Sonora. Jáuregui has also identified nineteenth century references to mariachi music as far north as San Rafael, California. I will elaborate on the early *hispano* music of California in the next chapter. Jáuregui explains that the instrumentation of early rural mariachi groups could consist of violins, *vihuelas*, guitars, harps, upright basses, *chirimías* (shawm), and *clarínes* (bugle/trumpet) (Jáuregui 2007:216). The instrumentation of early, "rural" mariachi ensembles varies. He notes that early mariachi ensembles generally included a harp (to play bass parts), a violin (melody) and a *vihuela* (rhythm instrument). Musicologist Jose Antonio Robles Cahero asserts that the bare bones mariachi is based on a baroque model, and that the harp and *vihuela* play a basso continuo-type line with the violin providing melody and/or ornamental figures.[39]

The Rural Tradition

Historically, the rural mariachi tradition, which precedes the urban tradition, consisted of four musicians, and instrumentation varied from one region to the next. The two regions most prominently associated with rural mariachi are central Jalisco and an

[39] I served as his Teaching Assistant in the Fall of 2003 for the UCLA course "Music in Latin America: Mexico and the Caribbean." Robles Cahero asserted the baroque connection in all his lectures pertaining to mariachi music.

area that includes southern Jalisco and Michoacán. The central Jalisco tradition included two violins, a *vihuela*, and a *guitarrón* (Pearlman 1988:48-60). The southern Jalisco and Michoacán traditions favored two violins, a harp and the *guitarra de golpe*.[40]

Figure 2.2: Picture of my father holding a *guitarrón*. Front view and side view of instrument. Photo by author.

[40] The *guitarra de golpe,* the original mariachi guitar, has five strings and is smaller than a guitar but larger than the *vihuela*. Unlike the *vihuela* and *guitarrón* the *guitarra de golpe* does not feature a concave back.

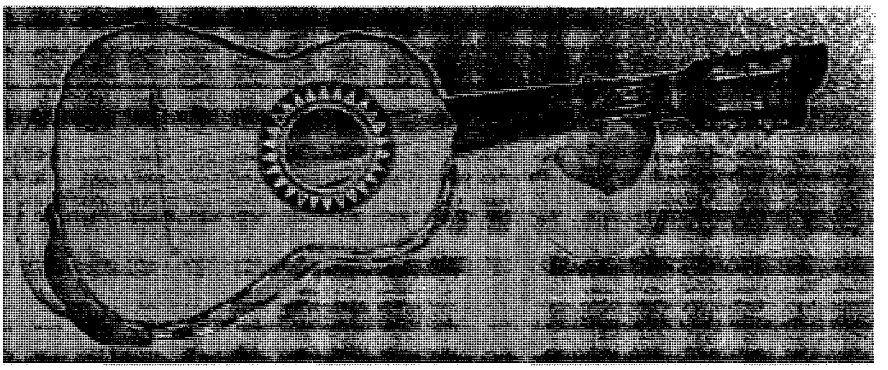

Figure 2.3: Front view of a *vihuela*. Photo by author.

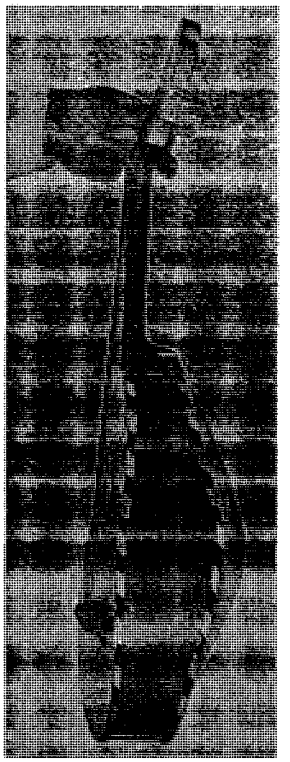

Figure 2.4: Side view of a *vihuela*. Photo by author.

A picture of a *guitarrón* and *vihuela* are shown in figures 2.2 through 2.4. The difference in size is evident in these pictures. Rural mariachi music is still played today in the rural regions of Jalisco and Michoacán; however, it is the urban mariachi that has

become the national musical symbol of Mexico.[41] Figure 2.5 shows a typical harp from this region.

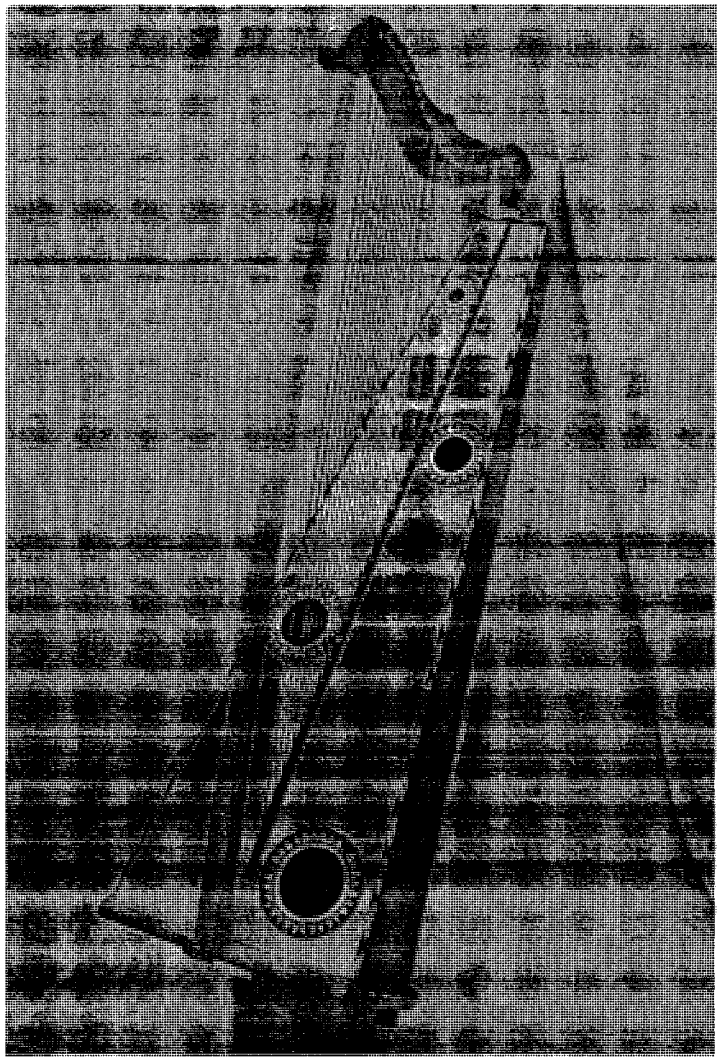

Figure 2.5: Picture of a typical harp. Photo by Romeo Guzmán. Used with permission.

[41] The *arpa grande* tradition of Michoacán could be thought of as the country cousin of mariachi music. In many ways, early mariachi ensembles which used the harp pre-1920s and *arpa grande* ensembles had the same instrumentation and were playing similar repertoire. Certain song forms such as the *valona* (a narrative song and poetic form) is now almost exclusively played by *arpa grande* ensembles, although they were once played by early mariachis as well (Interview with William Faulkner at the San Jose Mariachi Festival, July 12, 2002).

The Urban Tradition

The modern mariachi is an urban phenomenon that flourished in Mexico City after the Mexican revolution (1910-1920). A detailed account of early "urban" mariachi groups is beyond the scope of this dissertation, as is a discussion of all of the mariachi groups that helped to create the modern mariachi sound. For the sake of brevity, I will only discuss a few of the more influential mariachi groups.

At the turn of the twentieth century two urban styles of mariachi were becoming popular in Mexico, both from the state of Jalisco. One originated from the town of Cocula and the other from Tecalitlán. Cirilo Marmolejo's mariachi featured the Cocula style favored the guitarrón as the bass instrument, while Gaspar Vargas's mariachi favored the harp as the bass instrument.

Cirilo Marmolejo is often credited with helping to develop the urban mariachi sound. Originally from Tecolotlán, he moved his mariachi ensemble Mariachi Coculense "Rodriguez" de Cirilo Marmolejo from Jalisco to Mexico City in 1920. One of the first mariachis to experiment with the addition of "new" instruments such as the French horn, clarinet, coronet, flute and trumpet (Escalante and Herrera 1994:3), Mariachi Coculense's early inclusion of the trumpet would later influence other groups to adopt its use, making the instrument an integral part of the standard instrumentation of the mariachi. The role of technology and the media was crucial to the transmission of mariachi music throughout Mexico and beyond. During the 1930s, cinema, radio and the phonograph flourished, and Mexico City became the center for Spanish language media in Latin America. This period also saw the birth of the *ranchera* genre, which is nationalistic and

nostalgic in nature (Clark 1993:3).[42]

Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán, founded by Gaspar Vargas in 1898, is one of the most influential mariachi ensembles in history and continues to be a leading group today. According to Jonathan Clark, the original members of Mariachi Vargas were Gaspar Vargas (*guitarra de golpe*), Manuel Mendoza (harp), Refugio Hernández (violin) and Lino Quintero (violin) (Clark 1992:3). Gaspar's son, Silvestre Vargas, joined the group in 1921, and by 1932 had become its leader. Determined to expand the group both musically and in size, Silvestre added a *guitarrón* to reinforce the bass line, which was previously played by the harp alone.[43] Clark notes that "the *guitarrón* was at that time uncommon in Tecalitlán, being associated with mariachis from the Cocula region" (ibid.:4). While Mariachi Vargas did not begin as a popular or famous mariachi, they have become Mexico's longest running and most famous mariachi group. When Mariachi Vargas arrived in Mexico City in 1934, the popular mariachi of the time was Mariachi Tapatío, led by Cirilo Marmolejo's nephew José Marmolejo (ibid.:4).

By the 1940s and 1950s, the modern-day mariachi ensemble consisted of violins, trumpets, *vihuela*, *guitarrón*, guitar, and the occasional harp. Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán became one of the most famous mariachis in Mexico, and their music and influence was spread throughout Latin America by their frequent appearances on radio programs and in films. Late in adding the trumpet to its ensemble, Silvestre wanted to

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[42] Early recordings of this mariachi are available on, *Mexico's Pioneer Mariachis Vol 1 - Mariachi Coculense "Rodríguez" de Cirilo Marmolejo 1926-1936*. Reissue edited and produced by Chris Strachwitz. El Cerrito: Arhoolie Productions Inc. CD 7011. 1993.

[43] The *guitarrón* is a louder instrument than the harp and in addition to being more portable than the harp, it is also capable of playing chromatic pitches. The *arpa jalisciense* is a diatonic instrument. Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán has always had a harp in its ensemble.

keep his mariachi a string ensemble. However, by the 1940s, the trumpet had become so popular in other mariachi groups that in 1941, Miguel Martinez joined Mariachi Vargas as their first permanent trumpet player. To this day, he is regarded as one of the best mariachi trumpet players ever.[44] In 1944, Rubén Fuentes joined Mariachi Vargas as a violinist, later becoming their musical director and arranger. Fuentes, a prolific composer and arranger, and Silvestre Vargas codified much of the standard mariachi repertoire (ibid.:4). I will include a more thorough account of Mariachi Vargas in a later chapter, as their role in the mariachi festivals in the United States is important.

Types of Ensembles

Due to differences in performance situations and their demands, there exist a diversity of ensembles within the mariachi tradition. Differences in each center around issues that include level of musicianship, training required, leadership, time dedicated to rehearsal, and repertoire choices, which vary greatly from one ensemble to another. Yet, one common point of comparison among nearly all of the various manifestations of the mariachi is money, which profoundly influences the way that groups operate and organize themselves. These categories are by no means rigid, as some individual mariachi musicians are perfectly capable of performing in several of the categories I have listed below, and in many cases rely on these permeable boundaries to secure adequate employment. This section will discuss some of the common types of groups that I have observed in both Mexico and the United States.

[44] Miguel Martinez is still an active mariachi trumpet player and teacher.

Al Talón

Al Talón, literally meaning "at the heels," describes a situation where mariachi ensembles only play song requests. In most *al talón* settings, the mariachi is paid per song with the expectation that it will be able to play virtually any song asked of its members. Performing in this way is most commonly associated with bars, restaurants, and private parties. Many private engagements with mariachi ensembles performing that I have personally attended, or that I have myself performed for, were paid by the hour with the mariachi playing *al talón.*

For ensembles whose goal is to earn money playing table-to-table by charging a fee per song or per hour, it is important that the mariachi is able to play all requested songs. It is likely that if at least one person in the ensemble "knows" a song, the rest of the group will be able to "improvise" and play the request. In groups that are paid per song, it is not uncommon for the mariachi ensemble to cut songs short by omitting verses. With each song performed in truncated form, the group is capable of playing more songs in a given period of time, ultimately increasing their total pay for the job. Conversely, ensembles paid by the hour tend to elongate their performances of individual songs by either repeating or adding verses, so that they play fewer songs during an appearance.

In the *al talón* situation, the level of musical training required varies widely. The ability to improvise is extremely important, as is the ability to establish rapport with paying customers. While some *al talón* ensembles lack the technical skills to play the complicated repertoire that many show groups play, it is not a given that all show group mariachis can play *al talón* either. Elaborate, difficult arrangements tend to be the focus

of the show group repertoire, and since they tend to perform for high profile shows, the ability to improvise is not as critical to a successful performance. While individual mariachis who play in show groups may play *al talón* expertly, it is not unheard of for a group to hire a mariachi with great technical skill that cannot play *al talón* at all.

It is not uncommon at restaurants and bars for customers to sing with the mariachi. I have seen customers start singing with the mariachi unexpectedly, and even if they are out of the tune, the mariachi will find the key (or as close to it as possible) that they are singing in and accompany the singer. Many mariachis pride themselves on their ability to accompany anyone, and most like the challenge it presents. In many cases, it has been my observation that in the *al talón* situation it is a matter of quantity vs. quality, and there are many ensembles that play *al talón* very well.

Chambas

The term *chamba* is used to describe a one-time job in the general sense. When a group gets hired to play for a wedding, baptism, funeral, party, etc., that engagement will be referred to as a *chamba*. Generally, the mariachi ensemble will be paid an hourly wage that is usually decided upon in advance. Some groups require that a contract be signed and deposits paid before the *chamba,* while other groups are simply formed the day of the *chamba* with neither a formal contract nor a deposit. In this performance situation the mariachi ensemble may be expected to perform *al talón*, or they might select a repertoire in advance. Since mariachi music is so pervasive within Mexican and Mexican-American culture, most life-cycle events are celebrated with mariachi music, and

important events such as weddings, baptisms, funerals, birthdays, mother's day, father's day, quinceañeras, etc. all have songs associated with them. Depending on the purpose of the *chamba,* the mariachi will usually have an idea of the repertoire they may be required to play.[45] As any type of mariachi ensemble can be hired for a *chamba*, the level of musicianship varies greatly. Some groups are put together quickly on the day of the *chamba,* while other groups rehearse frequently and maintain consistent personnel.

Plantas

On the most fundamental level a *planta* is a job with "job security." Unlike a *chamba,* which tends to be a one-time hire, most mariachi ensembles aspire to obtain a regular *planta*, as it means a longer term of employment. As mariachi is music strongly associated with parties and drinking, restaurants, bars, and clubs tend to be the most common businesses that hire a steady mariachi, usually in order to attract more business. Throughout my research I have noticed two types of *plantas,* the unpaid and the paid *planta.* The unpaid *planta* describes a situation where the business may hire a particular mariachi group to perform at their restaurant but not pay them. The mariachi is expected to earn their money playing *al talón.* While this situation offers better job stability, the mariachi ensemble is still at the mercy of the business that hired them, and more successful restaurants will have many mariachi ensembles interested in the *planta.* The paid *planta* describes a situation where the business actually pays the mariachi a salary and the mariachi may choose to play *al talón* or have a set show. This type of *planta* is

[45] A *quinceañera* is comparable to a girl's "sweet 16" birthday, except that in Latin-America it is the 15th birthday that is celebrated

the most highly coveted performing situation, as the mariachi can expect a consistent pay amount. Every mariachi ensemble I have played with has actively sought out a steady *planta.* The continued success of many groups is dependent on steady work, and the *planta* provides this opportunity. Many groups will use the *planta* as a testing ground for new arrangements. Through the *planta* many groups will pass out business cards and sell CDs in the hopes of being hired for *chambas* when they are not already scheduled at the *planta.*

Show Groups

The show group is a mariachi ensemble that usually performs for shows, concerts, and high-profile professional events. Some of these groups may never play *al talón* – although ensembles such as Mariachi Los Camperos de Nati Cano are capable of playing all performance situations. It is most common for show groups to have their own set repertoire consisting of two or more hours' worth of music. Leaders of these professional ensembles will hire the best professional mariachi musicians, as groups tend to showcase new compositions and arrangements that require a high level of technical and artistic skill to play.

One well-known professional female mariachi group, Mariachi Mujer 2000, rehearses three to four times a year and only plays for mariachi festivals and other high-profile concerts. Laura Sobrino, their music director explained to me that many of the members live in other states and that a regular *planta* is not their main goal.[46] Throughout

[46] Personal interview, February 7, 2004.

the rest of the year individual members may play with other groups. Most recently they were selected to play for the 2008 Opening Ceremonies for the Beijing Olympics. Other professional show groups, such as Mariachi Sol de Mexico, have their own restaurant *planta*, in addition to playing for large events like concerts and festivals.[47]

Recording/Media Group

Radio stations, movie studios, advertising agencies and other entertainment businesses sometimes hire mariachis specifically for commercials, background music, or to accompany famous singers. Depending on the situation, a particular mariachi ensemble may be hired or individual mariachi musicians will be employed to form an ensemble to meet the particular requirements of the project. In Los Angeles, for example, mariachi groups that are members of the musicians union are more likely to be hired for this type of work.

Community/ Church Group

These groups exist to provide music for whichever community organization or church that supports them. Some community groups are sponsored by cultural centers and provide opportunities for aficionados of mariachi music to learn and play. Depending upon the goal of the ensemble, each member may "chip in" to help pay for an instructor. In some cases experienced groups may get paid for their musical services, although I do

[47] José Hernandez is the owner and musical director of Mariachi Sol de México. He owns the restaurant *Cielito Lindo*, which is located in El Monte, California. His male group, Sol de Mexico, and his female group, Reyna de Los Angeles, perform regularly at his restaurant.

not believe this is a frequent occurrence. Most community groups I know of are made up of aficionados who love mariachi music and play as a hobby; financial gain is not a driving force behind this kind of ensemble. The level of musicianship and formal training varies, and is dependent upon the individual members of the group. Church groups generally exist to provide music for religious services and celebrations associated with the church.

In California, youth community centers aimed at helping primarily Mexican and Mexican-American children may implement a mariachi program. Often they will either hire a professional mariachi or enlist the help of volunteer musicians to oversee these types of groups.

Student Group /Academic Group

This type of ensemble was first started in the United States. These groups are supported by various academic institutions to promote various educational goals. The first academic mariachi ensemble was started as class in 1961 at UCLA under the Institute for Ethnomusicology. Started by Donald Borcherdt, a graduate student in the music department, the ensemble provided an opportunity where students could come to learn to play mariachi music (Sheehy 2006: 83). Eventually, Borcherdt found a local mariachi musician, Jesús Sánchez, to teach the class. Members of the class eventually founded the performing ensemble Mariachi Uclatlán, which was hired to play throughout southern California. A more detailed account of the mariachi program at UCLA will be given in chapter 5.

Academic mariachi programs exist in elementary, middle and high schools and in universities throughout the West and Southwestern United States. While some are loosely organized after-school programs, others like the mariachi ensembles at the University of Texas Pan American are highly organized and offer many performance opportunities within the university setting. As mariachi music enters academic institutions, its entrance will no doubt change the landscape of the mariachi tradition. Since many of the students being trained in these programs are learning in the context of music education programs, they are not being taught in the traditional way. Learning music through the use of sheet music is valued in academic programs over learning by ear. Rather than favoring a teaching method that balances both skill sets, students may or may not be prepared for the expectations future clients will have of them.

Additionally, the expansion of mariachi education programs across the United States has created the demand for education resource materials and sheet music. These new industries are struggling to create these materials, and at this point in time, the quality of the materials being provided varies greatly. Some new method books that are based on state curriculum standards value achieving the goals of the "standards," which may be incompatible with actual music practice. As students are trained in these programs, there will likely be the tendency for them to favor the manner in which they were taught. Whichever arrangement of a particular song they learn will become the favored one. With the need for mariachi educational resources rising, the resulting production of sheet music will most likely result in the standardization of codified methods that determine how the music will be transcribed and arranged. Many students

produced from these programs may go on to teach and found programs of their own. How they teach will impact a new generation of mariachi musicians. The impact of the educational mariachi movement is making its mark on the tradition. In chapter 5, I focus specifically on this phenomenon and its potential impact.

Economic Factors

While mariachi music is often perceived to have a romantic past, the life of a professional mariachi musician is certainly not easy. Many of the mariachi musicians I know in Los Angeles have other "day" jobs and use mariachi as a way to supplement their incomes. For those mariachi musicians who depend on mariachi as their sole source of income, there is almost no job security, their income will fluctuate frequently, and there are rarely health or retirement benefits.

Mariachi ensembles that do not have a *planta* and rely entirely on gigs can generally only expect six months of solid work a year which depends upon customer demand. Many of the mariachi musicians I spoke to while I working in Boyle Heights told me that March through August were the more profitable months to work. Important holidays like September 15 (Mexican Independence day), Halloween, Christmas and New Years will generally provide work opportunities for the week in which those holidays fall. Groups that have some type of *planta* have a little more job security, and there is always the threat that they may lose their *planta*. Every group handles their finances differently. Some groups may try to conduct business legitimately, i.e. reporting earnings, while others try and do everything under the table, cash only.

Working conditions vary widely. In addition to playing indoors for *plantas*, some work may require the musicians to play all day under the hot sun or in the rain for a backyard party. The term *caimán* (literally "alligator") refers to a group's leader, who generally pays himself considerably more than any other member of the group. This practice is justified if the *caimán* is able to get good jobs for the group or is able write good arrangements for the group. Issues of unions and royalties concern professional show groups. For example, Mariachi Los Camperos and Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán have both recorded multiple financially successful albums, keep busy tour schedules, and have been featured in movies. To my knowledge, Mariachi Los Camperos is one of a few groups whose leader, Nati Cano, offers his musicians health benefits and a retirement plan.

Each performing situation will present itself with a different economic issue. I have found for most groups practicality is an overwhelming factor in most decision-making. That is, the most practical options are the ones chosen, regardless of whether it makes the most business sense or not. For example, I have worked with groups that may or may not use contracts. In any given group, the personnel can easily change, and flexibility is important.

Song Forms

Mariachi music encompasses a large and flexible repertoire. The three most well-known song forms in mariachi music are the *son jalisciense*, the *jarabe* and the *ranchera*. There are several other song forms played by mariachis, and the repertoire is vast and

expansive. Some song forms are borrowed from other regions in Mexico, while others are of European origin like the waltz and polka. Among the better-known song forms in the mariachi tradition are the *son jalisciense* (an original song form within the mariachi tradition), the *jarabe* (of Mexican origin, it is a medley consisting of tunes popular at the time it was written), the *ranchera* (currently the most popular song form, whose subject matter tends to deal with matter of the "heart"), the *corrido* (a ballad about a heroic person popular through many musical genres in Mexico), the *bolero* (of Cuban origin and immensely popular in the 1930s and 1940s), the *huapango* (which originated in the Huastec area extending throughout the eastern region of Mexico and, like the *son jalisciense,* alternates between rhythmic patterns), the *polka* (a European musical import), the *marcha* (also an imported European musical form), the *chotis (*a variant of the European schottische), the *pasodoble* (also a European import), the *danzón* (of Cuban origin), the *vals* (the waltz originating from Europe), the *cumbia* (of Colombian origin), the *joropo* (of Colombian and Venezuelan origin), and many others.

The Son Jalisciense

The *son jalisciense* is indigenous to the mariachi repertoire, and it is vital that any mariachi be able to play it well. As my next chapter will discuss the *son jalisciense* I feel it is necessary to give only a brief explanation of what it is and how it works. It should be noted that the word *son* is a generic term to describe songs from certain areas that have similar characteristics. For example, a *son jalisciense* refers to a *son* from Jalisco (and is

particular to the mariachi), *son jarocho* describes *sones* from Veracruz, and *son huasteco* describes *sones* from the northern region of Veracruz and neighboring states.

The polyrhythmic layering of duple and triple time characterizes *sones* presenting special challenges in their transcription. The few mariachi musicians who transcribe songs tend to write *sones* in straight 3/4 time, which on paper fails to capture the hemiola feeling of a *son*. A key element of the *son* is the different feel that 3/4 and 6/8 time have. The *vihuela* and guitar drive the piece rhythmically. Rhythmically difficult to play, the strumming patterns or *mánicos* are also difficult to transcribe because the accents do not necessarily fall on strong beats. The rhythmic interaction between the *armonía* (the *vihuela* and guitar parts) and the bass (played on the *guitarrón*) helps distinguish a *son* from other song forms. The *guitarrón* generally alternates between playing a phrase that is syncopated followed by a non-syncopated phrase, as will be evident throughout most of the *son.* The bass line offers rhythmic stability even though it is highly syncopated. While the *guitarrón* plays the syncopated bass line, the *vihuela* and guitar play fast eighth-and sixteenth-note patterns that are generally not syncopated but heavily accented. For those who are not accustomed to listening to *sones,* finding the beat can be difficult.

The right hand strumming patterns (*mánicos*) for the *vihuela* and guitar greatly impact the rhythmic feel in terms of where the accents fall. In a sense, the right hand strumming patterns can be considered their own art form. Pedro Torres, the musical director of Mariachi Flor y Canto, a group I worked with while in Minnesota, explained that in many Mexican folk genres, one can tell from where the music originates based on

the strumming technique.[48] If the embellishments, or *redobles*, are omitted it is easy to hear the beat because the *vihuela* and guitar generally play a straight eighth-note pattern, sometimes adding a fast sixteenth-note embellishment. The *redobles* add the regional flavor.[49] Figure 2.6 demonstrates the rhythmic interaction between the *vihuela* and *guitarrón*. While the markings above the *vihuela* typically represent violin bowings, both Laura Sobrino and Jesús Guzmán use the same markings to indicate the direction of the right hand strumming pattern for the *vihuela* and guitar. The ⌐ represents the down stroke and the ∨ signifies an up stroke.

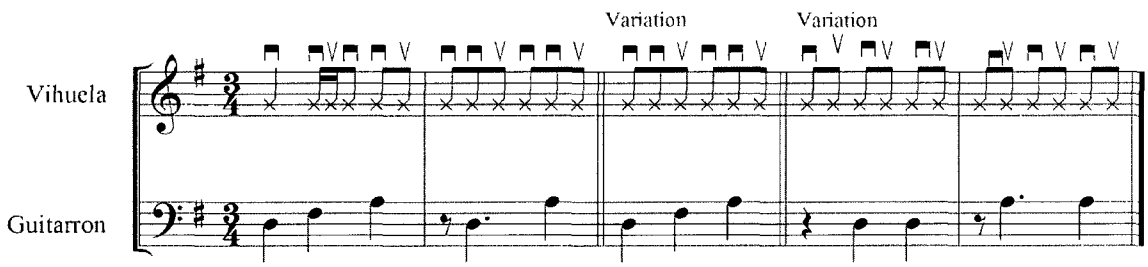

Figure 2.6: Basic *son jalisciense* rhythms.

Tag Endings

Two very common formulaic endings are shown below. Most *sones* will have one of the two endings. The first ending shown is perhaps the most common one. Figure 2.7 shows the most common of the tag endings.

[48] Personal interview, January 29, 2001.
[49] One strumming pattern: down-up-down-up-down, down-down-up-down-up-down, up up-down-up-down up.

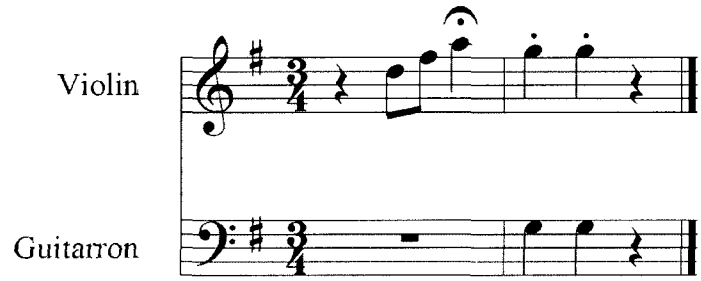

Figure 2.7: Most common tag ending for a *son jalisciense.*

Figure 2.8: Shows an alternate tag ending for a *son jalisciense.*

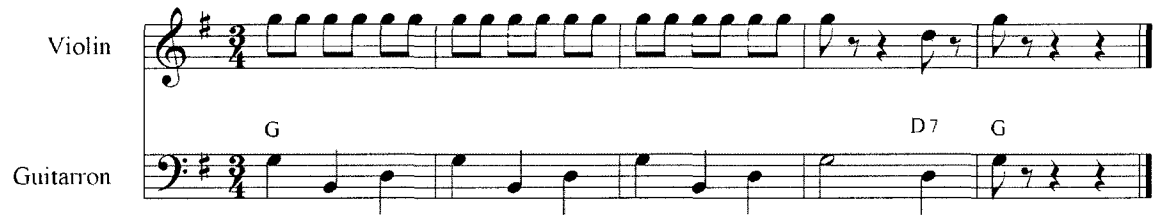

Figure 2.8: Alternate tag ending for a *son jalisciense.*

Bolero

The bolero is a borrowed song form from Cuba and is usually romantic in nature. Popular boleros include "Sabor a Mi," "Gema" and "Solamente una Vez," and are frequently requested songs. Boleros are generally played in 4/4 time and while rhythmically simple, are harmonically more complex. Augustíne Lara is perhaps one of the most famous Mexican composers of *boleros.* Figure 2.9 demonstrates the basic rhythmic pattern associated with the bolero. Figure 2.10 shows a characteristic tag ending in a major key, and figure 2.11 shows how a *bolero* in a minor key may end.

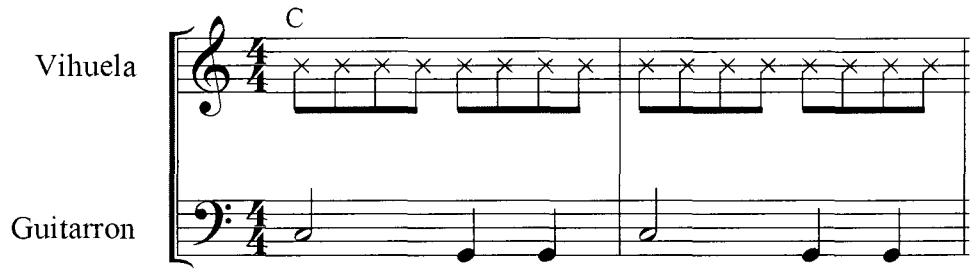

Figure 2.9: Typical *bolero* rhythmic pattern.

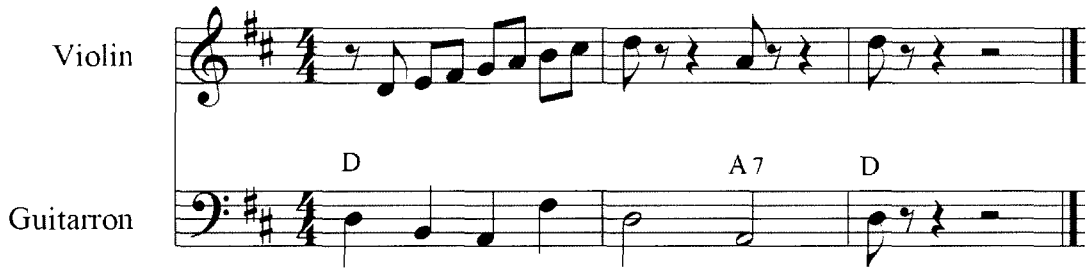

Figure 2.10: Tag ending for a *bolero* in a major key.

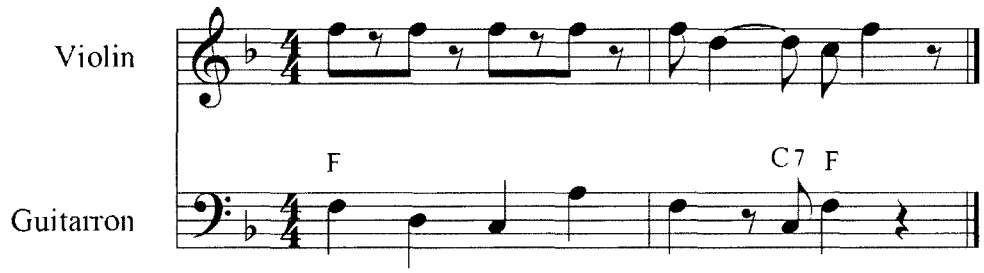

Figure 2.11: Tag ending for a *bolero* ending in minor.

Chotis

Generally set in 2/4 or 4/4 time, the *chotis* is the Mexican interpretation of the European schottische. This song form was brought to northern Mexico by Europeans during the nineteenth century. Most *chotis* are instrumental. "Amor de Madre" is a

popular *chotis* usually requested for mother's day. Figure 2.12 shows a typical *chotis* rhythmic pattern.

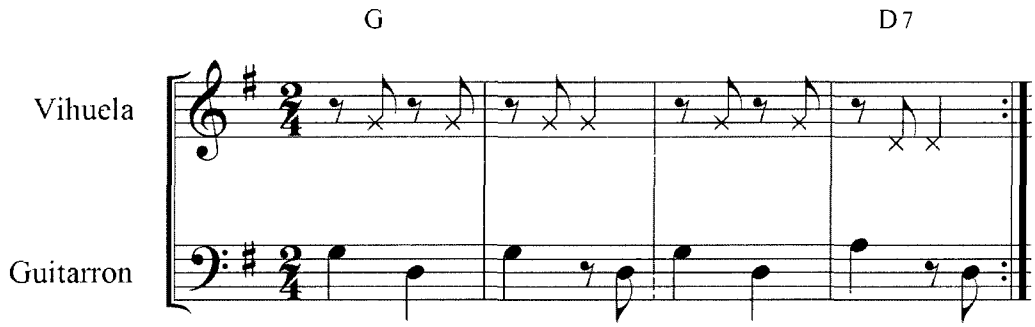

Figure 2.12: Typical *chotis* rhythmic pattern.

Corrido

While musically based on the *ranchera* form in terms of its introduction and use of tag endings, the *corrido* distinguishes itself as more of a literary genre. Most *corridos* are set in 3/4 time, as are many *rancheras*. The story being conveyed is the most important element of the song. Unlike the *ranchera*, the *corrido* typically does not have refrains, and each verse furthers the plot of the protagonist. Many *corridos* deal with themes of heroism and betrayal and relate the deeds of that person. Often important historical events are recounted in *corridos*. There is a large body of songs that tell of different events that happened during the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Since 2010 marked the one hundred year anniversary of the conflict, recent mariachi festivals programmed popular *corridos* from that period into their concerts.

Although not as common in the mariachi repertoire of *corridos*, a newer subset of the genre has emerged, namely that of the *narcocorrido.* The *narcocorrido* typically

relates the events of notorious drug cartels and the people involved in them. Usually composed and performed by *norteño* conjuntos (upright bass, accordion, and *bajo sexto*, a twelve-string guitar), the genre has gained transnational notoriety especially since famous *narcorrido* singers have been murdered for offending various cartels over the years. Even so, the use of *corridos* in storytelling makes them popular. In fact, *corridos* have been written for the political campaigns of presidential candidates. The *corridos* written about John F. Kennedy, and more recently Barack Obama, helped spread their campaign messages within the Spanish-speaking Latino community. Some of the more frequently requested *corrido* items are: "El Caballo Blanco" and "Siete Lenguas."

Cumbia

The *cumbia* is a dance song form that become popularized in the mariachi repertoire with the hit song "El Mariachi Loco" in the 1970s. Originally a genre from Colómbia, the *cumbia* is incredibly popular as dance music. In figure 2.13, a typical rhythmic pattern is shown. The square note-head in the guitar part is meant to signify a non-pitched rhythmic slapping motion. The song "El Mariachi Loco" is probably one of the most requested songs in the *al talón* setting. In fact, its popularity has also made it a hated song for mariachi musicians, who are tired of playing it. Additionally, the *cumbia*, because of its popularity as dance music, is sometimes considered not worthy of serious performance. For example, important mariachi performance venues like the Albuquerque Mariachi festival have actually banned the song form from its student mariachi

competition. Additionally, in all of the mariachi classes I have ever attended, which are numerous, a *cumbia* has never been taught.[50]

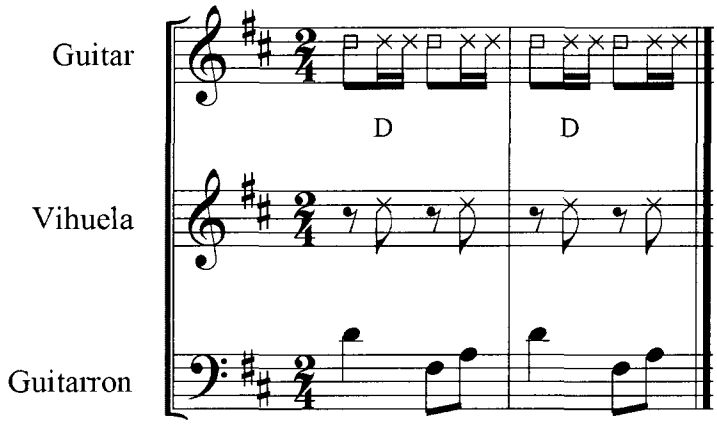

Figure 2.13: Typical *cumbia* rhythmic pattern.

Danzón

The *danzón* is a Cuban dance genre that has been imported into the mariachi repertoire. In 4/4 time, they are still well-liked dance songs. Popular in the first half of the twentieth century, Mariachi Vargas recorded an album in 1964 featuring *danzones* exclusively. Popular *danzones* include "Siboney," "Juarez," and Nereidas.

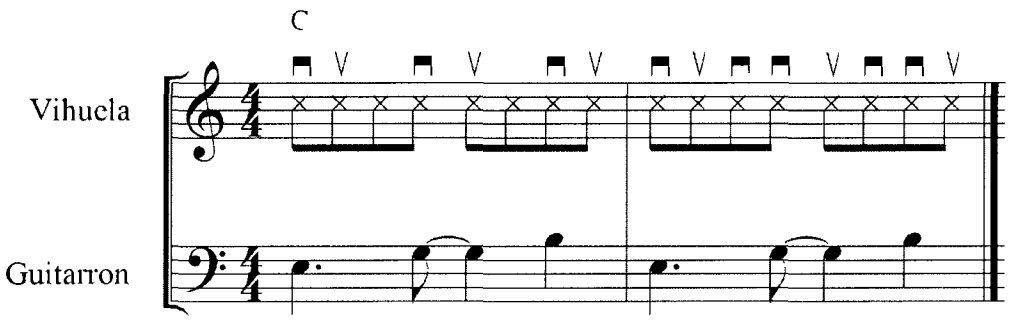

Figure 2.14: A typical *danzón* rhythm.

[50] Although I have attended numerous mariachi classes over a fifteen-year period, I realize that it is possible that there are mariachi instructors who do in fact teach *cumbia* to their students.

Huapango

A mariachi interpretation of the *son huasteco* genre, the *huapango* is a *son* genre related to the *son jalisciense*. It too features alternating 3/4 and 6/8 rhythms with similar syncopations. The distinguishing element of the *huapango* that makes it different from the *son jalisciense* is the use of the *apagón*, which is a dampening playing technique used by the guitar(s) and or *vihuela*. Borrowing stylistic elements from the *son huasteco* genre, the violins typically play virtuosic difficult fast passages during introductions and musical bridges. The vocal falsetto is also a distinguishing element of the the *huapango*. The typical rhythm associated with the *huapango* is shown in figure 2.15. Frequently requested *huapangos* include: "La Malagueña," "El Pastor" and "Cucurrucu Paloma."

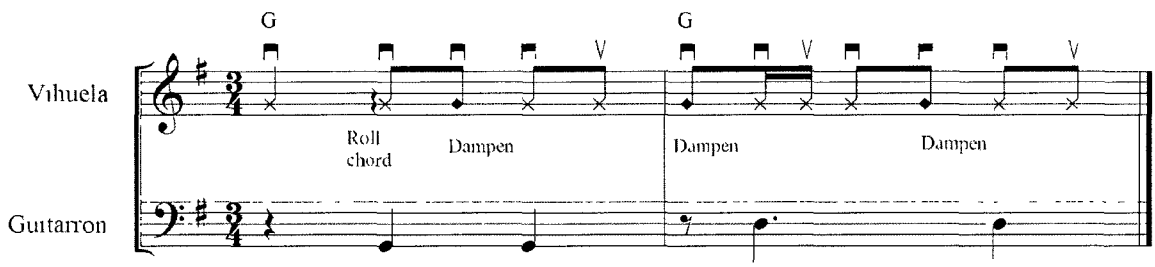

Figure 2.15: Shows a typical *huapango* rhythmic pattern.

Jarabe

One of the more traditional song forms in the mariachi genre, the *jarabe's* name, literally meaning "syrup," most likely refers to the fact that it is a "mixture" of popular melodies from the time in which a particular *jarabe* was composed. All *jarabes* begin with a 6/8 meter that, unlike other song-forms, is not syncopated. After this 6/8 section,

the other sections of the *jarabe* will move into sections of 2/4, 3/4 and perhaps return to 6/8. It is not uncommon for the middle section of a *jarabe* to contain sections of other *sones*. For example, "Jarabe Jalisciense" begins with a customary 6/8 introduction and moves into sections of various popular *son jalisciense* songs. Perhaps the most popular *jarabe* is "Jarabe Tapatío," which is also known in the United States, as the Mexican Hat Dance. The term *Tapatío* refers to someone or something from Guadalajara, so the song essentially identifies itself as a *jarabe* from Guadalajara. Like the *sones*, *jarabes* were popular dance music in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

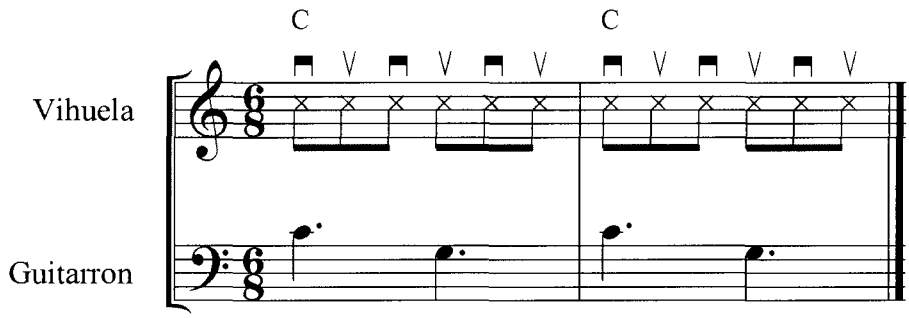

Figure 2.16: A typical *jarabe* rhythmic pattern.

Joropo

Of Venezuelan origin, the *joropo* entered the mariachi repertoire in the 1970s, following the successes of Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán's multiple tours to Venezuela. Rhythmically similar to the *huapango* in terms of using stylistic elements such as the *apagón*, the *joropo* also makes use of heavy syncopation and alternations between 3/4 and 6/8 time. Figure 2.17 demonstrates a typical *joropo* rhythm. The most famous *joropo* in the mariachi repertoire is "La Bikina," which enjoyed renewed interest after the

famous pop/*ranchera* singer Luis Miguel recorded it in 2000, for which he was nominated for a Latin Grammy in 2001.

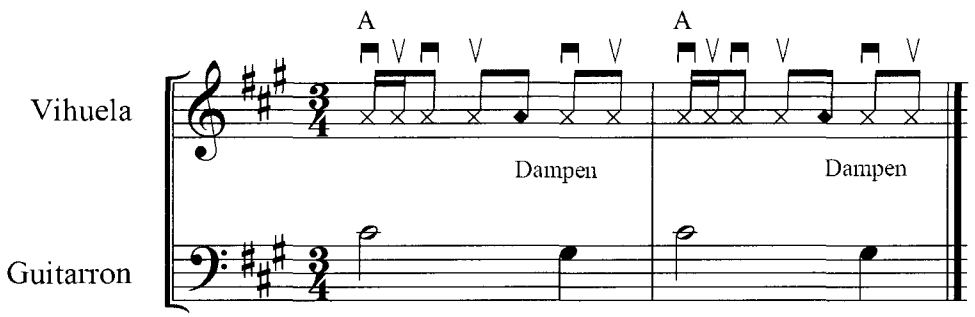

Figure 2.17: Typical *joropo* rhythm.

Pasodoble

The Spanish-origin *pasodoble* is an instrumental song-form that is rhythmically similar to a polka. Figure 2.18, which is identical to my polka example, shows the typical rhythm used in the song-form. Showcasing the melody with virtuosic violin and trumpet parts, the *pasodoble* is a difficult song-form; as a result, generally advanced, well-rehearsed mariachi groups are the ones that are able to perform it well. "España Cañi" is an example of a well-known *pasodoble*. Figure 2.19 is an excerpt from Jesús Guzmán's arrangement of the trumpet part for "España Cañi."

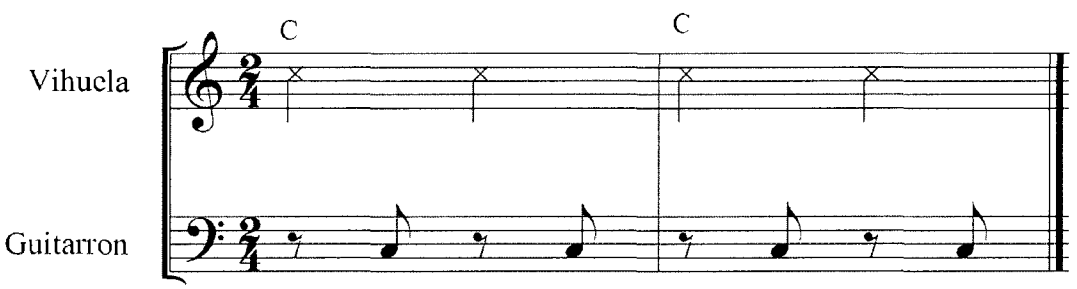

Figure 2.18: *Pasodoble* rhythmic pattern.

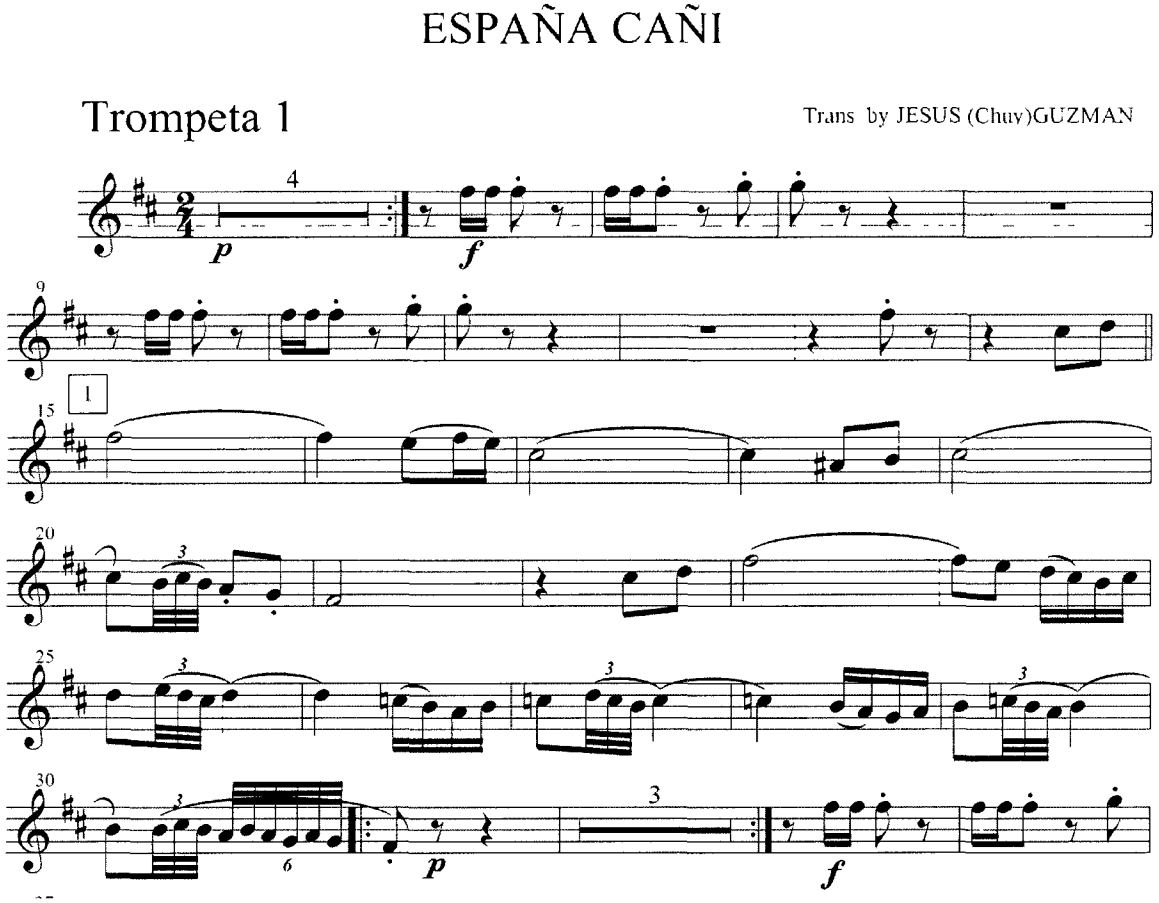

Figure 2.19: Excerpt of the trumpet 1 part of "España Cañi" as arranged by Jesús Guzmán. Excerpt used with permission.

Polka

A dance genre imported from Europe, the polka became a nineteenth-century dance craze. Attributed to German immigrants who settled in Northern Mexico in the 1800s, the polka was an immediate success. Mariachi versions of popular polkas emerged, and soon Mexican polkas' were being composed. Featuring a basic 2/4 time, polkas such as "Jesusita en Chihuahua" and "Las Perlitas" are commonly requested

songs. Figure 2.20 also demonstrates a typical polka rhythm. Please note that it is identical to figure 2.18.

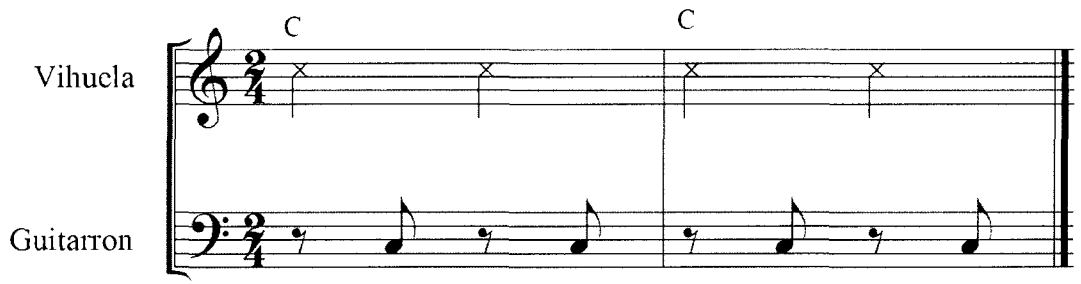

Figure 2.20: A typical polka rhythm.

Ranchera

The *ranchera* is one of the most popular song forms in the mariachi tradition. The majority of all songs requested tend to be *rancheras*. Similar in subject matter to that of the American "blues," the *ranchera* can be thought of as the Mexican blues. With emotionally charged lyrics conveying a wide range of human emotion, such as lost love, unrequited love, pride in one's homeland etc., the *ranchera* is an important song form within the mariachi genre. Characterized by a very emotional signing style, it is the ability of the singer to convey the appropriate emotion that determines the success of its performance. According to Mark Fogelquist, three types of *armonía* accompaniment are found: the 3/4 *ranchera* valseada (waltz rhythm), the 2/4 *ranchera polqueada* (polka rhythm), and the slow 4/4 *ranchera* (Fogelquist 2008:18). *Rancheras,* like the *son jalisciense*, also make use of tag endings. Figures 2.21 through 2.25 are just a few examples of some of the more typical rhythmic patterns and tag endings.

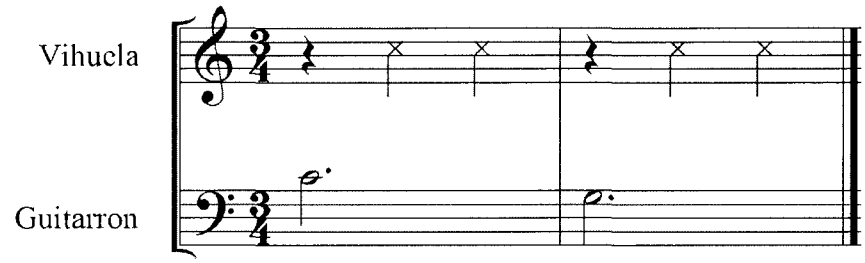

Figure 2.21: Example of a typical 3/4 *ranchera* rhythm.

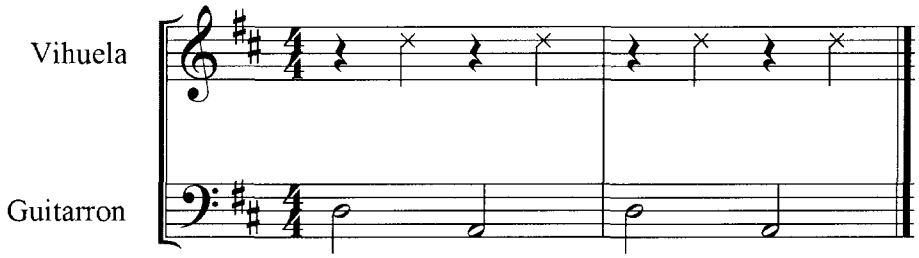

Figure 2.22: Example of a typical 4/4 *ranchera* rhythm.

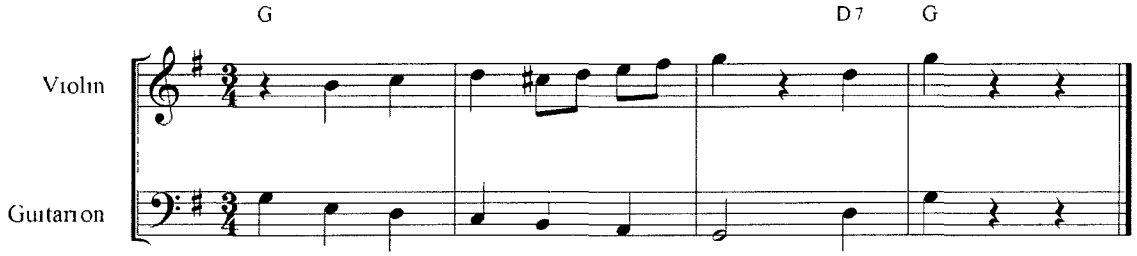

Figure 2.23: Example of a common 3/4 time *ranchera* tag ending.

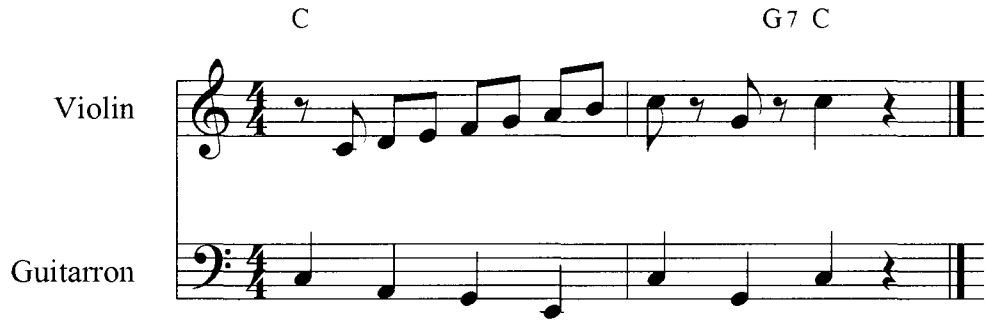

Figure 2.24: *Ranchera* tag ending in 4/4 time, example 1.

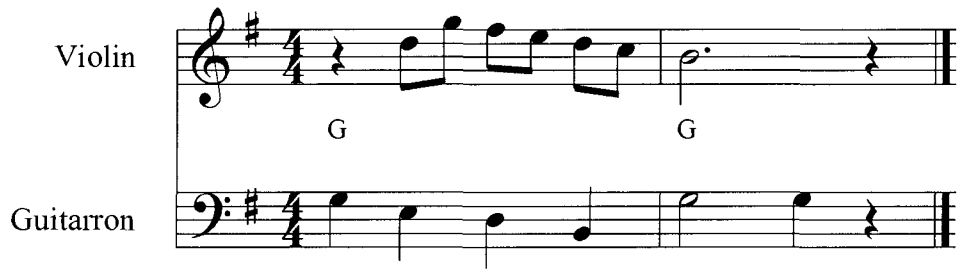

Figure 2.25: *Ranchera* tag ending in 4/4 time, example 2.

Vals (Waltz)

Another European import, the *vals* or waltz, enjoyed great popularity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Still popular, the *vals* is often an integral part of the celebration party for a girl's *quinceaña.* [51] Always in 3/4 time, they can be either instrumental or sung pieces. Figure 2.26 gives an example of the typical *vals* rhythm.

[51] A *quinceaña* celebrates a girl's fifteenth birthday. The celebration signifies her ceasing to be a girl and transitioning into womanhood.

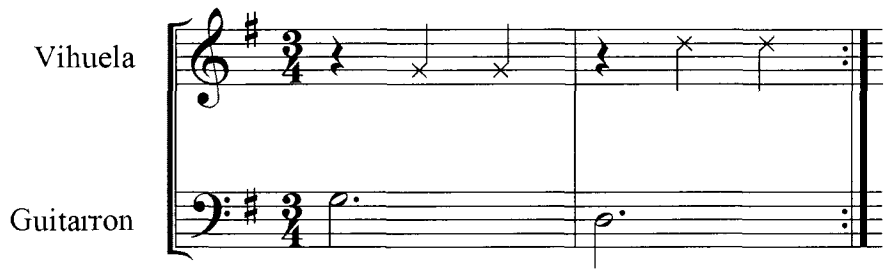

Figure 2.26: Typical *Vals* rhythmic pattern.

Potpourrí

A recent development, the *potpourrí* is essentially a medley. Fogelquist notes that "with the proliferation of mariachi festivals during the past twenty-five years, top-level professional mariachi have been pitted against one another in large venues more frequently. To maximize limited time slots, these groups frequently create medleys from segments of well-known songs" (Fogelquist 2008:21). Creating a coherent *potpourrí* is an art form of its own. Generally, only the most advanced mariachi groups will either arrange their own *potpourris* or have arrangements made for them in order to showcase their talents.

Conclusions

As mariachi is a genre with a vast repertoire, learning mariachi music can be a daunting task taking years of study. The successful mariachi groups are those that are able learn quickly, often on the spot during a performance, and have a large number of songs ready to play in their repertoire. Since there is an appropriate song for virtually

any occasion, mariachi music is a fitting choice. Mariachi music has in part remained popular because it is flexible and can incorporate elements from other genres. Due to its flexibility, it is always in a process of development and change, which is evident when one learns its history.

Chapter 3

Mexican Music in Early California

Introduction

Perceived as a musical genre that came to the United States in the twentieth century, mariachi music in California actually begins in the preceding century. Through archival research, it has become apparent that some of the song-forms and instruments typical of mariachi groups in Central Mexico in the nineteenth century also thrived in California. Most Americans assume the history of California begins with the Gold Rush of the '49ers (1849). The concept of "Manifest Destiny," which influenced the expansionist policies of President Polk during the 1840s, bestowed an almost religious belief that the United States was divinely destined to expand west to spread democracy and Protestantism (Pratt 1927:795). Through a series of managed events he was able to spark the Mexican American War, in which Mexico lost nearly a third of its territory. The written history of the region has largely reflected the precepts of Manifest Destiny. In this context California was viewed as a barren wasteland waiting for Anglo-Americans to come and tame it.

However, before the Mexican-American War and the Gold Rush, a thriving *Californio* culture existed. Military presidios, a religious Catholic mission system and *haciendas* (or large landed estates) made up the California landscape (Koegel 1994:111). The Mexican *hacienda* system, which had thrived in California since the eighteenth century, was largely based on farming and raising cattle. The owner of the *hacienda* was often referred to as the *hacendado* or *patrón* (boss), and the peasants (*campesinos)* worked the land. Due to the importance of cattle to the early California economy,

vaqueros or cowboys captured the imaginations of early visitors to the region as mentioned in Dmitry Zavalishin's 1824 account of his visit to California (Gibson 1973:282). Although California remained a remote northern Mexican province, the movement of cultural influences was rampant. Within this cultural context, it is then logical to assume that antecedents to the modern mariachi can be found through song-forms like the *son* and *jarabe* in California before statehood.

When I first began to seriously investigate mariachi music in 1999, I too assumed that mariachi music had come to the United States during the waves of Mexican immigration that occurred in the early and mid-twentieth century following the Mexican revolution of 1910,[52] and the even larger wave of immigration that occurred during the Bracero program following World War II.[53] In chapter two of Daniel Sheehy's book "Mariachi Music in America," he discusses the emergence of mariachi music in the United States. He begins with the story of Natividad "Nati" Cano, the creation of Mariachi Los Camperos, and the opening of La Fonda Restaurant in Los Angeles (Sheehy 2006:40). By 1957, Cano had joined Mariachi Chapala, a group based out of Mexicali that eventually performed in Los Angeles. After performing in Los Angeles with Mariachi Águila at The Million Theatre, Cano along with eight other members organized the incorporation of Mariachi Los Camperos, Inc., in 1967. La Fonda restaurant opened its doors in 1969 featuring a formal mariachi dinner show. Sheehy goes on to explain that in the 1930s Mexican films which prominently featured famous actor/

[52] During the Mexican Revolution of (1910-1920) displaced Mexicans sought refuge in the United States (Acuña 1988:144).
[53] The Bracero Program, enacted from 1942 to 1964, brought an estimated two million Mexican workers on guest contracts into the United States (Acuña 1988:263).

singers backed up by mariachi groups, became incredibly popular. In some cases, these films were more popular outside of Mexico and their success served as a motivation for more films to be made and distributed in the United States (ibid.:48).

Additionally, many articles perpetuate the idea that mariachi came to the United States during the first half of the twentieth century. While I agree that mariachi music became popularized in the twentieth century in the Mexican-American community, it is important to realize that it is only the urban mariachi that is being discussed. In Mexico, the emergence of the urban mariachi has been well documented, and the differentiation between the rural and urban mariachi is clear. In the United States, I have never come across an article or attended a lecture in which rural mariachi has been the main focus. It is generally assumed that the rural mariachi tradition has never existed in this country; however, this is an assertion that I have always questioned. My reasoning was that the Southwestern United States was first colonized by Spanish Europeans. Throughout most of the Southwestern United States many towns and roads have Spanish names. In California, many of the Catholic missions are still functioning, and have become popular tourist destinations. The names and missions, along with other "artifacts," predate the waves of Mexican immigration that occurred in the early twentieth century. The process of *mestizaje,* which began when the first Spaniards colonized Latin America, is an important concept in Latin American studies. Yet that same process of *mestizaje* is rarely discussed in an American context. All Spaniards arriving in the Southwest traveled north through Mexico and set up territories in the Southwest, establishing *presidios*, missions and towns. Just as they had done in Mexico, the Spaniards subjugated the local native

populations. Yet they were also influenced by the people they dominated. With the movement of people North and back South, it is likely that cultural influences, such as music, would travel with them.

An additional goal of this chapter is to explore a history that has not yet been examined. As previously mentioned, it is largely assumed that mariachi music was imported to the United States in the twentieth century. Through my archival research, I am able to show that this is not the case. In fact, there is a much longer history with roots in the nineteenth century *son jalisciense* song form being performed in California. In his epilogue "Paradigms and Stories," Daniel Neuman discusses the role of historiography in ethnomusicology. He notes that "It used to be the case that anthropology and ethnomusicology were largely ahistorical when not actively antihistorical" (Neuman 1991:270). This neglect of history was due largely in part to the scarcity of documents and other sources. As a twenty-first century ethnomusicologist, it is possible to do archival research and actually listen to recordings of music from the previous century. Of course, traditional research methods such as reading journals, looking at photographs and where available actual music scores are important, the availability of recorded media is expanding the type of research ethnomusicologist can do. Neuman's historical paradigms "reflexive music history," "interpretive music history" and "immanent music history" are useful in understanding the role of the history that is being written. In my case, the first two paradigms are pertinent to this particular chapter as well as in my sixth chapter that focuses on mariachi education (ibid.:269). According to Neuman "*Reflexive music history*" describes "the history of music history," while "*interpretive music history*"

describes "History [that] is written to make a point and present an argument." This chapter engages with both paradigms—first, by writing a previously untold part of the history of mariachi music, and secondly, this history challenges the notion that mariachi music is a recent and foreign import.

I have chosen to focus solely on California history, since the archival information was easily accessible to me. My initial inquiries into conducting research in Arizona and New Mexico revealed the need to focus on a single area. A comprehensive study of Spanish and Mexican music in the Southwest before their inclusion into the United States could be the topic of numerous dissertations. Since I am based in California and have been an active mariachi musician in this state, it was logical for me to begin my investigation there. In the future, I intend to conduct further research on the musical practices that existed in Arizona, New Mexico and Texas prior to statehood.

Spanish Period (1602-1821)

Although I am mainly interested in California's "Mexican" period, which lasted from 1824 to 1848, it is important to provide a brief history of the Spanish period. According to various sources, California's first inhabitants, Native Americans, consisted of seventy distinct groups, the largest being the Chumash, Pomo and Salinan, who were settled along coastal areas. European exploration began in the mid-1500s. Hailing from Portugal and sailing for the Spanish Empire, João Rodrigues Cabrilho was one of the first to explore parts of the California coast in 1542 (Engstrand 1997:83). Sailing for England, Francis Drake claimed a portion of California in 1579 (ibid.:88). From 1564-1600,

unintended visits were often made by the Spanish Manila galleons on their return trips from the Philippines (Engstrand 1997:87). By 1602, the Spanish began exploring and mapping the coast of California. To aid in their subjugation of the native population through forced conversion to Catholicism, and to serve Spain's strategic interest by preventing Russian explorations and possible claims to North America's Pacific coast, the Franciscan Order was asked to found a mission in Alta (Upper) California.[54] San Diego de Alcalá was the first mission, built in July 16, 1769, under the supervision of Fr. Junipero Serra (1713-1784). He would see eight more missions built during his lifetime. The last of the twenty missions was built in 1823 (Krekelberg 2009:6). Although they were initially set up for the purpose of colonization, there existed a notion that once the natives were "civilized," by the spread of Catholicism, the missions would become the property of the natives the Church controlled; this perceived goal was never realized (ibid.:8).

Mexican Period (1821-1848)

In 1821, Mexico gained its independence from Spain. Under Mexican rule Alta California remained a remote northern province. Under political pressure from ranchers and the military who coveted their relative prosperity and property, the missions were secularized and many of the lands were sold off by the end of 1832. In this period *haciencdas* with their smaller farms, or *ranchos* became the dominant institutions in

[54] The Spanish emperor in 1767 expelled the Jesuits from Spain's colonies, leading the government to ask the Franciscan order to replace them as the primary missionaries in both Alta (upper) and Baja (lower) California. Junipero Serra was appointed as the head of these missions (Koegal 1994:2).

Mexican California (Griswold 1979:13-19). The new Mexican government made feeble attempts to establish itself in its Northern territories, but generally they were largely ignored and neglected. A distinct Californio culture emerged based largely on farming and cattle. The *ranchos* were developed under the ownership by Californios (Spanish-speaking Californians). Ownership had been obtained through land grants from the Spanish and then the Mexican governments. It was during this period that strong *ranchero* dynasties were established such as the Arguellos, Picos, Sepulvedas, Vallejos, etc. (ibid.: 24).

American Period (1848 - Present)

As early as the 1820s, trappers and settlers from the United States and Canada began to arrive in Northern California. By 1846, American settlers in Sonoma rebelled against Mexican rule in what is referred to as the "Bear Flag Revolt." They established the short-lived, twenty-two day Republic of California, which dissolved as the Mexican American war began in that same year (ibid.:28). Through a series of decisive battles taking place throughout the Southwest, Mexico ceded its Northern territories. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed on February 2, 1848, ended the Mexican American War (ibid.:29). California became the thirty-first state of the United States three years later.

Archival Research

In order to find signs of early mariachi activity in California, I turned to the Southwest Museum and the Lummis collection. Through archival research, I examined

the development of various song-forms from the late nineteenth century through the early twentieth century as documented by Charles Fletcher Lummis, not only as examples of early Mexican-American music, but as a possible antecedents to modern mariachi.

Figure 3.1: Picture of Charles Fletcher Lummis with his children (1903). Braun Research Library Collection, Autry National Center; P.33557. Used with permission.

Lummis and members of the Southwest Society—a branch of the Archaeological Institute of America—founded the Southwest Museum of the American Indian in 1907. What is now known as the Lummis Collection contains photographs, journals, articles, diaries and more importantly, wax cylinders and transcriptions that feature Native American and Mexican-American songs. The collection that includes the wax cylinders is currently housed in the Braun Research Library at the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles. John Koegel's dissertation, "Mexican-American music in nineteenth-century

Southern California: The Lummis Wax Cylinder Collection at the Southwest Museum, Los Angeles (1994)" is thorough in its discussion of the Mexican-American music in the museum's library holdings, and his dissertation is one of few sources directly relevant to my research. As Koegel is a musicologist with a specialization in American music, his dissertation does not offer an ethnographic perspective. While Koegel was not specifically looking for mariachi music, his dissertation provided me with an important starting point, and serves as an equally useful reference in the study of early Mexican-American music. As is evidenced by Koegel's dissertation and my own assessment, the collection at the Southwest museum is extensive.

Charles Lummis was born in 1859 in Lynn, Massachusetts, and began his career as a writer while still a student at Harvard in 1879. After failing out of Harvard in 1880, he married and moved to Ohio. In September 1, 1884, he left Ohio and set out for California, making many stops throughout the Southwest along the way. The cultural makeup of New Mexico was to leave a lasting impression on him, as it was his first real exposure to the Southwest and Spanish songs. His initial negative stereotypical racist views of Mexicans and Indians quickly changed as he made friends and learned more about the cultures that existed there. In his travels throughout New Mexico, he wrote down songs that he learned from New Mexican shepherds, farmers and ranchers in a journal. In 1885, he reached Los Angeles and traveled throughout California, and in 1892, Lummis permanently established himself in Los Angeles (Koegel 1994:18).

In 1902, Lummis purchased his first wax cylinder recording machine, and experimented with it by recording a few Spanish-language and Indian songs that would

later become the basis for his wax cylinder project. In November 1903, using grant money from the Archaeological Institute of America, he recorded Spanish-language and Indian songs. The grant also gave him the opportunity to purchase a superior Edison cylinder machine and many two-minute Edison blank wax cylinders.

Over a four-month period, I spent countless hours at the Braun Research Library, located in the Southwest Museum, looking over many photographs, reading journal entries, looking at transcriptions and listening to recordings. I had the opportunity to listen to 198 songs, many transferred from wax cylinders onto tape in the late 1980s. According to Koegel, the Lummis Collection is a mixture of traditional and popular songs. Many of the recordings date approximately from the Mexican period in Alta California until the early 1900s (Koegel 1994:9). Imported Spanish songs and dance forms such as the *jota*, *décima* and *zarzuelas,* as well as imported Mexican songs and dance forms such as *romances, jarabes* and *corridos* are well documented as existing in the Southwest by the turn of the twentieth century. The majority of the songs recorded by Lummis are lyric *canciones,* romances or historical ballads, as well as other popular humorous songs and patriotic songs (ibid.:186).

Figure 3.2: Picture of Rosendo Uruchurtu recording for Lummis (1904). Braun Research Library Collection, Autry National Center; P.33391B. Used with permission.

A few are even non-Mexican popular songs such as many of those sung by Lummis's blind informant Rosendo Uruchurtu, who is pictured in figure 3.2. "Ay! Chiquitia" is a good example of a non-Mexican song that first appeared in a French collection of *Chanson espagnoles*, and Rosendo Uruchurtu was one of Lummis's main informants (ibid.:72) .

Figure 3.3: Picture of Arthur Farwell (1904). Braun Research Library Collection, Autry National Center; P.32252. Used with permission.

Lummis employed the services of Arthur Farwell to transcribe the collection. Farwell, who later became a composer of note, was just beginning his career at the turn of the twentieth century, having founded the Wa-Wan Press in 1900, and was traveling throughout the country at the time looking for Indian songs to use as source materials for his compositions (Browner 1997:273). Farwell transcribed approximately 283 Spanish-language songs for Lummis, even though he was more interested in Lummis's Indian recordings (Koegel 1994.37). After looking through Farwell's transcriptions, I found songs that had been transcribed, but the cylinders were broken before they could be transferred to tape. It is currently unknown exactly how many cylinders are broken.

Of the 198 songs and some 220 transcriptions I examined, one song, a *son* entitled "La Zorrita," stood out because it was rhythmically different from the majority of the collection. As someone who primarily studies mariachi music, I immediately recognized that the song "La Zorrita" was a *son.* More importantly, it rhythmically resembled a *son jalisciense,* a song-form that is specific to the mariachi tradition. While I could easily identify "La Zorrita" as a *son,* I was not familiar with this specific song. For this reason, I played the example for Jesús Guzmán, the musical director of the famous Mariachi Los Camperos de Nati Cano and instructor of the mariachi ensemble at UCLA. Guzmán immediately recognized that the song was a *son.* At first I did not tell him that it was a recording from 1904, and he assumed it was a more recent recording. While not familiar with the particular *son,* he commented that the person singing was a good *sonero* (singer of *sones*) and had impeccable timing. He was thoroughly surprised when I told him where the recording came from. Noted mariachi historian Jonathan Clark also recognized that "La Zorrita" was a *son,* and played it over the phone to Heriberto Molina, violinist and vocal soloist of the world-famous Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán in the 1950s-60s, who commented that the singer in the recording was a "true *sonero*" (someone who sings *sones*). I have yet to find a commercial recording of "La Zorrita" performed by a mariachi. "La Zorrita" is the only example of a *son jalisciense* that I heard during my listening sessions, and in looking through the transcriptions, I believe it may be the only one in the entire collection.

In his dissertation Koegel classifies this song simply as a dance song and notes that "La Zorrita is an additive song as to its poetry—the singer being free to contribute

new portions of the verse according to his (or her) ability—and thus the fox is free to bring back any fruit or vegetable she wishes. This interplay between music and nature reminds us how very much closer nineteenth-century Californians lived to the earth, and how their music reflected this proximity" (Koegel 1994:176). In Anthony Shay's article "Fandangos and Bailes: Dancing and Dance Events in Early California," he mentions a quote by a Russian visitor to California in 1824. That visitor, Zavalishin, remembered that, "When I was young I danced everything—*sones, jarabes, pontorico, medio catorce, fandango, la zorrita, las pollitas,* and *el caballo* (Shay 1982:110). Shay goes on to say that "in virtually every household there were those who played the guitar, violin, harp, piano, or flute. Some popular and typical play party dance-games were: *el borrego* (the lamb), *el caballo,* (the horse), *la canasita de flores* (the little basket of flowers), *el burro* (the donkey), *la zorrita* (the vixen), etc." (ibid.:10).

Accompanying the recording of "La Zorrita" was a transcription made by Arthur Farwell. In it one can see some of the difficulties that exist in transcribing a *son.* As noted in chapter one, s*ones* are especially problematic to transcribe due to their polyrhythmic nature. As a practical matter, those who are currently transcribing mariachi music – mostly mariachi educators and arrangers – tend to write *sones* in straight 3/4 time, which, on paper, fails to capture the hemiola feeling of a *son.* 3/4 and 6/8 time do have a different feel, and the alternation between 3/4 and 6/8 time is a key element in the *son.*

The Farwell transcription demonstrates this difficulty and, in my view, fails to capture the *sesquiáltera,* or hemiola indicative of a *son.*[55] In his transcription, figure 3.4, we see that he has chosen to represent the time signature in 3/8 time, and his mistakes and strike-outs on the page are noticeable. The rhythmic alternation typical of a *son* is essentially non-existent in all of the other songs in the Lummis Collection, with "La Zorrita" being a striking exception. It is possible, however, that perhaps some of the broken cylinders may contain other examples of *sones.* Although it is unclear if Farwell had access to Porfirio Rivera – the singer – he would have had limited opportunities to listen to the wax cylinder recordings, since excessive playing for transcription purposes would have destroyed the cylinder. For me, transcribing this song proved useful in positively determining that it was *son.* The three bar phrases are a fairly typical convention of sung *son* verses. In figure 3.5, I chose to portray the rhythm showing the rhythmic alternation. This helped me to understand where the accents were taking place. Transcribing also gave me the opportunity correct a few minor pitch mistakes Farwell made. Although this is only a vocal recording it demonstrates the difficulty in transcribing *sones.*

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[55] Sesquialtera describes a particular proportional relationship with a ratio of 3:2 that is especially characteristic of sixteenth century Renaissance polyphony (David Hiley, et al. 2001. "Sesquialtera." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online,* http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40114 (accessed March 20, 2011).

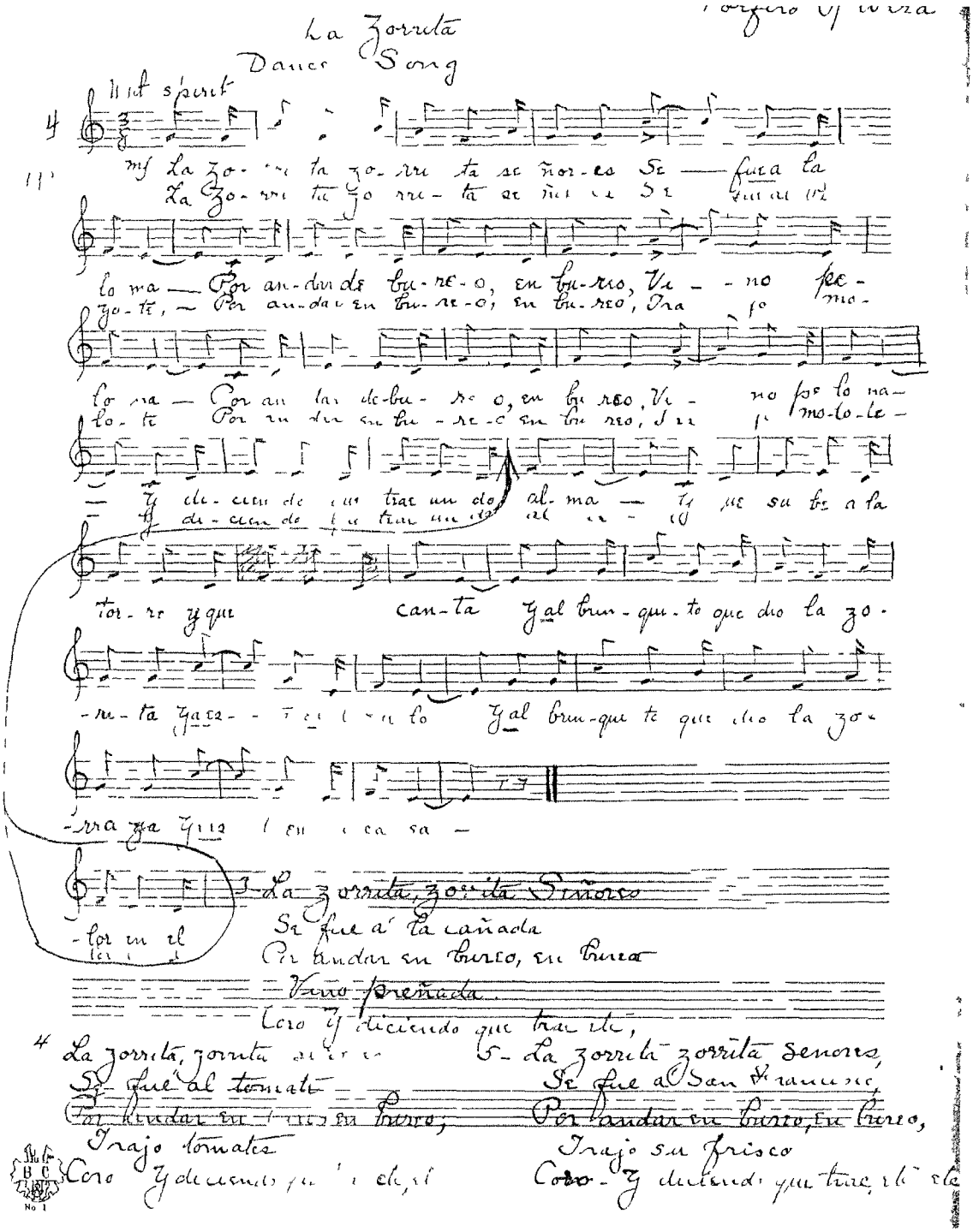

Figure 3.4: Image of Farwell's transcription of "La Zorrita." Braun Research Library Collection, Autry National Center; Sung by Don Porfirio Rivera. MS.1.5; Folder Songs, Verse and Music, 1850-1929. Used with permission.

La Zorrita

As sung by Porfirio Rivera

Transcribed by Lauryn Salazar

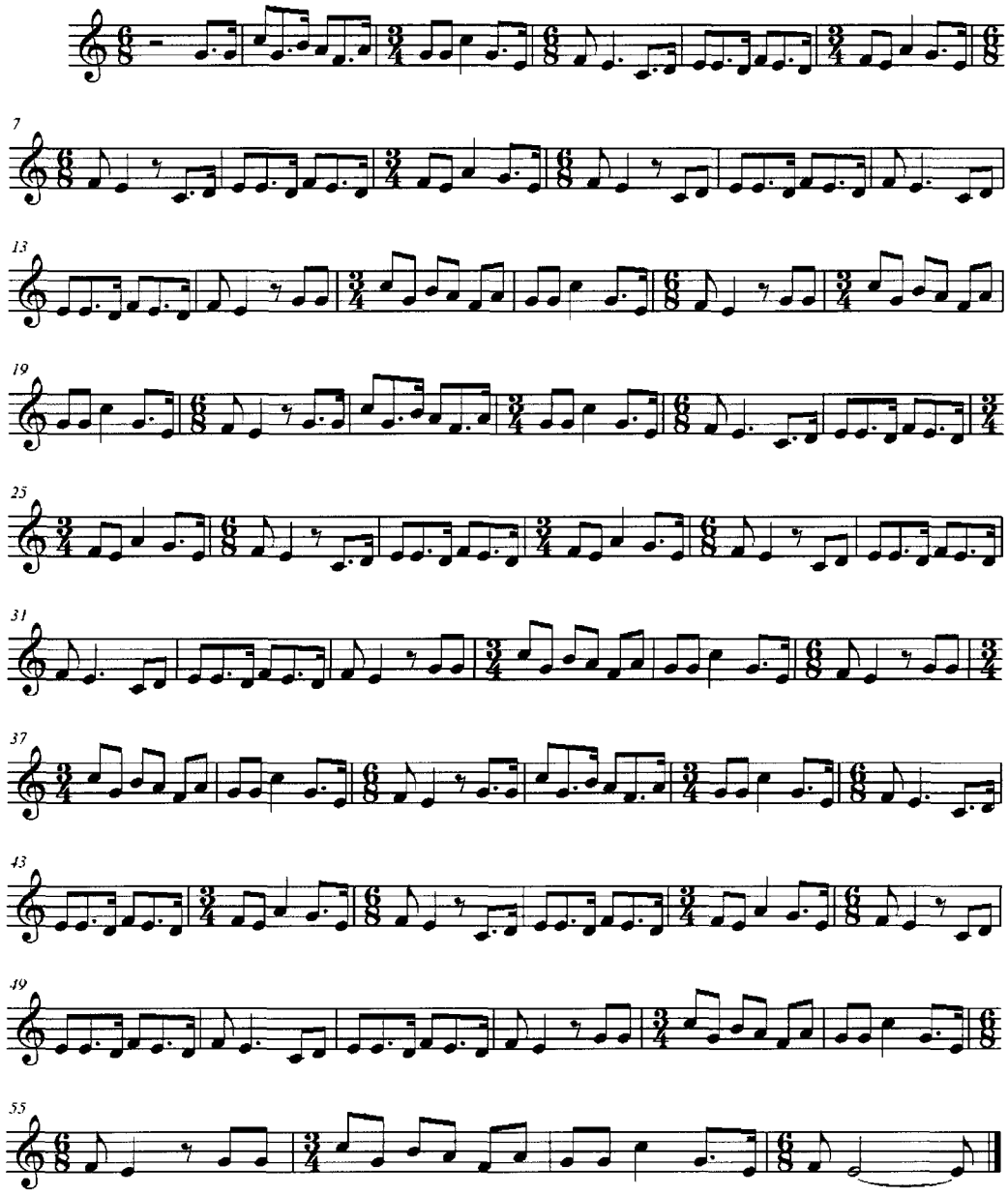

Figure 3.5: Author's transcription of "La Zorrita."

Like many of the *sones,* the lyrics to "La Zorrita" have multiple double meanings. On the one hand this song is about a little female fox; however, it also likely about a loose woman. Below is my translation of the text.

La Zorrita	The Little Fox
La zorrita, zorrita, Señores,	The little fox, little fox, gentlemen
Se fue á la loma.	went to the hill,
Por andar en bureo, en bureo;	To have a good time, a good time,
Vino pelona.	She came bare
[Coro:]	
Y que sube que baja la torre	And who goes up brings down the tower
Diciendo que traie un dolor en el alma	saying I brought a pain in my soul
Y al brinquito que da la zorraza	and with the little jump given by the fox,
Ya está en su casa;	she is now alone.
Y al bringquito que da la zorrita	
Ya está solita.	
	The little fox, little fox, gentlemen
La zorrita, zorrita, Señores,	Went to Peyote
Se fué al Peyote,	To have a good time, a good time
Por andar en bureo, en bureo;	and brought a crowd.
Trajo molote.	And who goes up brings down the tower
La zorrita, zorrita, Señores,	The little fox, little fox, gentlemen
Se fue á la cañada	went to the canyon
Por andar en bureo, en bureo;	To have a good time, a good time
Vino preñada.	and she came pregnant.
	And who goes up brings down the tower
Coro: Y que sube etc.	
	The little fox, little fox, gentlemen
La zorrita, zorrita, Señores,	went to the tomato fields
Se fue al tomate	to have a good, a good time
Por andar en bureo en bureo;	she brought tomatoes
Trajo tomates.	and who goes up brings down the tower
Coro: Y que sube, etc.	The little fox, little fox, gentlemen
	went to San Francisco
La Zorrita, zorrita, Señores,	to have a good time, a good time
Se fue á San Francisco,	She brought her "frisco" (suitcase? probably
Por andar en bureo en bureo;	an idiomatic phrase...)
Trajo su frisco.	

Of further interest to me is the date this song was recorded – August 21, 1904. I am very grateful that Lummis was careful to say the dates and places where each of his recordings took place at the end of each recording. It is clear that his recording of "La Zorrita" recorded in Los Angeles in 1904, predates the "first" *son* recordings in Mexico by four years. Featuring only *sones*, the Mexican "Coculense recordings," took place from 1908-1909 (Núñez 2004:vii).

For unknown reasons, three major American phonograph companies – Columbia, Edison and Victor – recorded the Cuarteto Coculense, a group performing in Mexico City. The Cuarteto Coculense was originally from the small town of Cocula, Jalisco, and in 1905, they played in Mexico City initially to perform for the Mexican dictator Porfirio Diaz at his birthday celebration. According to Mexican historian Méndez Moreno, "[Mariachi Coculense] caused much admiration among compatriots and foreigners alike. In addition to the joy, emotion and uniqueness of their *sones* and unusual, regional costuming; large sombreros made of straw etc." (Rafael 1999:6). The group's move to Mexico City in 1905 for Porfirio Diaz's birthday celebration is generally regarded by mariachi scholars in Mexico as the beginning of mariachi music becoming an urban genre, and helped establish mariachi music in Mexico City, which in turn propelled the style to the status of a national musical symbol.

Twenty-five *sones* were recorded in these 1908-09 sessions, and they are listed as *sones abajeños,* which identifies them as being *sones* from the lowlands or Bajío region of Jalisco. Some of the *sones* listed on the recording, e.g. "El Carretero," "El Ausente," "Las Abajeñas," and "El Zihualteco," make up a fundamental part of the current mariachi

repertoire of *sones* that are frequently performed. The instrumentation of the Cuartero Coculense consisted of two violins, a *vihuela* (a 5-string concave back small guitar) and a *guitarrón* (a 6-string, concave back large guitar). While these *sones* have evolved over the past century, the basic melodic and rhythmic components are similar.

As mentioned earlier, the recording of "La Zorrita" predates the Coculense recordings by four years. After searching library and census records it is clear that there is no information about Porfirio Rivera, the man who sang this song for Lummis. This is unfortunate. While Lummis generally photographed his informants and kept diaries of his experiences with them, Porfirio Rivera is the glaring exception.

Of further interest is my quest to discover the instrumentation that was used at various Mexican musical events in California at the turn of the twentieth century. As seen with the Cuarteto Coculense, a rural mariachi consists of violins, *vihuela* or guitar and *guitarrón* or harp. The *guitarrón* was the favored bass instrument in Cocula, Jalisco, while the harp was the favored bass instrument in the town of Tecalitlán, Jalisco, which fostered its own mariachi style. While at the Southwest Library I skimmed several books, diaries and journals kept by travelers or newcomers to California at the time of statehood (1851) through 1910, which had various references to instruments such as the harps, violin and various types of guitars. This type of instrumentation is also the configuration of the most basic mariachi. In his 1914 memoirs, Dr. Platon Vallejo recalls that "The evenings were given over to pure merriment. Every hacienda had its stringed band of several pieces, the harp, the guitar, and violin—once in a while a flute. And every night rain or shine—except at times of death or sorrow, there was a *baile"* (Shay 1982:102).

Whether or not they were playing *sones* is unclear, but the instrumentation and *son* song form clearly existed in California at the turn of the twentieth century.

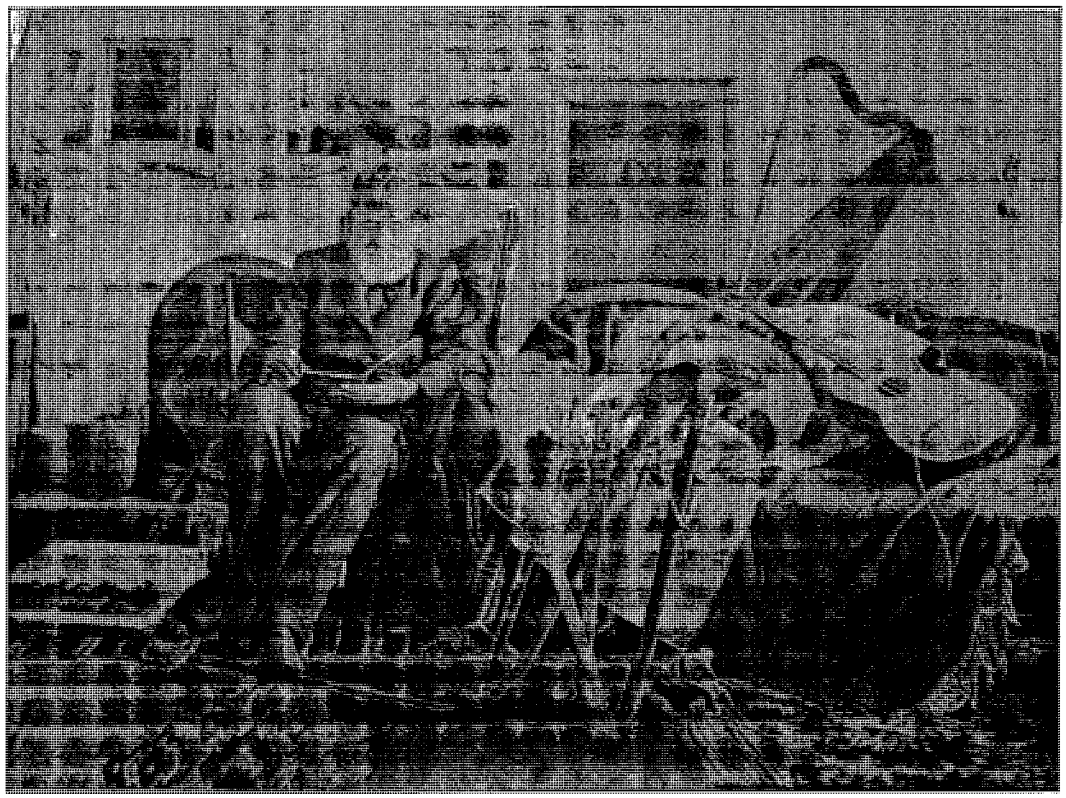

Figure 3.6: Photograph of Don Antonio Coronel with part of his collection of swords and instruments, circa 1890. Don Coronel was the mayor of Los Angeles under the Mexican Regime, and mayor (1853) under the Americans. Braun Research Library Collection, Autry National Center; P.36396. Used with permission.

At the Southwest Library I found a picture of Don Antonio Coronel from about the 1890s. Coronel was the mayor of Los Angeles under the Mexican regime and also mayor in 1853 under the Americans. While this picture is not part of the Lummis Collection, it is important because in the background you can see a harp. More

importantly it is a Mexican harp that is found only in the Mexican states of Jalisco and Michoacan.

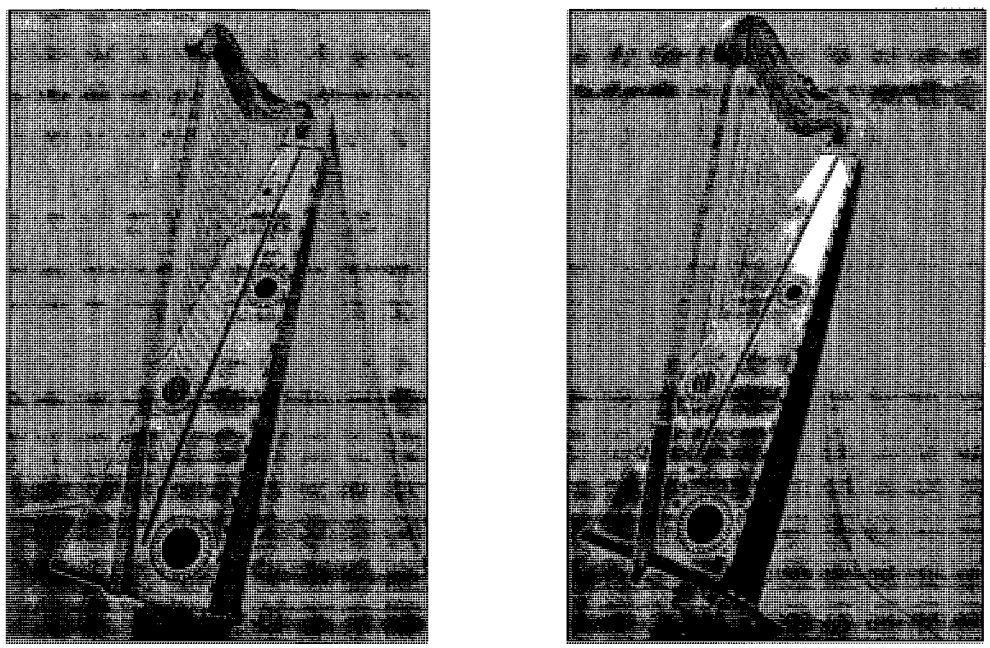

Figure 3.7. Photographs of two mariachi harps belonging to the author. Photo by Romeo Guzmán. Used with permission.

These types of harps, which feature four sound holes in the front, are played within the *arpa grande* and mariachi traditions (Figure 3.7). The *arpa grande* tradition of Michoacán (big harp ensemble) is the country cousin of mariachi music. When mariachi music moved to cities and added trumpets in the mid twentieth century, the *arpa grande* ensembles stayed in the towns and on the ranches of rural Michoacán. The fact that "La Zorrita" was recorded in 1904 by Lummis shows that music as well as people were

constantly moving back and forth between Mexico and the United States and continuously influencing each other.

In many ways the transnational movement of peoples and their culture has never stopped. As a vibrant genre, mariachi musicians, through participation especially in mariachi festivals across the United States are constantly influencing and being influenced by the other musicians they meet. This back and forth movement of culture challenges the notion of a static border. Political borders do little to stop the movement of people, ideas and culture. By examining the earlier history of California before statehood, I aim to situate mariachi music not as a recent "foreign" import, but rather as a part of the fabric of California cultural history. In the future, I plan to arrange this song for youth mariachi groups as a song with roots in California going back one hundred years. As mariachi music moves into the Academy, a more thorough history documenting the performance of Mexican musical genres in the United States can only enrich our understandings of the historical place of this music within the larger "American" musical tradition.

Chapter 4

Mariachi Festivals

Introduction

An American phenomenon, mariachi festivals are held throughout the nation, providing educational workshops and performance opportunities for students.[56] The more established and larger festivals take place in Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico and Texas.[57] All festivals are organized by different community organizations and/or schools, each with different goals and agendas. It is important to note that there is no single entity that organizes mariachi festivals, and few festivals have ties with one other. Festivals in the United States have performed an integral role in the transmission and dissemination of the mariachi musical tradition through student-oriented workshops and performances, as well as large-venue concerts featuring professional ensembles. Largely organized by nonprofit community groups that seek to promote cultural awareness while supporting social programs in their local communities, these festivals provide educational opportunities and cultivate a sense of Mexican-American cultural pride while showcasing the music to a diverse audience. Under the surface, such events function to legitimize mariachi music, dispel negative stereotypes of Mexican-Americans, and offer an alternative means of combating domination, namely through symbolic resistance. In this chapter, I aim to analyze the purpose, function, and goals of mariachi festivals and their impact on the mariachi tradition.

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[56] In 2005 I attended the *Encuentro Internacional Del Mariachi y la Charrería* (The International Mariachi and Charrería Meeting), established in 1994 in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. This mariachi festival is modeled in large measure after the Tucson, Arizona mariachi festival. Although a thorough analysis of this festival is beyond the scope of this dissertation, I plan to attend this festival many more times so that I can do a complete comparative analysis in the future.

[57] The terms festival and conference are used interchangeably.

I have personally attended mariachi festivals in Tucson, Arizona; Bakersfield, Chula Vista, Fresno and San Jose, California; and Las Cruces and Albuquerque, New Mexico. While they are all similar in format, each yields a different experience for participants. Mariachi education through performance workshops is the purported main goal of all of the festivals, but some are organized better than others. Additionally, a few even provide students with the opportunity to attend lectures that focus on the historical and cultural aspects of mariachi music. In this way, students gain a deeper appreciation of the art form they are studying. Many of the larger festivals offer close to a weeklong event schedule. In addition to the workshops and final performance, jam sessions, student showcases, and competitions, festivals offer additional outlets for students to share their knowledge with each other. In discussing the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife, Richard Kurin, in his book *Reflections Of A Culture Broker: A View From the Smithsonian* (1997), notes that:

> In general, festivals provide a time out of time. They separate off the heightened and the accentuated from the mundane, the usual, daily routine. Festivals are liminal moments, temporary pauses or transitions in the flow of events and activities, in which new relationships can be made, old ones reinforced or inverted. Festivals may indeed reinvest the social order with legitimacy—connecting that order to higher powers, cosmic purposes, and sacred history. But festivals may also provide a release valve, so to speak, giving members of a society a chance to revolt against the usual order, counter the structure of relationships with either inverted ones or none at all. Festivals typically conjoin and separate people, magnify and compress space and time (Kurin 1997:128).

The mariachi festivals serve to provide a space where Mexican culture is celebrated and seen in a positive manner. They are positioned opposite the ever-increasing anxiety over issues of illegal immigration that most recently appeared as a

result of discriminatory legislation like the laws enacted in Arizona in 2010, which targeted illegal Mexican immigration and abolished Mexican-American studies in schools. [58] Seen as a form of cultural repression, these laws are being challenged in the courts. Since it is the Tucson Unified School district's ethnic studies program that is the primary target, there is no doubt that the role of the Tucson mariachi festival will become an even greater beacon of cultural pride for the Tucson Mexican-American community. In this context, the festival does provide a "release valve" and allows "members of a society to revolt against the usual order" (Kurin 1997:128).

In addition to the positive cultural attributes the festival confers, the financial impact is just as important. By promoting tourism, local hotels, restaurants, and shops benefit from the influx of festival participants, and in the process expose younger participants to new places and experiences. Casual conversations with students have made it evident that for some, attending the festival can result in their first airplane ride or hotel stay. As most festivals are now geared towards student participation, many school programs fundraise year-round in order to attend at least one festival a year. More established programs, such as those in the Chula Vista Sweetwater school district, are able to send to their students to multiple festivals throughout the year. Currently, it is mostly through mariachi festivals that mariachi competitions and showcases exist. The

[58] House Bill 2281 dictates that K-12 classes that promote the overthrow of the U.S. government, promote resentment toward a race or class of people, are designed primarily for pupils of one ethnic group, or advocate ethnic solidarity will not be eligible for federal funding. The bill's designer, Tom Horne, has been on a mission to eliminate the ethnic studies program in the Tucson Unified School district. He has received harsh criticism since it is only the Mexican studies program that is being targeted. The immigration law, known as SB 1070, orders immigrants to carry their alien registration documents at all times and requires police to question people if there's reason to suspect they're in the United States illegally.

Mariachi Spectacular festival in Albuquerque, New Mexico, offers an adjudicated mariachi festival, in which each group is given a comprehensive review of their performance by the judges. Past judges include previous members of Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán, Mariachi Sol de Mexico, and others. The ability to gain feedback from esteemed judges is major motivation for groups to attend and participate in the festival.

Because of the festivals' large budgets, many of the professional mariachi groups, in both the United States and Mexico, depend on festivals for their financial stability. It is highly advantageous for any professional group to become the "house" mariachi that provides the bulk of music and teaching services for the festival. Mariachi Los Camperos de Nati Cano serves in this capacity for the Tucson International Mariachi Conference in Tucson, Arizona and also for Fresno, California's Radio Bilingüe ¡Viva El Mariachi! Festival. In doing so, they provide the music taught and also help to decide which other mariachis will be headlining at the final concert. Mariachi Cobre, based out of Orlando, Florida, serves as the main mariachi for both the San Jose Mariachi Festival in San Jose, California and the Las Cruces International Mariachi Conference, in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Other prominent mariachis such as Sol de Mexico de Jose Hernandez of Southern California also serve as the headlining mariachi for other major festivals. It is interesting to note, however, that no all-female mariachi holds a permanent position as a "house" mariachi for any major festival.[59] The financial importance of being hired to play and teach at a mariachi festival is great as the larger, more high-profile

[59] While most festivals make it a priority to include at least one all-female group, the bulk of the leadership falls to male groups. While a thorough discussion of gender is beyond the scope of this dissertation and is no doubt an important topic worthy of several dissertations, I will at least observe that while I know many qualified female mariachi musicians, the perception amongst the community at large is that men are the main bearers of the mariachi tradition.

performances, and often leads to participation in other festivals. The musical director of a well-known mariachi group based in Guadalajara, who asked not to be identified, told me that it is very difficult to get booked for the more popular and established mariachi festivals in the United States. Long-standing alliances make it difficult for newer groups to get noticed. He mentioned that his group had been making inquiries into being hired for the newest festivals being planned in Atlanta, Georgia and Lincoln, Nebraska.

My exposure to mariachi festivals began in July of 1992, at the age of twelve, when I attended my first mariachi festival in San Jose, California as a ballet folklórico participant. This festival provided me with the opportunity to hear highly virtuosic mariachi music, which greatly influenced my desire to study ethnomusicology. Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán was the main headliner, and up until that point I had never heard a professional mariachi play. It was exciting to watch them perform and even more exciting to actually meet them in person. For me, the mariachi festival exposed me to a different style of mariachi encompassed within the genre. Previously, I was only aware of the *al talón* style of mariachi, and was mainly used to hearing *rancheras*. At the festival, with its focus on education, songs forms such as the *son jalisciense*, *huapangos*, polkas and others were taught in an effort to expose students to a broader understanding of the genre. Attending this festival expanded my knowledge of the tradition, and helped me to gain a greater appreciation for both the art form and my culture.

Brief History

Photo: El Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlan in concert. (Photo by Bill Faulkner)

Photo: Young Mariachi students in class. (Photo by Bill Faulkner)

Figure 4.1: Photos from the 1979 San Antonio Mariachi Festival. Photo by William "Bill" Faulkner. Used with permission.

Belle and Juan Ortiz held the first San Antonio International Mariachi Festival in September 27-30, 1979, effectively launching a movement.[60] The couple hired Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán, Mexico's longest-running and most famous professional mariachi, to headline a concert and offer performance-based educational workshops for festival

[60] In 1979 Belle was known as Belle San Miguel.

participants. In an interview with Belle Ortiz at the Bakersfield Mariachi Festival in 2004, she reminisced that organizing the festival proved a daunting task since it was a new concept.[61] An educator herself, her goals were for the festival to be more than just a series of concerts; she wanted the community to be actively engaged in the events being offered. Through her own work as a teacher in the San Antonio school district, Ortiz knew there was interest in learning mariachi music, and she was determined to create a feasible format for the festival. Since the festival was a new concept, Ortiz realized that she would need a famous mariachi in order to help legitimize the festival. She remembers that the festival was organized quickly, but was elated at the news that the world's most famous mariachi, Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán, was going to be teaching and performing. While the members of Vargas had never served as "teachers" before, Ortiz recalls that they were "naturals." The students appreciated the opportunity to have access to a famous and influential mariachi from whom to actively learn.

[61] Personal interview, September 18, 2004.

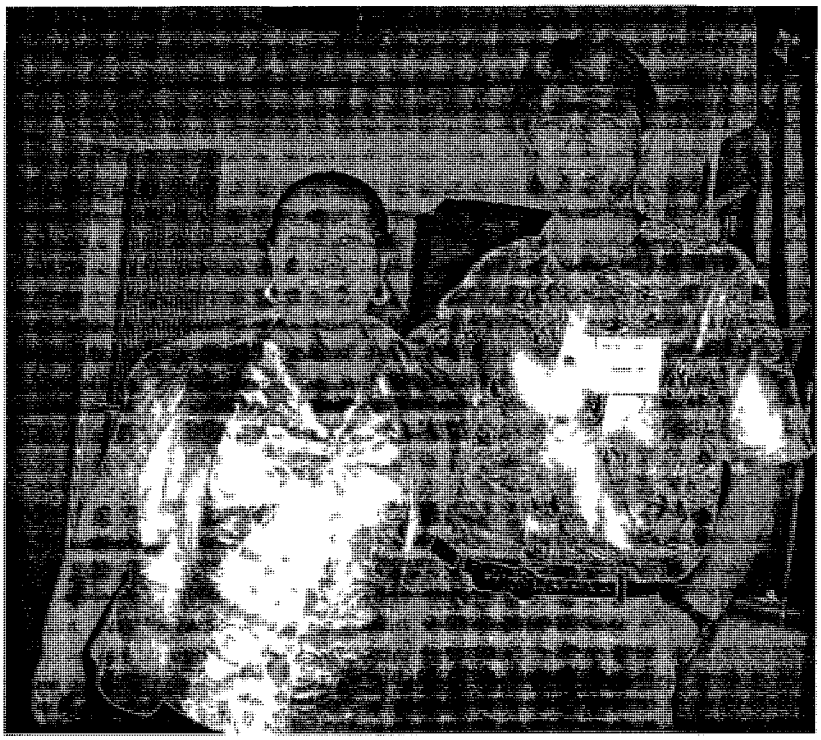

Figure 4.2: The author with Jonathan Clark at the 2005 Chula Vista Mariachi festival. Photo by Diana Verdugo. Used with permission.

Jonathan Clark, a well respected mariachi historian, who in 1979 traveled with Mariachi Vargas in Mexico, remembers that while the mariachi was happy to be booked for a performance, they were very much confused by the idea of teaching. Clark notes that the very concept of a workshop to teach mariachi over a four-day period was revolutionary, and no one really knew what to expect.[62] The mariachi was surprised by the diversity of participants interested in learning mariachi. While several students turned out to be amateur mariachis that performed with local groups, many aficionados and fans also took the classes. During the 2007 Tucson festival, I had the opportunity to briefly

[62] Personal interview, August 25, 2005.

interview José "Pepe" Martinez, who is the musical director for Mariachi Vargas.[63] He recalled that the students had all sorts of questions about topics ranging from arranging to playing technique, and that he personally loved the challenge. At the time, he had no idea that the festival concept would become so popular and have such an important impact on the tradition. When asked about his favorite aspect of the festival, he remarked that teaching at the workshops was the main highlight for him. In a short report for the *Asociación Nacional de Grupos Folklóricos* (National Association of Folklorico Groups) ANGF Journal, Clark writes that, "Over 300 people from five states of the union registered for this first event of its kind in which no fees were charged. Individual sessions and seminars encompassed the history of the mariachi, musical arrangements, methods of instrumentation, and beginning through advanced techniques for playing" (Clark 1980:21).

The festival was an instant success and influenced the creation of similar festivals in other locations like the mariachi festival in Tucson, the second festival to be initiated in the United States. While the San Antonio festival proved highly influential, it was not without its problems. According to Clark, pictured in figure 4.2, as the festival become more popular and grew, more careful organization and planning became necessary.[64] Unfortunately, the transportation needs for the mariachi was overlooked, and one year they were stranded at the airport for several hours. Another time the reservation of a room for a special event was forgotten. In many ways, the festival outgrew itself before a feasible infrastructure could be created to handle its implementation.

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[63] Personal interview, April 21, 2007.
[64] Personal interview, August 25, 2005.

Figure 4.3: Photo of William "Bill" Faulkner during the harp workshop at the 2007 San Jose Mariachi festival. Photo by author.

William "Bill" Faulkner, a mariachi harpist and teacher, was also in attendance and remembers that there were very few harp students who participated in that particular workshop. Figure 4.1 shows Martinez teaching young students at the very first mariachi festival. Faulkner recalls that as an eager student he was thrilled at the opportunity spend four days with his mentor Arturo Mendoza, Mariachi Vargas's famed harpist.[65] Although he too remembers certain activities could have been better organized, the general consensus according to him was that everyone was happy for the opportunity to learn and play for one another. Being surrounded by three hundred mariachi musicians and fans proved an amazing experience because it revealed the importance of mariachi music for the community. For Faulkner, the opportunity to actively engage with members of Mariachi Vargas on a personal and intimate level was one of the most important aspects

[65] Personal interview, September 28, 2007.

of the festival for him. Another positive aspect of the festival for him was the lecture on mariachi arranging which was taught by Martinez. The opportunity to ask him pointed questions about the topic of mariachi arranging was incredible helpful for him, especially given the fact that in 1979 even fewer mariachi resources were available. With the current interest in publishing mariachi musical scores, it is surprising that more festivals do not offer workshops in arranging. Having since taught his own harp workshops at other festivals over the years, he believes, as others do, that some festivals have gotten so large that students are being pushed around like cattle.

In addition to workshops and lectures, a student competition was also held. Serving as adjudicators for the event, members of Mariachi Vargas decided the winners but also gave important feedback to the groups as well. Clark remembers that September 1979 was declared "Mariachi Month" by the city of San Antonio, and that the event proved to be an enjoyable experience for those who participated. Eventually, the festival ended in the mid-1980s, but its influence was widespread and has proven to become an important event in the mariachi history timeline. The scope of the festival and its format served as the basis for the Tucson mariachi festivals, and in turn has since become the model for all other festivals.[66]

Describing the Mariachi Festival

It is important to mention that the terms "festival" and "conference" are used interchangeably. Although festivals are often given long, impressive official names, they

[66] It should be noted that the current San Antonio Festival was organized in 1994 and has no ties to the festival of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

are mostly referred to in the community by the city in which they take place. For example, the Radio Bilingüe ¡Viva Mariachi Festival! is simply referred to as the Fresno mariachi festival. It would not surprise me if most festival participants were unaware of the official names of the festivals. In the past, there might have been a distinction between a conference or a festival based on its duration, but it has been my observation that since 2000, many "newer" festivals refer to themselves as a conference or festival regardless how many days they last. For this section of my analysis, I will refer to each festival according to how they name themselves. Through the use of thick description, I will give a detailed day-by-day description of the La Frontera Tucson International Mariachi Conference.

The Tucson International Mariachi Conference is a four-day event that typically takes place the second to last week in April. As one of the larger festivals, it attracts close to one thousand workshop participants with specializations in mariachi and ballet folklórico. It has become so popular that they have actually turned students away. Because space is limited, it is particularly difficult to gain entrance to the most advanced workshop, the masters class, for which it is necessary to register months in advance. Festival organizers told me that the format of this conference has not changed since the mid-1990s. The first day of the festivals generally consists of a one-hour orientation that starts at 7:00am. This orientation is lead by the members of Mariachi Los Camperos de Nati Cano, who introduce the repertoire that will be learned and performed.

Figure 4.4: Nati Cano and author at 2003 Tucson Mariachi Festival. Photo by Diana Verdugo. Used with permission.

Cano makes it a point to welcome the participants and imparts as much practical advice as possible. Although it is only the orientation, he makes it a point to go over with the students important performance etiquette like wearing the *traje de charro* (mariachi suit) with pride and how to stand while performing. After all of the mariachi instructors have been introduced, a senior festival organizer reminds the students of the "rules" for participation and the good behavior that is expected of them. Geared primarily for middle school and high school students, the orientation feels more like a school convocation. So while the first half of the orientation is concerned with the mariachi workshop participants, the second half is related towards the ballet folklórico students who are then introduced to their teachers and shown a demonstration of the dances that they are going to learn.

Figure 4.5: Picture of students taking a break backstage before the final show. Taken at the Tucson Mariachi Festival 2004. Photo by author.

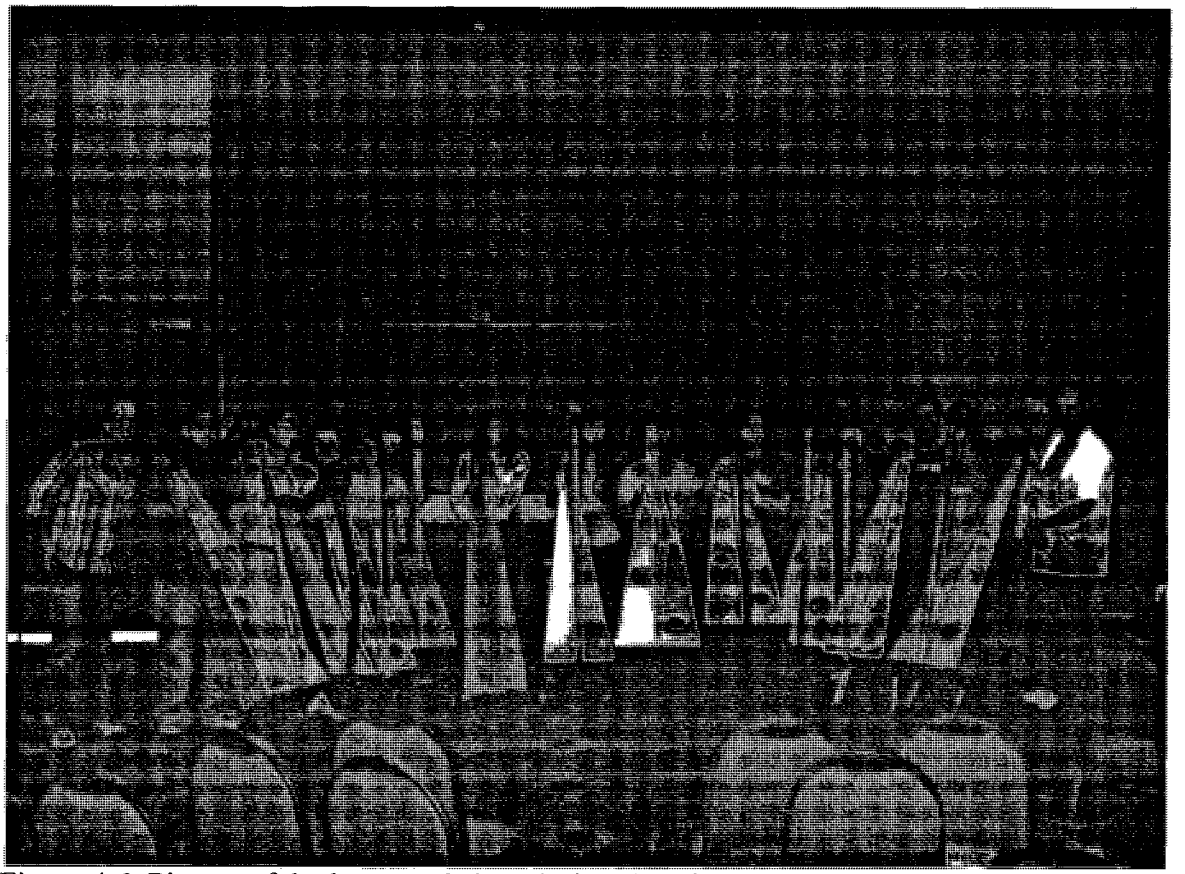

Figure 4.6: Picture of the harp workshop during the 2006 Tucson Mariachi Festival. Photo by Diana Verdugo. Used with permission.

By 9:00am the workshops are underway. Divided according to ability level, close to one hundred students participate per class. While all instruments are gathered in rooms according to their level, it is common for the instructors, especially for the beginner and intermediate sections, to stake out a particular section of the room and run sectionals in a hallway or courtyard.

Each room sounds like chaos but progress is always made. By the end of the day, when all the levels rehearse together, it becomes evident that the students have learned their music. The voice and harp classes are the only ones in which the participants of all levels rehearse together. Since the voice and harp workshops generally have the lowest number of students, the instructors are able to work one-on-one with participants—something not possible in the other workshop classes. Figure 4.6 was taken at the 2006 festival of the harp workshop.

The masters class, made up of the more advanced students, is taught by the members of Mariachi Los Camperos with Jesús Guzmán, the group's musical director, leading the rehearsals. Sectionals do not happen at this level, and each song is rehearsed similarly to the way a symphony orchestra might rehearse. It is expected that all students who sign up for this level can read music and have had significant experience playing their instrument. During the final concert, the masters class is given the opportunity to perform two to three pieces by themselves. A lunch break is taken from 12:00pm to 1:30pm, where most students have either brought their own lunch or eat at one of the restaurants downtown. The workshops resume for the remainder of the day until 4:30pm. In the evening there is an outdoor dinner to honor all mariachi and dance participants of

the workshops, and even features a performance by Los Camperos and various ballet folklórico presentations.

Day two begins with rehearsals starting at 9:00am until noon. After lunch, the workshops resume from 1:30pm until 3:15pm. In order to begin preparing for the final concert, a preliminary rehearsal is scheduled from 3:30pm to 4:30pm at the Tucson Convention Center Arena, where the final concert will take place. This is the first time since the orientation that all workshop participants are together in the same room. The evening ends with the student showcase concert at 7:00pm, which generally concludes at midnight. When groups mail in their registration materials during the months before the conference, they are invited to submit a DVD audition tape for the showcase.

The morning of the third day begins with shorter classes from 9:00am to 10:45am. At 11:00am all students are gathered and given evaluation forms. Once those are completed, a general concert rehearsal takes place until 1:00pm. Students are then dismissed until their stage call at 7:00pm at the Tucson Convention Center Arena. The night of the performance is usually filled with anticipation for many students, as most are not used to performing in such large settings. All of the students with whom I have talked about the conference look forward to participating in it each year.

A mariachi mass at St. Augustine Cathedral is the beginning activity for the last day of the conference, a day in which there are no workshops. A fair, complete with booths and stages for mariachi and ballet folklórico performance, surrounds the perimeter of Reid Park, and for a nominal fee it is open to the public as well. Booths for food, arts and crafts, and games are set up throughout the park. It is a busy four days after which

most workshop participants are thoroughly exhausted; however, most keep coming back year after year.

In this context the mariachi festival creates a positive space in which participants can engage in an aspect of their culture that is being celebrated. Away from their normal home and school environments and highly focused on learning and performing mariachi music, a great sense of purpose is bestowed upon them. For many students, it can be one of the few times that they are singled out to participate in an event designed specifically with their interests in mind. While the beginner and intermediate workshops tend to attract students of all ability levels and must therefore focus on learning notes and rhythms, the advanced workshops can focus on style. Participating in the masters workshop at the Tucson festival is always an illuminating experience because only the most focused and serious students take part. Moving beyond learning notes, Jesús Guzmán and Nati Cano demand the best from their students over the three-day workshops. It is not uncommon for both Guzmán and Cano to "remind" students how they should practice their music, in addition to holding their instruments correctly, as well as the proper stance they should always utilize while performing. During the workshops Cano especially imparts to them that they must learn the music and aspects of the tradition accurately as they will be the vehicle by which the tradition will be preserved and disseminated. While Guzmán and Cano direct the workshops, the other members of Los Camperos reinforce the directions given by helping individual students with various aspects of their playing. Through repetition and positive reinforcement, Cano and Los Camperos instill and reinforce the values that they deem important.

Students leave the workshops and festival with a heightened sense of purpose and as actively engaged participants in the larger mariachi tradition.

The Guadalajara Mariachi Festival

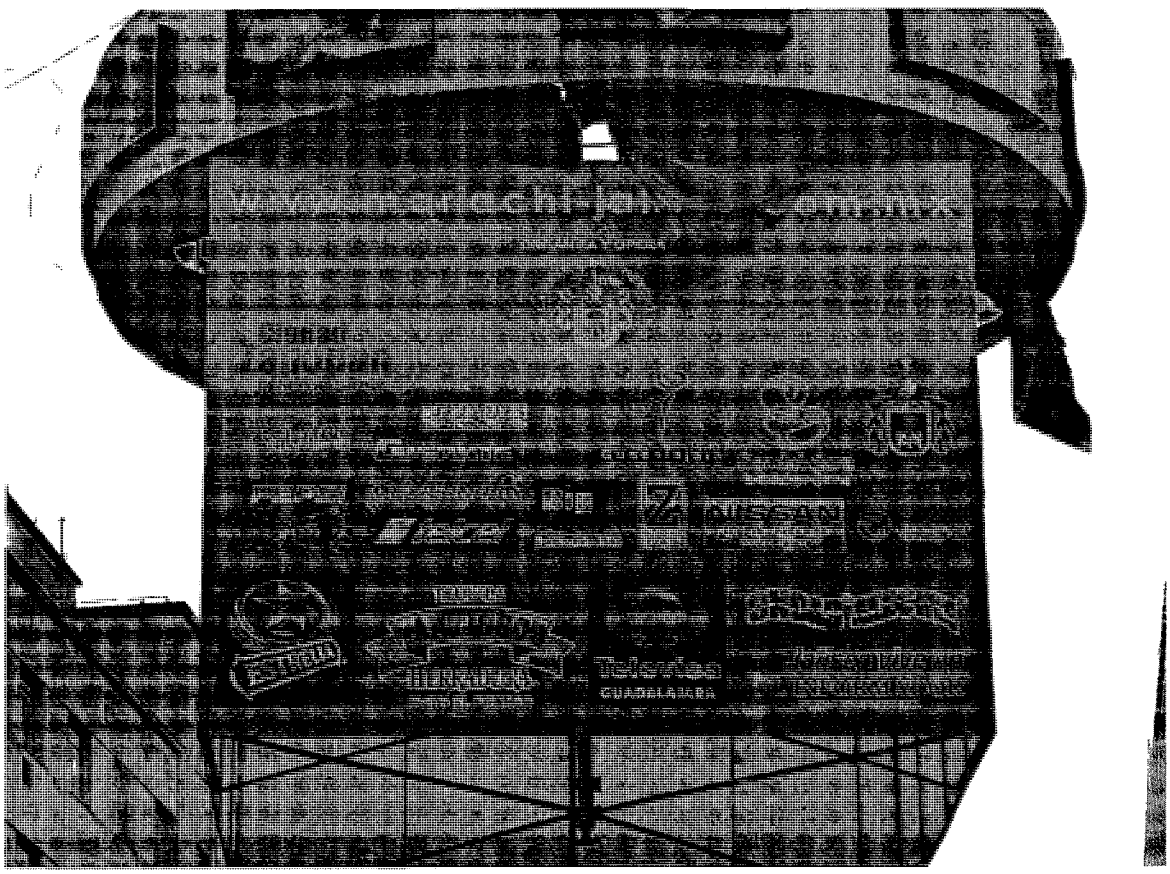

Figure 4.6: Promotional poster advertising the 2005 festival. Photo by the author.

In sharp contrast to the American mariachi festivals that focus primarily on education, the Encuentro Internacional Del Mariachi y la Charrería (International Meeting of Mariachi and Rodeo), which generally takes place the first week in September, is entirely geared towards tourism. Situating itself as taking place in the birthplace of mariachi music and tequila, the mariachi festival attracts mariachi

participants from around the world. Organized by the Cámara Nacional de Comercio de Guadalajara (National Chamber of Commerce of Guadalajara), the festival is seen as means of attracting tourists from around the world. Figure 4.6 shows an example of the promotional materials that can be found all over the city. As mariachi has become an increasing popular transnational genre, with practicing mariachi groups that span from Asia to Europe, the festival attracts hundreds of mariachis. While workshops are offered, they are not on the scale of those in the United States. In 2005, I attended the twelfth Guadalajara mariachi festival. Since it was my first time, I was not sure what to expect. It differed greatly from the other festivals in which I had participated in the past. Unfortunately, due to wrong information provided by various festival organizers, I missed the festival workshops. In fact, several organizers told me that there were no workshops and that I had been misinformed. Eventually, I was able to track down the hotel where the workshops were taking place, only to find out that they had ended the previous day. In addition to workshops, various events are held throughout the city of Guadalajara in restaurants, hotels, and famous landmarks such as the Teatro Degollado. Instead of one final performance in which participants from the workshops are given the opportunity to present, three to four performances over several nights were given at the Teatro Degollado, in which Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán, Mariachi de América, and Mariachi Los Camperos de Nati Cano each perform with the Orquesta Filarmónica de Jalisco (Philharmonic Orchestra of Jalisco) in addition to their individual sets. A featured vocalist also performs, backed up by one of the mariachi groups.

Navigating this festival proved difficult for me, as the events were spread out across the city. Since I went as an individual and not as part of a mariachi group, it was difficult to gain access to key organizers; I was seen as nothing more than a tourist from the United States. Mariachi groups are encouraged to register, and throughout the weeklong festival performance opportunities are organized for them by the festival organizers. In this way, the organizers always have mariachi groups ready to perform at the various sanctioned events. What struck me right away, as I attended various events, was how the "international" mariachis were the real focus of the celebration almost to the exclusion of local mariachi groups. In conjunction with the festival, the Tequila Express, similar to California's Wine Train of Napa Valley, takes visitors on a train from Guadalajara to the town of Tequila to the site of an old hacienda.

Figure 4.7: Mariachi musicians performing on the Tequila Express. Photo by author.

Demonstrations of the processes involved in making Tequila in addition to multiple opportunities to taste different varieties, to enjoy local food and to appreciate ballet folklórico presentations are given. Figure 4.7 shows a mariachi group performing on the train. The entertainment, organized by the festival, consisted of two mariachi groups, one from Venezuela and the other from Colombia as well as a *ranchera* singer from France who calls himself *El Charro Frances* (the French Charro).[67] While popular, this particular festival has been criticized for being too commercial, and in response another independent festival has been organized. Known as the Encuentro de Mariachi Tradicional (Traditional Mariachi Meeting), this festival focuses on traditional mariachis that perform primarily in the rural tradition. Unfortunately, I have not been able to attend this event. It clear that key fundamental differences exist between the mariachi festivals in Mexico and the United States, and in the future I plan to research these differences.

Problematizing the Mariachi Festival

In this next section, I explore three festivals, and examine how mariachi festivals reflect the motives of festival organizers. Representing the different variations mariachi festivals take throughout the American Southwest, I have decided to focus on the La Frontera Tucson International Mariachi Conference in Tucson, Arizona; the Sweetwater International Student Mariachi Conference in Chula Vista, California; and the San José Mariachi Conference, which now goes under the banner of the San José Mariachi and

[67] It should be noted that while in Guadalajara, I attended performances of mariachi groups from Cuba, Estonia, Germany and Spain at the various events associated with the festival. At this point in time, I have only undertaken three short (one to two month) research trips in Mexico. In order for me to do a valid comparative analysis, I will need to spend more time in Mexico.

Latin Music Festival in San Jose, California. Several questions form the framework for my comparative analysis. My first question deals with issues of representation. Each festival has a mission statement, yet some festivals follow their mission statements better than others. How do these festivals represent themselves in their mission statements and how well do they actually succeed in following them? The second question focuses on the primary priorities the festival organizers have for their mariachi festival. After ten years of fieldwork during which I attended many festivals through the Southwestern United States, I have observed that mariachi festivals serve as fundraisers and vehicles for education. However, the level of importance organizers place on fundraising or education varies. I examine each case with regard to a fundraising vs. education continuum and the emphasis placed on one over the other. Lastly, I aim to determine the exact audiences these festivals are geared towards and if they really do serve the group each claims to help.

A Look at Tucson Behind the Scenes

The La Frontera Center Incorporated, a behavioral health agency, organizes the Tucson conference. The mariachi festival is its primary fundraiser. In their mission statement that say:

> Our mission is to promote awareness of and generate funding for La Frontera Center Inc., a non-profit behavioral health agency serving children, families and adults, and to foster the traditional values of mariachi music and baile folklórico through activities that increase knowledge, artistic and technical experience. (http://www.tucsonmariachi.org/)

This is the only mission statement of the three to explicitly acknowledge fundraising as a primary goal. In previous interviews with Lolie Gomez, the head organizer of the festival, she has admitted that in 2003 the workshops cost them over $100,000, and it is through the main concert at the convention center that they turn a profit.[68] Ticket prices for the event range from $26 to $85 per ticket. Gomez is neither an educator nor an expert on mariachi music or ballet folklórico. However, she has made it a point to hire consultants and instructors who are authorities in the field. The educational component of the festivals focuses mainly on performance. Workshop participants focus on learning the repertoire provided by the high-profile professional mariachi ensemble. In this case, Mariachi Los Camperos de Nati Cano, based out of Los Angeles, has been the main headlining and teaching mariachi since 1988. Gomez is intent on making sure only mariachi ensembles and solo artists who can fill the convention stadium are hired, as "La Frontera" cannot afford to lose money on this event. It is also highly political who gets hired at festivals. Mariachi Los Camperos serves as the directing mariachi, and as such, Nati Cano has a tremendous say as to which other ensembles and instructors will be hired to perform and teach for the festival.

The Tucson festival caters to a diverse group of students and audience members. Since the conference occupies an important cultural role in the Tucson community, it attracts a fairly diverse audience to its main concert as well. It is an expected event that the inhabitants of Tucson look forward to attending. Like most festivals, the workshops are geared towards student-based mariachi groups at the elementary, middle, high school,

[68] Personal interview, April 25, 2003.

and college level. However, because of the sheer scope of the conference, many mariachi groups will attend in order to gain access to sheet music, network, and learn from high profile mariachi ensembles.

While this conference shows Mexican and Mexican-American culture in a positive light and promotes mariachi music, it is not without its problems. According to many workshop participants I have talked to over the years, many believe that the conference has gotten "too big" for itself. Only the most advanced students actually get to work with the headlining mariachi, and placement tends to be based on ability to pay for the registration first, rather than on musical ability. The advanced or "masters" level costs $150, while other levels cost $85 per registration. Most participants complain that each of the levels are too crowded; often 50 students will be assigned to one instructor. Even so, the overall experience for most participants is a positive one.

Behind the Scenes at Chula Vista

The Sweetwater International Students Mariachi Conference is similar to Tucson in format, but differs in its educational approach and scope. This conference is organized by the Sweetwater School District in Chula Vista, California. It is most commonly referred to as the Chula Vista Mariachi festival because it takes place at Chula Vista High School, the school that hosts the best mariachi program in the district. In their mission statement that say:

> The 2008 Sweetwater International Student Mariachi Conference will offer professional mariachi instruction to students of all ages at novice, intermediate, and advanced levels, in addition to

> instruction in Mexican folkloric dance, at three levels. The Sweetwater School District welcomes students and groups from outside the area and encourages them to take advantage of the conference's workshops and performance opportunities. (http://www.suhsd.k12.ca.us/mariachiconference/)

Mark Fogelquist, who received his M.A. in ethnomusicology from UCLA in 1975, serves as one of the main organizers for this conference. He is renowned as a pioneer in launching successful academic mariachi programs that have been shown to dramatically aid in the retention and improved graduation rates of Mexican and Mexican-American students. In contrast to Tucson, Chula Vista has a much smaller conference that consists of about two hundred mariachi and fifty folklórico students. Unlike Tucson, which rents out the Tucson Convention Center, the events at Chula Vista take place on the campus of Chula Vista High School. Figure 4.8 shows participants in the voice workshop performing. Various classrooms are used for the workshop instruction, and the student showcase and main concert take place in the gymnasium. The final concert costs $5.00 per person, making it accessible for families of participating students.

Figure 4.8: Picture of workshop participants at the 2006 Chula Vista Mariachi Festival. Photo by author.

While the conference is also a fundraiser for Sweetwater school district mariachi programs, organizers direct the majority of its much lower budget at education. As an ethnomusicologist, Fogelquist places a high emphasis on both performance and scholarship. Since the festival's inception in 2005, he has invited famous mariachi musicians from the 1940s and 1950s to give talks about their experiences as mariachis from that time period. Rigoberto Alfaro, who played guitar with Mariachi Vargas in the 1950s and is now a famous arranger, served as the musical director and honored speaker at the 2006 festival. In a later interview, Alfaro told me that Fogelquist had been inviting him to participate in various mariachi festivals for years.[69] Not understanding what they were about or what takes place, he always refused. The Chula Vista festival was amongst the first festivals he attended, and he has since provided music for and taught at the

[69] Personal interview, June 12, 2009.

Albuquerque mariachi festival as well. He was initially surprised at how many young students were studying mariachi in schools. Based out of Mexico, he had never seen mariachi being taught in this format. Below I am pictured with Alfaro in figure 4.9.

Figure 4.9: Picture of Rigoberto Alfaro and author at Chula Vista festival in 2006. Photo by Diana Verdugo. Used with permission.

During the course of two days, various informal lectures or talks are given to the students informing them about the history and cultural relevance of the mariachi tradition. As a smaller conference, students have greater access to the high-profile, professional mariachi instructors. This conference has hired both Mariachi Sol de Mexico de José Hernandez of Los Angeles and Mariachi Internacional Guadalajara, based out of Guadalajara, Mexico, to teach and headline the conference. The conference ultimately serves its intended audience, mainly students and parents within the Sweetwater school

district. While anyone can register, non-school district participants pay a slightly higher, albeit affordable, fee to participate.

The Controversy of San Jose

Prior to 2005, the San Jose Mariachi conference was on par with Tucson in both format and programming; the only difference was that San Jose was slightly smaller with 500-600 total participants. The Mexican Heritage Corporation, whose purpose as an organization has changed several times in recent years, organizes the conference. The first San Jose conference took place in 1992, where I was in attendance as a dance participant. I had the opportunity to watch Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán perform, which exposed me to virtuosic mariachi playing for the first time. In addition to playing the popular *rancheras* to which I was accustomed, they also played incredibly difficult arrangements of songs. At twelve years old, I realized I liked that kind of mariachi music. In the early 2000s, through complex problems of mismanagement, the Mexican Heritage Corp began losing money on most of its events. At one time they had their own building in which the organization provided various social programs such as ESL and art classes in addition to ballet folklórico and mariachi programs. The conference was also the main fundraiser for these events, but eventually due to poor planning, it declined in number of

both workshop participants and audience members.[70]

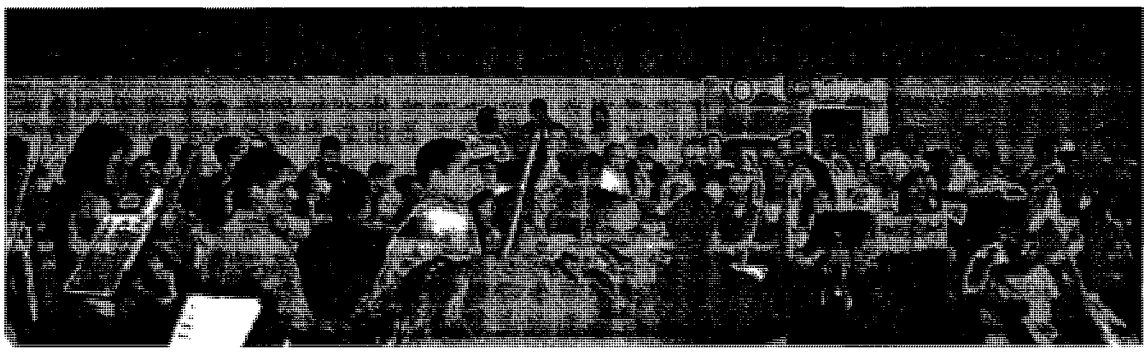

Figure 4.10: Workshop Rehearsal at the 2005 San Jose Mariachi festival. Photo by the author.

Desperate for change, the board of directors for the Mexican Heritage Corporation hired Marcela Davison, a lawyer from New York with prior arts administration experience, to take over as CEO of the group. Under her direction all year-round programs were cut, and she focused all her attention on the festival. Both the 2005 and 2006 mariachi festivals were small and not very well publicized. Davison is neither a mariachi expert nor does she appear particularly interested in maintaining the festival as a showcase for mariachi music.[71]

The 2007 San Jose Mariachi Conference was described by many as "different" and "bizarre." The workshops were shortened to two days and only for three hours of instruction.[72] Whereas the festival used to take place in July so that it would not conflict with school schedules, it now takes place the second to last week in September and the workshops are taught after school. What distinguished the 2008 festival from any other was that the final concert was billed as a "mostly mariachi" concert which featured Tlen

[70] Personal interview with Jonathan Clark, August 25, 2005.
[71] ibid
[72] ibid

Huicani (a son jarocho), Los Lobos (rock), Ozomatli (rock), Linda Ronstandt (ranchera/rock), Mariachi Cobre and Mariachi Sol de Mexico. The workshops also included son jarocho classes with no explanation as to why they were included. Many of the students and parents were given the false impression that *son jarocho* and mariachi are they same, when they are in fact two completely different genres. It was even unclear if many of the festival organizers knew that there was a difference.

While the general public seemed to like the inclusion of these other genres into the mariachi festival, the majority of local San Jose mariachi educators and mariachis were furious. For them a mariachi festival should feature one hundred percent mariachi music, otherwise it is not a mariachi festival. In the past, the festival gave local mariachi groups the opportunity to perform; in 2007, only one local group was featured. Since then the Mexican Heritage Corporation has been plagued with many other problems outside the scope of this paper. Of importance is that after significant public outcry in regard to the programming of various arts events, the city of San Jose put together a task force and hired an outside consultant, a cultural anthropologist, to investigate the problems. Under intense public pressure, the 2008 festival was renamed the "San José Mariachi and Latin Music Festival." The controversy is far from over, as local mariachis and mariachi aficionados are angry that this festival has been twisted into something that does not, in their view, promote mariachi music at all. Featured in the Metro Silicon Valley newpaper, a cartoon poking fun at the festival appeared in the February 20-26, 2008 edition. This cartoon was published a few months after the 2007 San Jose festival. In it, we see a banner that reads "Mariachi Festival" and three very perplexed mariachis

looking at a stage filled with drummers, polka dancers, and whirling dervishes. Upon looking at this scene, one of the mariachi musician says, "Now that's what I call 'Latino Alternatives'!" In the bottom right hand corner, the same three musicians wonder, "Maybe they're from Eastern Mexico?" The cartoonist, in addition to poking fun at the festival, is also questioning how a "mariachi festival" can feature so little mariachi music. This was a main criticism of the 2007 festival as a whole. In their mission statement the Mexican Heritage Corporation states that:

> The Mexican Heritage Corporation serves the Silicon Valley and Northern California by presenting and advancing Mexican and multicultural performing arts. We accomplish this through: The San Jose International Mariachi Festival and its related concert and education programs. (http://www.mhcviva.org/)

All programming from 2007 seemed to contradict the above statement. The 2008 Festival saw the creation of a general boycott and subsequent manifesto written by local mariachis. They were successful in getting a few high profile mariachi ensembles to boycott the festival as well. Members of the community were so upset by the actions of festival organizers that a manifesto was written and disseminated by e-mail to various community organizations throughout Northern California. Below is an excerpt from the manifesto:

- We, the undersigned, as performers of mariachi music in the San José-San Francisco Bay Area, manifest our dissatisfaction with the 2007 San José International Mariachi Festivals for the following reasons:
- Less than half the number of musical ensembles featured in this festival had any direct relationship to the mariachi genre.

- Most of the mariachi groups that participated in this festival were brought in from outside our region. Invitations to participate in this event were only extended to 3 local mariachi groups, out of a total of some 17 ensembles presented, marginalizing our local talent.
- Members of our mariachi community were not consulted or otherwise allowed to participate in this festival's organization.
- The title of this festival was contradictory to its content, since almost all emphasis was given to vocal soloists and non-mariachi ensembles, in both publicity and billing.
- Festival publicity was disrespectful to mariachis and to our music.
- Furthermore, we manifest our refusal to participate in any future San José International Mariachi Festival unless the following conditions are met satisfactorily:
- Said festival features 100% mariachi groups. The only exception acceptable to us would be Michoacán-style *conjuntos de arpa* (*arpa grande*), which are a traditional form of mariachi.
- At least 20% (25%?) Bay Area mariachi ensembles are featured in said Festival.
- Members of our local mariachi community are given the opportunity to participate in the planning and selection of artists to be featured in said Festival.

- Mariachi ensembles are given priority billing in all concerts and in all publicity, with any vocalists or other invited soloists announced in a lower priority in relation to the mariachi groups on the program.
- Festival publicity is first approved by members of the mariachi community, to ensure this is not offensive or disrespectful to our music or our culture.

It is clear that the author(s) of this manifesto wanted to "reclaim" their festival. Few venues exist that are dedicated solely for mariachi performance and education. Although the festival has continued in its new format, many previous participants have chosen not to attend future festivals. The controversy over the San Jose festival, while a local issue, has had a profound impact on other festivals. At the Tucson and Albuquerque festivals the situation seemed to be on the minds of many organizers. If the San Jose festival proves financially successful, will it become the "new" model upon which other festivals will be based on? Would its influence be widespread leading to a complete change as to how festivals function and operate? Furthermore, how would this affect the link between mariachi festivals and education programs?

By examining these three particular mariachi festivals, it is evident they each have their own agendas and use mariachi music as a highly politically charged vehicle to affect the communities to which they cater. It is also clear that there are multiple ways in which organizers view mariachi music and choose to represent it. As mariachi festivals continue to spread and more nonprofit community groups and schools start organizing their own festivals, it will be interesting to see if new formats are created or if they will look to

other festivals as models. With this in mind, a more critical study of mariachi festivals is needed in order to fully understand the multiple meanings this music has to different people.

Chapter 5

Transcribing Mariachi Music

Introduction

As mariachi music programs have expanded into academia in the U.S., the demand for written mariachi music has increased proportionally as a result. The proliferation of mariachi festival workshops and academic mariachi programs has raised important issues surrounding the role of musical transcription in mariachi music. Traditionally, mariachi has been a music learned by ear, but an increasing number of educators are now utilizing written scores in teaching this music. As mariachi educators and would-be publishers grapple with the manner in which to actualize mariachi music through transcription and notation, the wide variety of approaches has resulted in a lack of standardization. While the use of written scores is becoming more widespread, the abilities to learn aurally and improvise remain vital skills for all practicing mariachi musicians. As a main point of distribution of sheet music and music discussion, many academic mariachi programs exist under the aegis of music programs where Western classical notation is the dominant method of instruction.

The role, and even usefulness, of transcription is an important topic within ethnomusicology. For many ethnomusicologists written scores do not exist in the traditions they study, and those musics with visual representations, transnotation becomes the issue. In discussing Ter Ellingson's chapter on transcription in Helen Myer's book, Tara Browner notes that, "According to Ter Ellingson, transcription, which he defines as 'the writing of musical sounds,' has, due to a 'changing emphasis in ethnomusicological

theory and method' . . . declined in importance, or even become a peripheral or anachronistic remnant of outmoded ideas and methods" (Ellingson 1992:110). She continues:

> There are two primary reasons for this perception. First, many ethnomusicologists subscribe to the tenet that to impose Western notation on non-Western music is a version of musical colonization; second, with the increasing availability and dissemination of high quality recordings with texts, quite a few ethnomusicologists now think that there is no need to include transcriptions in their works when a compact disc will represent the sound for the reader. A third trend is to create alternative systems of notation or transnotation, often graphic or machine-based (and thereby supposedly culturally neutral), for individual music systems. Finally, some scholars simply find no need to discuss musical sounds, and therefore have no use for musical notation in any form (Browner 2009:xiv).

On the next page Browner states that, "In the view of some ethnomusicologists, transcription is a kind of throwback to the days before recordings were readily available and when notation literally *substituted for* sound" (ibid.:xv). These quotes have been taken from Browner's introduction to her edited work of transcriptions of a Native American pow-wow that occurred at UCLA in 2001. She makes the case that transcription remains an important endeavor for ethnomusicologists, and later says that, "For the most part, ethnographic documentation of Native musical expression is through recording, not performing. And this means that the process of 'getting inside' the music must happen through transcription, not participant-observation" (ibid.:xvi). Browner's purpose in transcribing an entire pow-wow in a scholarly edition is to document performance practice and provide a format in which the reader can experience "the totality of the pow-wow performance," and to pay "proper respect to Native traditions and conceptualizations" (ibid.:xxvii). I have chosen to focus on Browner's book *Songs*

from "A New Circle of Voices":The Sixteenth Annual Pow-wow at UCLA (2009), partly because it is one of the only recent publications by an ethnomusicologist that is devoted entirely to this issue of transcription, and also because I feel that the issues she discusses are relevant to the events taking place within the mariachi tradition in the United States. In Browner's book (2009), she views music and dance as two equally important components and chose to represent both in her transcriptions. Through a flexible use of Western notation, each system consists of four parts: voice, drum, and male and female dancers. This allows for a set of transcriptions that are accessible and easy to follow. It is clear that her volume of transcriptions is a scholarly undertaking intended to document an important event in a respectful manner.

In the context of mariachi music, the need for transcriptions of mariachi music is driven by the increasing number of mariachi classes either in schools or festival workshops throughout the Southwestern United States and, most recently, in parts of Mexico. This demand is the driving force behind a fledging publishing movement that in its infancy is struggling to determine how to create for-profit musical scores of mariachi music. With few exceptions, the majority of people currently in the business of transcribing mariachi music are not trained ethnomusicologists, and through a method of trial and error are struggling with long-standing issues faced by ethnomusicologists. While Browner defends her decision to publish a transcription volume as a worthwhile and important scholarly enterprise, the mariachi world is scrambling to provide quality scores in response to this emerging market.

In addition to struggling with the process of transcription, issues of copyright and intellectual property also come into play. In her article "Indigenous Music and the Law: An Analysis of National and International Legislation," Sherylle Mills discusses various aspects of copyright and how they are incompatible with non-Western musical practices. As a lawyer, she raises issues of copyright from a historical, cultural and legal standpoint. She explains that copyright comes out of Anglo and Anglo-American ideals that are more concerned with making money than protecting the rights of aboriginal people (Mills 1996:57). Article I, § 8, cl.8 the "Copyright Clause" stipulates that in order for a document to be protected under copyright laws, it must have an author, be tangible and be original (ibid.:61). She is quick to point out that most folk music is considered public domain; meaning that anyone can use it without paying royalties or giving credit to the original creator. With the demand for scores an underground sheet music trading scene has emerged, especially for those scores provided by famous mariachi groups at festival workshops. Through various online websites, I have seen pages devoted to trading mariachi music on youtube, facebook and mariachi chat forums. While all scores have an author and are tangible, not all are necessarily original. Professional mariachi groups generally perform music specifically arranged for their group. Many semi-professional and amateur groups try to copy what they hear from professional groups. While a transcription can be thought of as an individual's interpretation of what they heard, trading scores obtained from festivals or downloading a copy of a score someone has posted online is a problem. When I asked Jesús Guzmán what he thought about some of his transcriptions being traded without his consent on line, it became clear he was

unaware it was even happening. In my opinion, as the publishing industry grows and the potential for profit is realized, the issues of copyright and intellectual property will become important. This chapter focuses on the issues surrounding the process of transcribing mariachi music, and investigates its practical and cultural implications for the mariachi tradition as a whole.

Demand for Scores

Mariachi Festivals

As mentioned in my fourth chapter, a defining characteristic of US mariachi festivals is the inclusion of workshops wherein playing instruction is provided. Following the model established in Tucson, Arizona, it is now customary for workshop participants to perform in a final, and often sold-out, concert the repertoire that they have learned in the workshops. More established festivals can attract as many as nine hundred workshop participants. With such numbers of musicians at a variety of skill levels, the use of written music is most often the most practical method of assuring that participants will be able to perform en masse. Since most workshops only last two to three days, rote learning of music becomes impractical, as it is an extremely time-consuming way of acquiring performance competency. For this reason, festival organizers hire the best professional mariachis available that are willing and able to provide scores for the mariachi workshops. Festivals provide a forum for students to hear mariachi music at the professional and virtuosic level, representing a style of playing that many of these students aspire to achieve. At the core of this playing style are sophisticated arrangements

that in most cases must be learned from scores. Because of the intense student interest in the virtuosic style of playing and the arrangements that feature it, many instructors try to obtain these scores for use in their own school programs.

In addition to differences in transcription style, the scores themselves vary considerably. For example, the show repertoire played by Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán is very popular. The few festivals that I have attended in which Mariachi Vargas served as the primary instructors were particularly interesting, since their scores are notoriously vague and often incomplete. At the 2002 San Jose Mariachi Festival, Vargas taught their arrangement of "Que Viva Veracruz II." While the hand-written parts used in the workshops are legible enough, it is clear that the notation and the sound the teachers tried to elicit from students differed greatly. In this case, entire sections were omitted and certain notes were missing from the individual parts. This score, no doubt, is meant as a guide in order to help musicians remember the chord changes. Without coaching or listening to a recording, learning this piece based solely on how it is written is not possible.

A more recent example of this phenomenon took place during the 2005-2006 mariachi festival season. José Hernandez, the founder and musical director of Mariachi Sol de México, debuted his original composition "El Rey de La Huasteca," which became an instant success. I later learned that Sol de México included the score to be taught to advanced students at one of the mariachi festivals in 2006. The score was duplicated and distributed widely throughout the various mariachi websites. In several online forums there were requests for that particular song daily. Hernandez has since published the song

in the ¡Simplemente Mariachi! series, and his score is selling for $40.00. In 2006, I had the opportunity to adjudicate for two mariachi competitions in California, where the more advanced mariachi groups performed "El Rey de La Huasteca." In one particular competition, four groups played this composition. The majority of the groups competing at these competitions were from high schools and community colleges, and had managed to obtain a copy of the score in order to learn and perform it.

Academic Education Programs

Academic mariachi programs are also driving the demand for written scores for several reasons. It is generally known that the majority of music programs in the United States focus on Western classical music and/or jazz, in some places mariachi classes are now being offered during a regular class time period or as after-school programs. However, there is a great disparity in how instruction is structured and implemented. It should be noted that at present no standard mariachi curriculum exists, and how classes are taught largely depends on the instructor. In Southern California, for example, classes are either taught by a working mariachi musician or by a band teacher whose knowledge of mariachi may be rather limited. As in most states, California requires that teachers at the elementary and secondary levels hold a college degree. Since school districts often implement rigid hiring practices and procedures that prevent mariachis from qualifying as teachers, band teachers are often placed in a situation where they are asked to teach

mariachi classes.[73] Mariachis with formal training in music may write their own transcriptions, which are largely prescriptive and serve as a general road map for the music. It has been my experience that band-turned-mariachi instructors, who are frequently unfamiliar with the tradition or its repertoire, drive the demand for written scores. While it is common in the world of band and orchestra to open up a catalog and order a fully-arranged score and individual parts for the purposes of instruction, no such service exists at this time for mariachi music. Some band instructors teaching in a southern Californian city school district near Ventura have resorted to hiring a mariachi as a consultant to assist with instruction. In many cases, this has been done "under the table" without the school district's knowledge or approval.

It is not uncommon to find classes that focus on choir, orchestra, band, and jazz in schools with thriving music programs. The written score, especially in classical music, is incredibly important, and much attention is given to learning how to read music in these settings. Written music tends to be the primary manner in which the music is taught and learned, and the majority of music educators with whom I have studied with believe that basic musicianship skills are a vital segment of music instruction. As mariachi music enters school music programs, there is the expectation that it will conform to the models that already exist. Ramon Rivera the current director of the Wenatchee, Washington school district mariachi programs discussed with me that, "teaching the kids to read music is a major selling point of the programs."[74] Once the students learn how to read

[73] According to Helen Rees, school music programs in Britain, which focus on teaching Indian music also have a similar problems in hiring qualified teachers (Rees 2010:11).
[74] Personal interview, August 20, 2005.

music they can transfer that knowledge to learning other genres. According to Rivera, learning to read music offers his students another valuable skill that will help them in the future, should they choose to further their study of music.

Over the years, numerous mariachi instructors have informed me that opposition to their classes often comes from other music faculty. In some cases, there is an assumption that mariachi classes will lure students away from the "main" program; however, numerous students with whom I have spoken also participate in other music classes. Another issue I touch upon in chapter six is that of mariachi instructors who are not themselves mariachis. For someone trained in teaching band or orchestra the concept of learning music without a score might seem rather unorthodox. Therefore, obtaining sheet music for these instructors is a high priority.

Current Methods for Acquiring Written Music

Obtaining mariachi scores is a common problem for mariachi instructors and at this point in time there exists only four possible ways to obtain written mariachi music. The "do-it-yourself" method is a path frequently employed by instructors when they discover the scarcity of scores; however, this requires the combination of musical training and knowledge of the mariachi tradition. In my opinion, there are at present very few people capable of writing quality mariachi transcriptions. The benefit, however, of being able to do so is that one can write for the specific group with whom one works. For example, a *son* could be simplified for an elementary school mariachi group.

Another method of obtaining scores is to either purchase the score from a mariachi who sells transcriptions or rely on the limited mainstream sources available. When an individual or company offers reasonably good transcriptions, this method is considered by many directors to be a suitable way to gather instruction materials. Even with well-written transcriptions, there remains the problem of cost and availability. For example, Laura Sobrino keeps a catalog of transcribed songs that she has already transcribed for sale on her website; however, when someone requests a song that is not already transcribed, the interested party must be willing to pay her for the required labor—something that she as a busy performer/educator may not always have the time or interest in doing. As with most mariachis, her website is a means of supplementing her own income.

A third method by which materials are obtained is the mariachi festival. Mariachi festivals are usually good venues to obtain scores, should one be able to collect the entire score. Due to copyright issues, most festivals only allow students to obtain a copy of their individual part for use in the individual workshops of which they are participants. Various directors make a point to ensure all instruments are represented in the workshops so that they may at least obtain a complete set of instrument parts. Since entering parts in a computer notation program like Sibelius or Finale is a labor-intensive process, it would probably take less time to write one's own individual score. I have also heard rumors of directors befriending festival volunteers in hopes of obtaining access to music scores. Some festival workshop instructors, especially those from Mexico, have given away their "teaching" binder containing all music taught in the workshops. Many of these mariachis,

taking for granted their knowledge of the music, do not realize the value their binders have for individuals such as band directors. Additionally, some organizers, like those at the Las Cruces Mariachi Festival, used to sell the complete scores with instrument parts for $50.00 per song. The festival organizers eventually decided to stop selling the music due to the issue of possible copyright infringement. At the 2008 Albuquerque Mariachi Festival, Jose Hernandez, director of Mariachi Sol de México, sold a few of his own arrangements and compositions. To purchase scores of all music learned at the festival—approximately ten songs—cost $1,000.

The fourth way in which scores can be obtained is through trading, an activity that can led to questionable practices. Since quality mariachi music scores are few, an interesting underground music trading scene has emerged. While some of this trading occurs at mariachi festivals, competitions, and among the various mariachi classes, the majority of this trading happens online. Mariachi gossip sites such as www.elmariachi.com often have forums dedicated to trading music. It is not uncommon for someone to post something like, "I'm looking for the score to 'song x', I have the following songs if someone wants to trade." Those with large music score libraries hold major trading currency in this community. Most recently, youtube.com has become a major trading hub as videos showing pages from a score with the song playing in the background have emerged. On the page where the video has been posted, the posters supply their e-mail address with a message indicating that they are willing to trade scores.

It is just a matter of time before copyright issues become a main problem for the fledgling mariachi publishing industry. Right now the market is relatively small, but

demand is growing. The majority of the traded scores have been obtained primarily through mariachi festival workshops. It is obvious that some of the headlining mariachi groups responsible for providing sheet music for the workshops do not realize the value of their scores. Until this fledgling business grows into a significant part of the music publishing industry, this issue is likely to remain unresolved.

Mariachi Publishing

In response to the demand for mariachi music scores, some established music publishers such as Mel Bay Publications and Alfred Music Publishing have begun to print mariachi method books and sheet music. Laura Sobrino, the musical director for Mariachi Mujer 2000, worked with Mel Bay on two editions, *Mel Bay Mariachi Favorites for Solo Guitar* and *Mel Bay presents Violin Transcriptions*. She recalled that each time she sent them material, the editors would change the meter from 3/4 to 6/8. Her preference is to write in 3/4 and use beams to show where the 6/8 takes place. In her experience, changing from 3/4 to 6/8 proves to be confusing for most students. However, her use of beaming reflects the 6/8 feel while retaining the framework of 3/4 time. Misunderstanding her intention, the editors "corrected" the beaming to reflect 3/4 time. It took several phone calls and letters of explanation before the editors understood why she was transcribing the rhythmic feel the way she did. Figures 5.1 is an example of how Sobrino was trying to indicate a 6/8 feel in 3/4 time, and figure 5.2 demonstrates simply how the publishing company tried to "correct" her work.

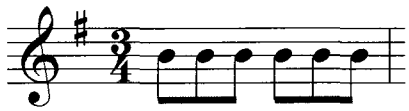

Figure 5.1: Representing a 6/8 feel

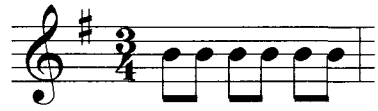

Figure 5.2: Typical 3/4 beaming

In the describing the purpose of Sobrino's violin transcriptions book, the back cover states that:

> In the 1980's there was a sudden renaissance of traditional Mexican music, not in its native Mexico, but around the world. As interest grew in learning mariachi repertory from non-mariachi trained musicians, a need arose to provide written notational documentation of the many songs that have come to identify the mariachi tradition. Author Laura Sobrino has been a professional mariachi and is familiar with the stylistic intricacies that truly make this Mexican traditional and popular music unique. For those who wish to grasp an understanding of the mariachi style and who don't have a mariachi musician to teach them, these transcriptions are some of the best available. The pieces in this collection include parts for one or two violins, guitar (notation and chord symbols), and bass (notation only) (Sobrino 2002: back cover).

I would agree that her transcriptions are the most practical and understandable on the market. However, without knowledge of mariachi violin playing technique, these transcriptions will not help a classically trained violinist to sound like a mariachi. When this book came on the market during my senior year of undergraduate study, I was taking classical violin lessons at the time. Interested in learning some of the songs, I took this book to my instructor, who was open to the idea of learning different styles of playing. However, as we played through some of songs during my lessons, my teacher found that the bowings and articulations made little sense to her. She was certain that there had been a mistake, and went on to make several "corrections." Out of context and in the hands of a non-mariachi, these materials can be easily misunderstood.

Other mariachis have established their own internet-based mariachi publishing companies. One well-known site, www.mariachiconnection.com out of San Antonio, Texas, sells arrangements by local mariachis and mariachi instructors. I have heard harsh criticism of these arrangements, especially by band directors who had found some of their work to be poorly written and confusing. Sobrino, a respected teacher who teaches the mariachi class at UC Riverside, also has her own internet publishing company, www.mariachipublishing.com, which serves an outlet for her own transcriptions. Both she and Ray Benavides, the owner of mariachiconnection.com, admit that their arrangements are meant primarily as a guide for those people who are already familiar with mariachi music.

To mitigate this concern and provide information to those wanting to establish academic mariachi programs, MENC – The National Association for Music Education – created a section devoted to mariachi education in 2006. Through the work of its mariachi advisory board, a group consisting primarily of long-time mariachi instructors and ethnomusicologists, information ranging from how to obtain resources to the creation and implantation of curriculum is being disseminated. MENC already provides education resources for band, choir, jazz and orchestra programs, and through the inclusion of mariachi resources, they acknowledge mariachi's growing popularity. Stating on their website, "MENC is pleased to offer professional support for mariachi educators," it also includes a comprehensive listing of all mariachi resources available. While helpful, it is problematic that the resources listed are not reviewed and their quality varies. Their website, http://www.menc.org/gp/menc-s-mariachi-education-site, offers access to

resources and information geared primarily toward educators interested in becoming more familiar with mariachi music.

Prescriptive vs. Descriptive Transcriptions

The dearth of quality scores is a pressing issue for school programs. In my opinion a mariachi program that uses poorly written scores does their students a great disservice, since it is difficult to learn to adequately read music from low-quality notations. This could prove highly problematic, should students want to pursue a formal music degree. Learning to transcribe or arrange music accurately requires some degree of formal music education—the very training that many mariachis lack. Over the years, I have witnessed a few problematic situations arise with regard to the transcription of mariachi music. Some instructors, many of them excellent mariachis without any formal music training, have attempted to write down the music using whatever system they can devise. The reverse case sometimes occurs, where instructors unfamiliar with the mariachi tradition transcribe the music how they hear and understand it. A variation is that of a non-mariachi instructor who has spent some time learning about mariachi music and creates a score that is so detailed that no one can actually play from it. The real struggle seems to stem from the perennial problem of a prescriptive vs. descriptive transcription. This tension is being played out in classrooms throughout the southwestern United States.

In his article, "Prescriptive and Descriptive Music Writing," Charles Seeger makes the distinction between a prescriptive transcription, "a blueprint," and the

descriptive transcription, i.e., how "a specific performance" actually sounded (Seeger 1958:184). Since of the main purpose of mariachi transcription is to provide scores for use by students, materials need to be clear and as easy to read as possible. Therefore, a truly descriptive transcription would not be appropriate for classroom use in most cases. Since Western notation is the favored format, it makes sense that practical prescriptive transcriptions be created. The challenge then becomes how to represent the music in a way that is both accessible and as precise as is possible with a prescriptive transcription.

Problems Representing Musical "Style"

Accurately portraying the style of mariachi music is difficult to do on the written page. At the moment, no method book or notation system, no matter how accurate, can truly portray style. This is the main challenge in teaching and learning mariachi music, especially since many of the mariachis I have asked are unable to verbalize precisely what makes mariachi sound the way it does. After several years of working with Jesús Guzmán, he has never been able to explain to me exactly how the "timing" works in a *son jalisciense*. For him, it is easier to demonstrate the "timing" on one of the instruments than to try to articulate this concept verbally. However, timing in the *son* is one of the most complex characteristics of the song-form. For many years, I did not understand what Guzmán was trying to communicate through his demonstrations. After years of classical training, I had become accustomed to "hearing" music with Western classical music ears. It has taken years for me to learn how to "listen" to his instructions in order to understand how the music should be played. Similarly, Nati Cano often discusses what he

calls "tiempo imperfecto" (imperfect time) when explaining the *son jalisciense* in workshops. He frequently repeats this concept, but I have yet to hear him communicate in words exactly what he means by imperfect time. How does one notate an idea that is so difficult to be verbalized?

In 2006, I was invited to play in newly formed group whose director relied heavily on scores. Herself a classically trained musician, she insisted we play the music faithfully as written. Many of her musicians were also classically trained and heavily dependent on learning from sheet music. In many ways this group was a perfect example of the famous saying "the blind leading the blind." By the end of the rehearsal, we had learned the notes and rhythms exactly as written; however, being unable to execute the proper style or feel, we failed to sound like a mariachi. I eventually left that group out of frustration, but my experience did help me to understand the problems some mariachi groups, particularly those new to the genre, face in learning the music.

In terms of playing style, each instrument within the mariachi genre has its idiosyncrasies that define its particular sound. The different instruments can be categorized into two groups, rhythmic and melodic. Known as the *armonías*, the *vihuela*, guitar and *guitarrón* provide the rhythmic and harmonic foundation of the group, while the violins and trumpets comprise the *melodías* (melodic section). Traditionally, in early mariachi groups the harp provided the bass line; however, in the modern mariachi, the harpist may continue to double the bass lines and provide additional melodic embellishments (*adornos*) as appropriate.

In the *armonías* sections the *vihuela* and guitar create a crisp, vibrant sound by striking all of the strings at once. One of the defining characteristics of mariachi vihuela is the *mánicos* (strumming patterns) played in each song form within the mariachi genre The *guitarrón* plucks two strings at once, creating a unison or octave. It is the rhythmic, often syncopated, interaction between the vihuela/guitar and the guitarrón that establishes and maintains the tempo while, in my opinion, giving a particular song its mariachi flavor.

Violin playing in the mariachi tradition can be characterized several ways. Many non-classically trained mariachis do not hold their bow at the frog. I have observed some who hold it almost in a fist position immediately above the frog or even higher up the bow. Vibrato is often achieved using whatever method the violinist can play. The way in which a mariachi holds the violin varies greatly depending on the kind of group and context in which the musicians plays. Professional mariachi groups tend to face the audience straight on, with one turned foot slightly forward and violins held up high. *Al talón* violinists will hold their violin in whatever manner they see fit. Since the violins must be heard over the trumpets, excessive amounts of rosin are used to allow the instrument to produce a louder, more intense sound. Many violinists do not clean the rosin from their violins, especially under the bridge, since it can be used for pizzicato passages by placing one's finger to pick up rosin.

For many mariachi fans, a mariachi is not a true mariachi unless it has trumpets. The unique style of trumpet playing has become synonymous with the mariachi sound. Its playing style can be characterized by a loud and brassy sound with a wide vibrato. I

have been told that it can be an exhausting style of playing, and a lot of tonguing is used to produce the sound. On a lighter note, my husband, who attended college in Arizona, had two Anglo-American trumpet-playing roommates who also played in their school's mariachi program. They often referred to the slow, exaggerated vibrato as *vibrachi*.

"La Negra" - A Case Study

"La Negra" is by far the most popular *son* within the mariachi tradition. Many groups tend to either begin or end their performances with it. Often audiences will sing the verses with the mariachi, and "La Negra" has become an anthem for mariachis on both sides of the border. Since I have already discussed the song structure and meaning in chapter 2, the purpose of this section is to show some of the differences in which it has been transcribed. Laura Sobrino and Jesús Guzmán were kind enough to give me permission to use their transcriptions of "La Negra" for comparison. My point is not to make a value judgment as to who does a better job transcribing the music or to even surmise that one of these transcriptions represents the "correct" way or version. There is no doubt that each transcription is well written and both would meet the demands of a school setting. As I have mentioned in previous chapters, transcribing a *son jalisciense* is no easy task, especially because of its heavy use of *sesqialtera* (the alternation between 3/4 and 6/8). While the overall structure of the song in both transcriptions is similar, there are subtle differences.

To begin figures 5.3 and 5.4 show the opening theme of the song, and if we compare the first system of each transcription, we see that Sobrino has decided to

represent her trumpets as C trumpets while Guzmán writes for trumpets in Bb. This means that in a group using Sobrino's transcription, the trumpet players would need to transpose their parts. Additionally, she has chosen 3/4 time as a constant time signature through most of the transcription. In contrast, Guzmán alternates between 6/8 and 3/4 time. The beginning of "La Negra" starts out slowly and accelerates until it comes to the main tempo.

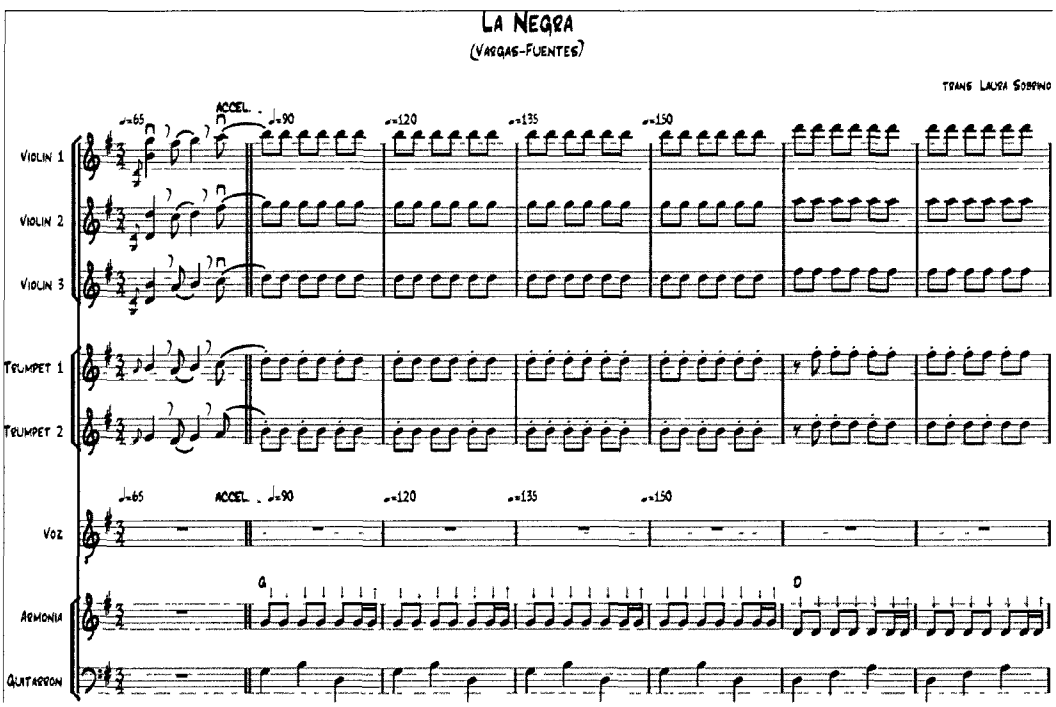

Figure 5.3: Laura Sobrino's transcription. Measures 1-7. Used with permission.

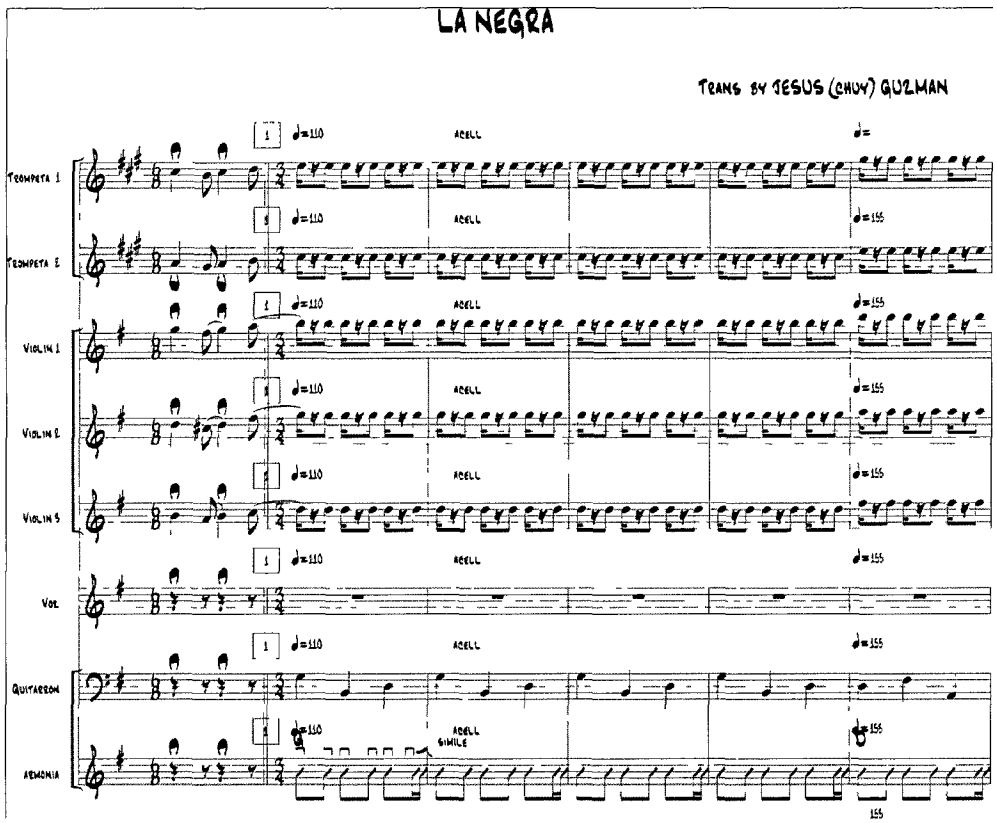

Figure 5.4: Jesús Guzmán's transcription. Measures 1-6. Used with permission.

Even the metronome marking they have listed differ somewhat. Sobrino recommends the quarter note begin at 30, continue to 120, then 135, and finally to 150. Guzmán has fewer metronome markings but indicates the song should start with the quarter note at 110 and accelerate to 156. It is clear that both of these transcriptions are prescriptive in nature. At first glance the most striking difference is how they have chosen to represent the first melodic phrase. Other than the very first note, which falls on the first beat, the subsequent notes anticipate the beat and don't necessarily fall right on it. This first passage is an example the "imperfect time" Nati Cano often mentions in workshops. Sobrino notates even eighth-notes throughout this passage, while Guzmán employs a sixteenth-note followed by a sixteenth-rest ending with an eighth-note. In both

cases, the transcription is only a basic guide. Both passages played exactly as written would fail to produce the mariachi sound. However, used by someone who is well-versed in the mariachi tradition, the transcription is a helpful means of relating notes and rhythms for student use.

As the song progresses other minor differences are evident. Figures 5.5 through 5.11 represent measures 17-36, where we see that Guzmán has chosen to tacit the trumpets and have them engage in call and response with the violins. Sobrino, on the other hand, has the trumpets doubling the violin parts throughout most of the passage. The notes played by the violins also differ, in that Guzmán uses more half-steps while Sobrino does not. Throughout these passages and for most of the song, the *armonía* is fairly similar in these two transcriptions. The only difference is a minor one. Although it is customary to notate the *guitarrón* part using only one note, it is actually doubling by playing octaves. So, while Sobrino and Guzmán choose to notate the octave in different places due to how the instrument is played, each yields the same sound.

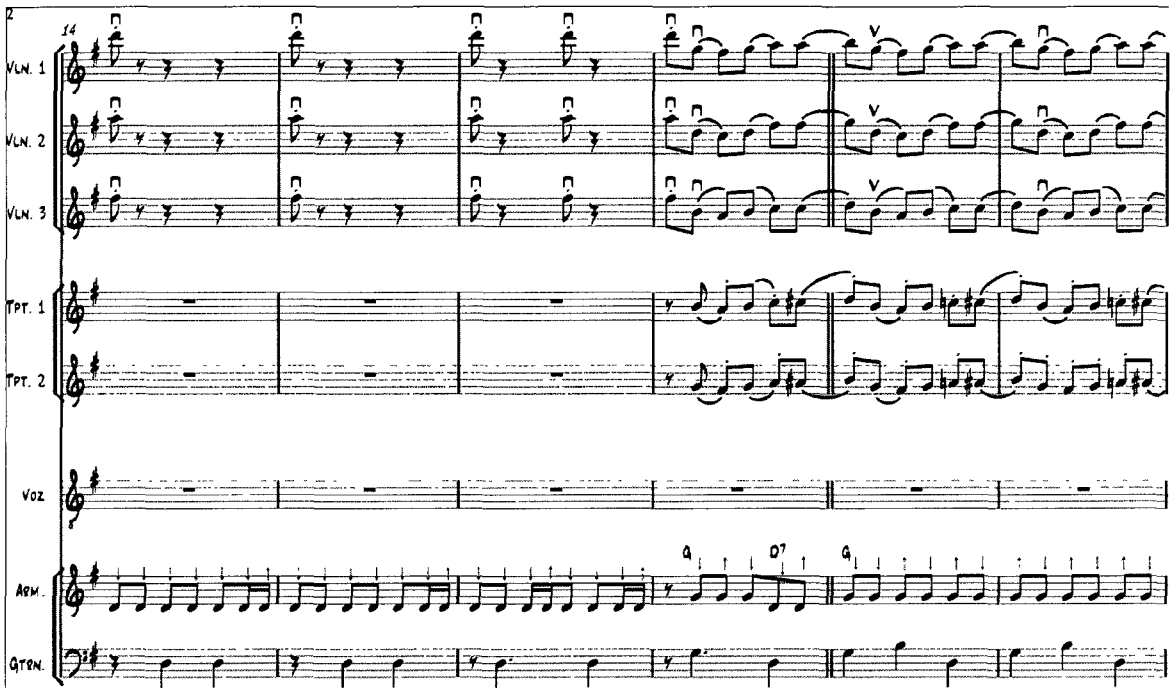

Figure 5.5: Laura Sobrino: Measures 14-19. Used with permission.

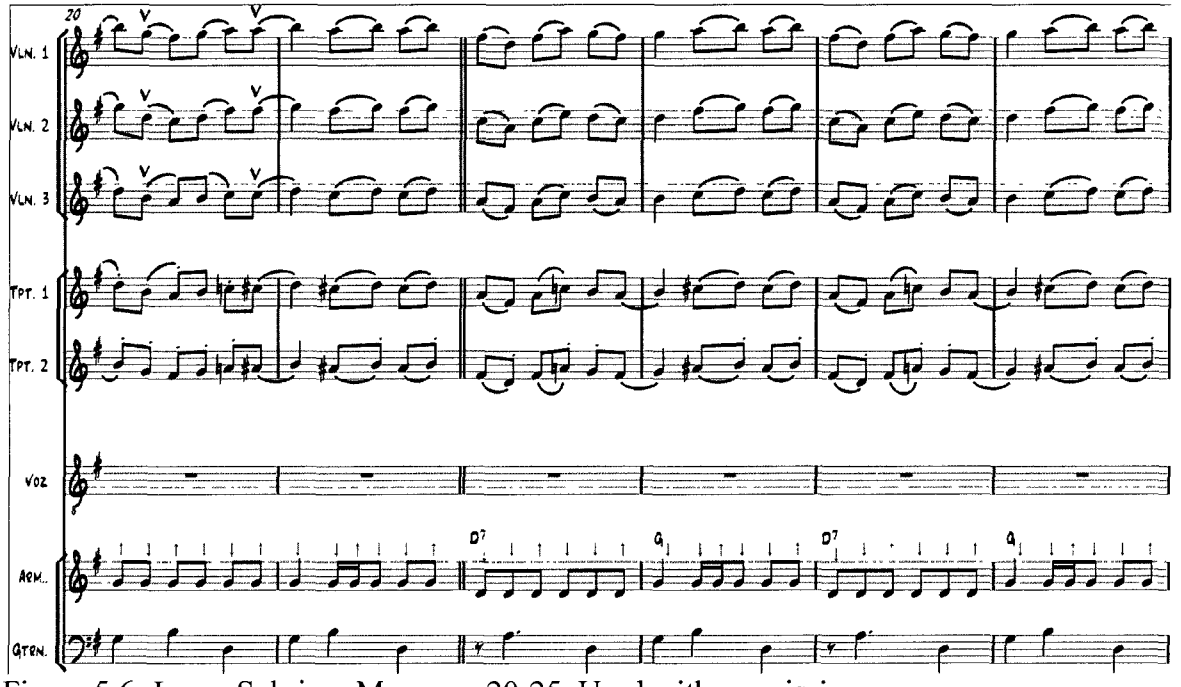

Figure 5.6: Laura Sobrino: Measures 20-25. Used with permission.

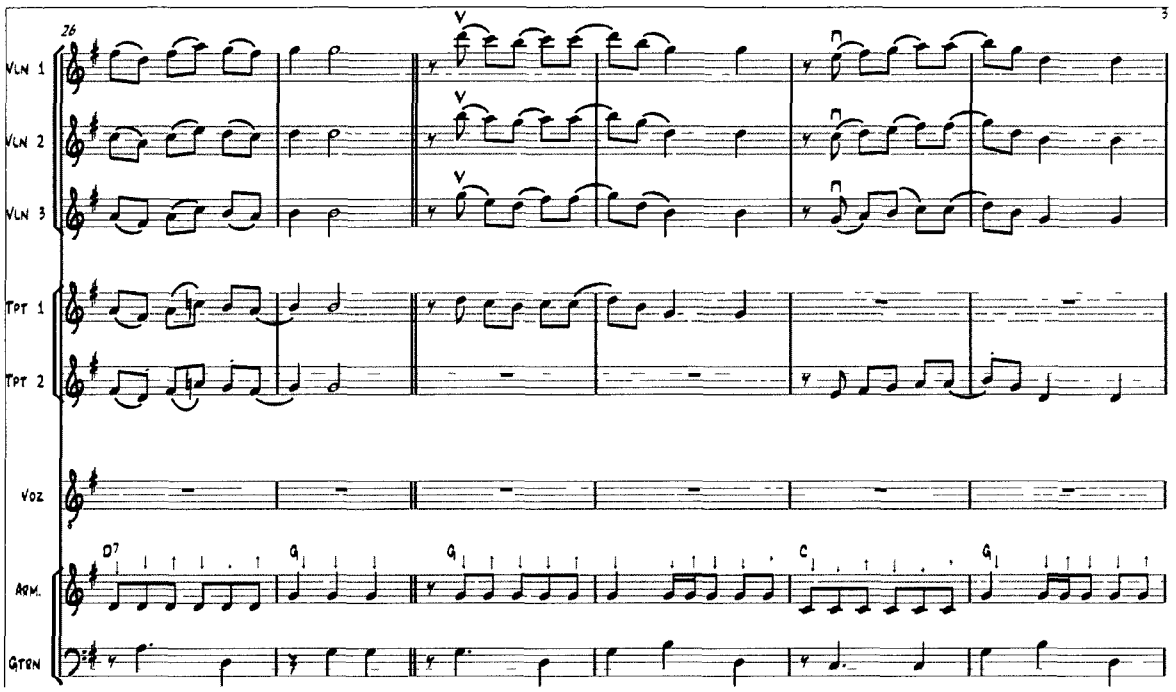

Figure 5.7: Laura Sobrino Measures 26-31. Used with permission.

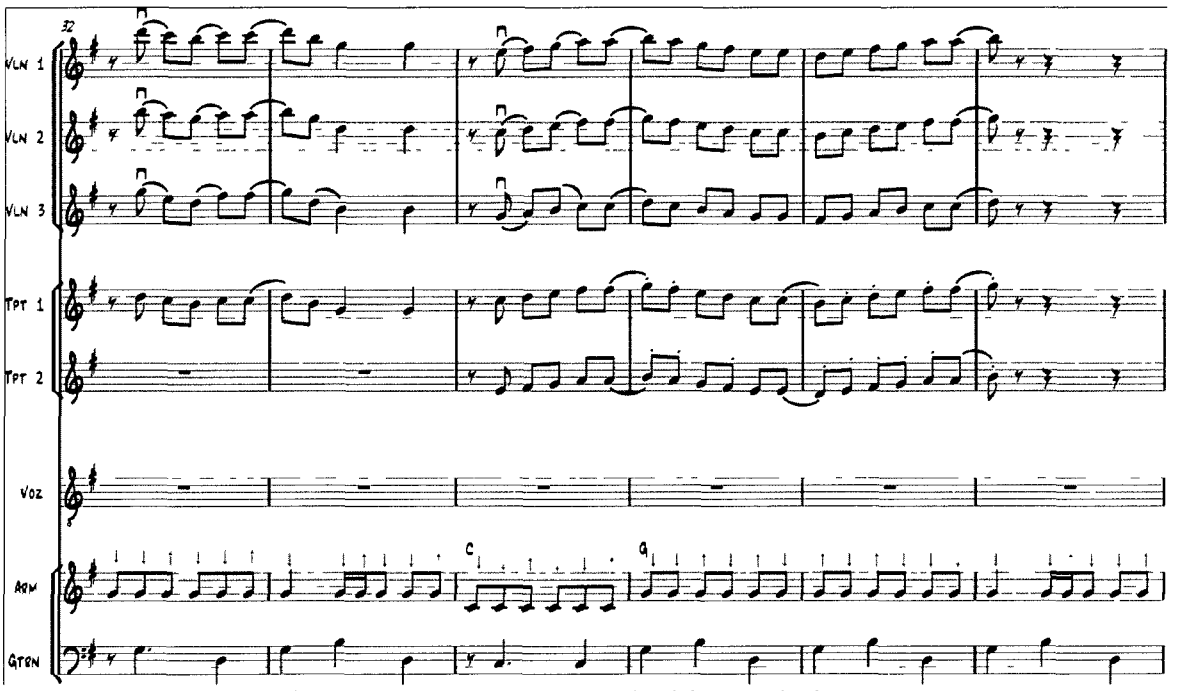

Figure 5.8: Laura Sobrino: Measures 32-37. Used with permission.

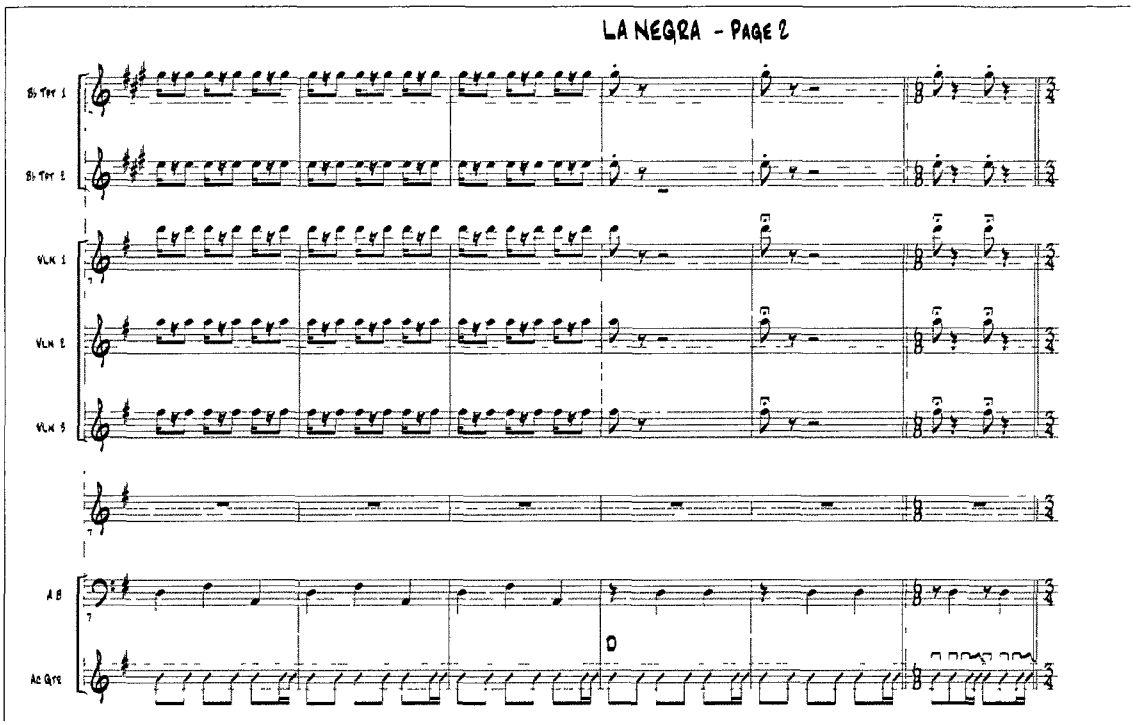

Figure 5.9: Jesús Guzmán: Measures 9-17. Used with permission.

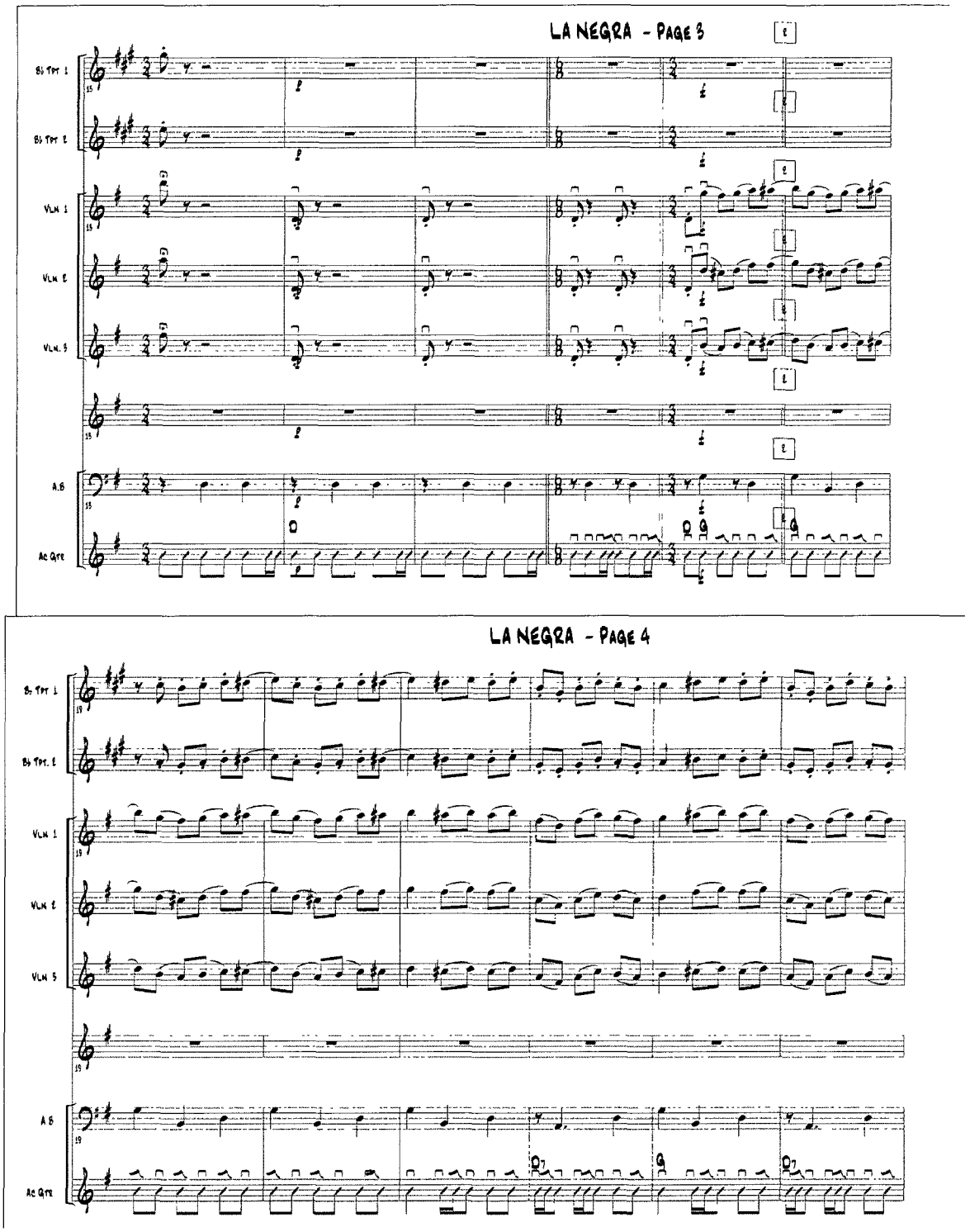

Figure 5.10a: Jesús Guzmán: Measures 13-24. Used with permission.

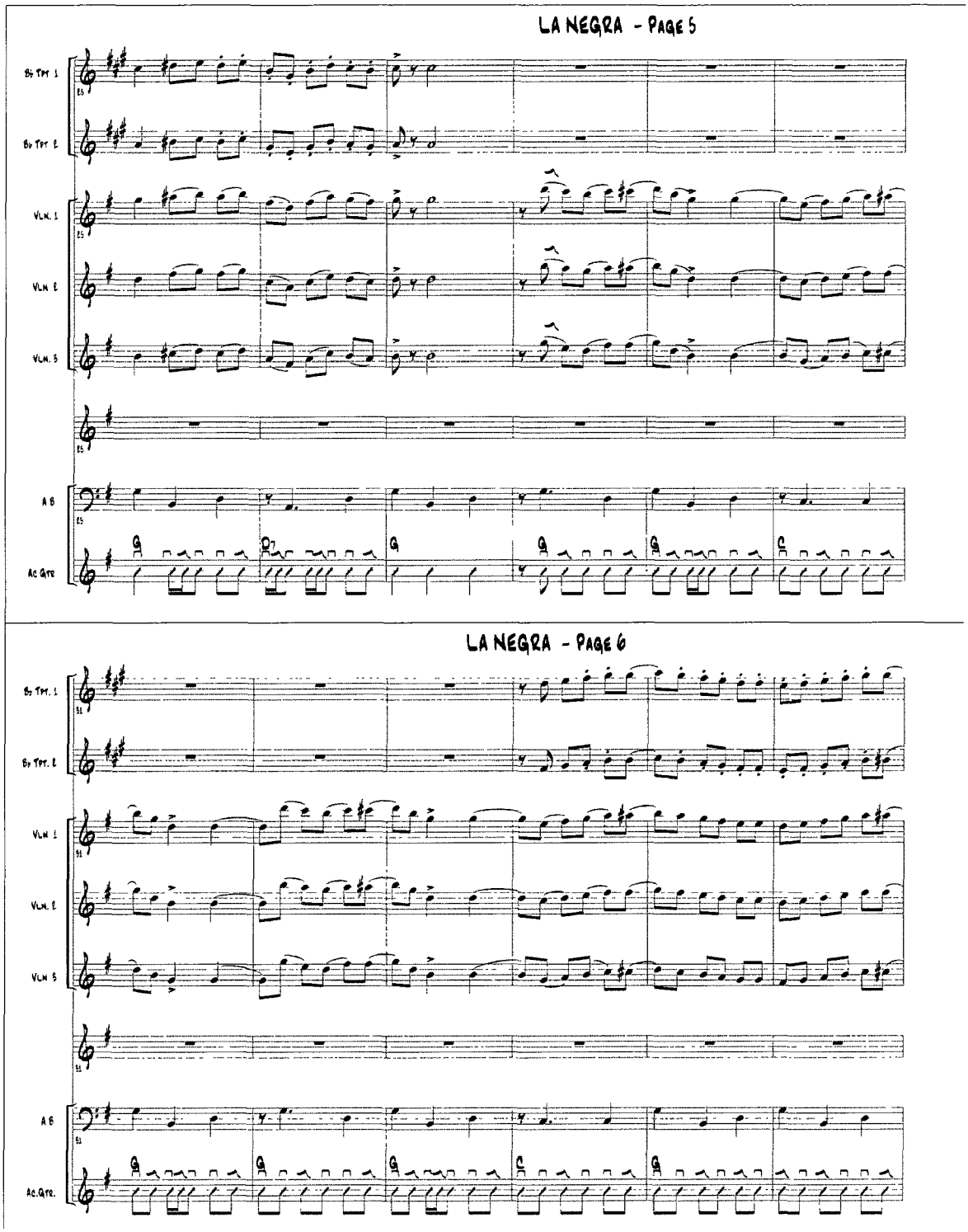

Figure 5.10b: Jesús Guzmán: measures 25-36. Used with permission.

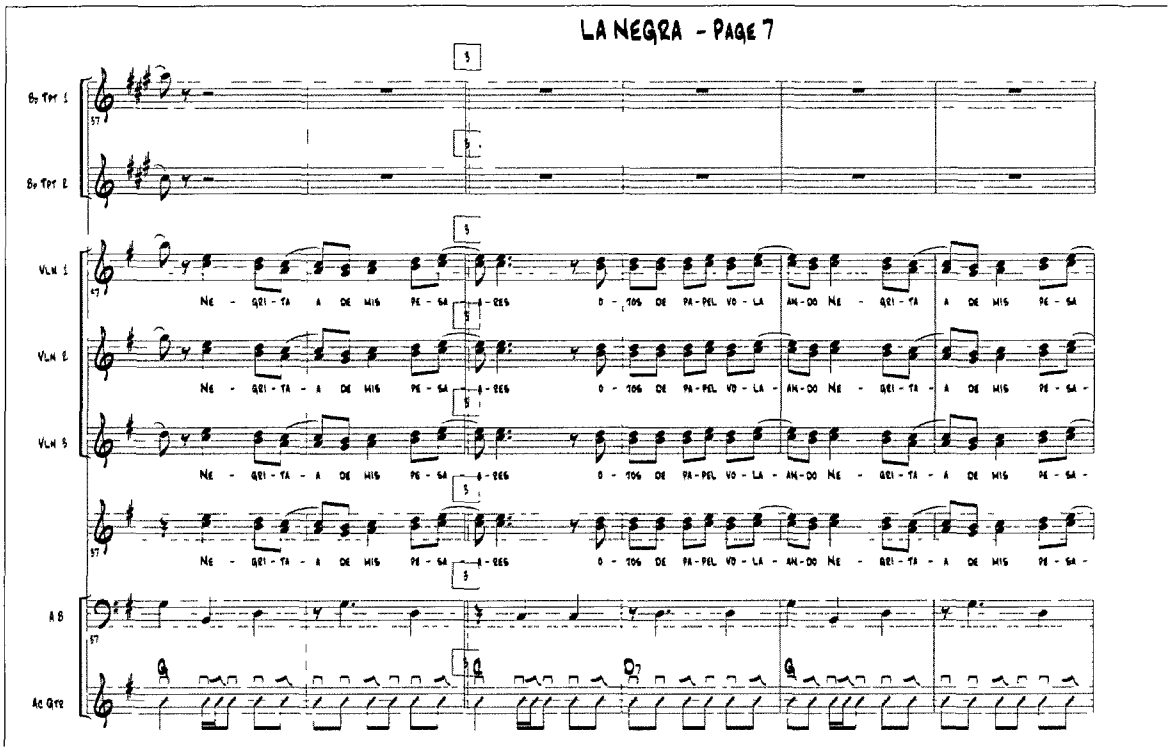

Figure 5.10c: Jesús Guzmán: Measures 29-40. Used with permission.

There are many more slight differences between the two throughout the song; however, each transcription has more similar than different.

Sobrino and Guzmán are experts at mariachi transcription, even though they come from different backgrounds. Each works as the musical director for a high-profile, professional mariachi group, and the ability to transcribe and arrange are vital to the sustainability of the groups they each direct. Coming from a strong classical music background, Sobrino has years of formal training. She first began learning to play mariachi music in college while attending the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC) in the 1970s. Her extensive classical violin training has aided her in transcribing mariachi music. She is very much aware of the issues important to ethnomusicology and their cultural implications concerning transcription. The choices she makes when

transcribing are deliberate and well thought out. Her ability to transcribe music quickly has helped her immensely with her teaching duties, and she is able to provide her own resources.

Guzmán, through a combination of self-learning and teaching by his family and other mariachi musicians, is a prime example of a mariachi trained in a traditional manner. With a keen ear and perfect relative pitch, he is able to learn music quickly and accurately without the use of sheet music. In a 2004 interview, he disclosed that it was not until he started to teach at UCLA that he started to transcribe music regularly.[75] With little formal training, he has taught himself through a process of trial and error. Having attended his classes since 2002, I have seen his transcriptions develop and gain more detail over time. The first year I worked with him, four of the ten songs we learned were handwritten, and focused solely on notes and rhythms. While they were neat and easy to read, there were minor errors such as extra notes in the measure. The use of dynamics or metronome markings was virtually non-existent. His use of music notation software has "fixed" the minor errors, and allowed him to explore different ways of representing the sound he is trying to achieve. In the Music of Mexico class, which caters primarily to beginning students with little musical experience and background, Guzmán tends to focus on teaching the vocals and guitar parts by rote. When working with the other instruments he tends not to make changes in the scores. However, when he works with more advanced musicians, such as coaching Mariachi de Uclatlán, a different, more critical side of him emerges. It has been in this situation where the drawbacks of written music

[75] Personal interview, March 1, 2004.

become clear. On the one hand, the score allows us to learn the notes and basic rhythms quickly, but they can also impede that process as well. This is where his coaching becomes invaluable. In the more complex *sones* like "El Pasajero," "El Cuatro," and "Las Olas," songs that present challenges in rhythmic timing (e.g., duple against triple passages) and tricky ornamentations, it has only been through his guidance that the group has been able to learn to play together. While each individual part on its own is not necessarily difficult, the "imperfect timing" or feeling of "tug of war" between the parts is extremely challenging. If one section is late or early, the entire *son* feel falls apart.

Conclusions

The demand for written sheet music has created a new industry that is struggling to define itself. This new market is being driven by the proliferation of mariachi education programs and the need for sheet music to be used in classrooms. While music obtained at mariachi festivals is viewed as being more "authentic," since it is primarily provided by the headlining mariachi group, the actual practicality of using it in the classroom varies. During festival workshops, the mariachi group that provides the scores is also teaching and is available to guide students. Most festivals begin with an assembly in which all pieces to be learned are performed by the instructors. This gives workshop participants the opportunity to hear, sometimes before ever having seen the music, what is expected of them. This is not the case in most K-12 classrooms, and the decisions of the instructor impact the quality of the class immensely. Although there are few resources available at this time, it is clear that with the skill level of those currently providing sheet

music varies greatly, making it difficult to obtain quality scores. While the use of sheet music in education programs as the sole means of learning music creates an ethical dilemma in terms of the impact on the tradition as a whole, it makes sense in an academic setting that students in a music program would learn to read music. However, as individuals and music publishing companies seeking to meet the demands of this new market emerge, it is unclear how will they will decide to represent the music. Even if the creation of a descriptive transcription were possible, it would be impractical for most classroom settings due to the complex nature of some of the song forms. However, the formation of a prescriptive transcription requires one transcribing mariachi to make certain choices as to how they are going represent the sound.

Additionally, the choice of songs being transcribed is significant. While some songs are more popular than others, ultimately the creators of future method books and catalogues will decide which repertoire to include. Certain songs may be chosen based on their use of a certain musical idea that, for pedagogical reasons, would aid the student in learning a new skill. Regardless, the demand for popular songs will no doubt impact song selection in such materials. If, like jazz programs, mariachi education becomes mainstream and widespread taught throughout the nation's schools, the mariachi publishing industry could become a serious business. Only time will tell what its impact will be on the tradition.

Chapter 6

Mariachi Education

Introduction

Academic mariachi education programs are an American phenomenon that have grown exponentially since their creation in the 1960s. The motivation for implementing these programs is varied and complex. In one way, classes serve as musical "labs" wherein university students can study the musical structures of the genre; in another sense, these programs fit nicely with the goals of civic engagement and social empowerment for a marginalized minority. At present, established academic mariachi programs at the K-12 levels, like those in Las Vegas, Nevada, Tucson, Arizona, and Chula Vista, California have demonstrated that participation curbs absenteeism, boosts academic achievement and has a positive impact on high school graduation rates. While formal statistics measuring these benefits are not yet available, the anecdotal evidence given by the mariachi educators is persuasive. In the ten years I have been observing classes and interviewing mariachi educators, they have all commented on these additional benefits to their students. At mariachi festivals, I have talked with many parents who have told me that the mariachi program helped their children succeed and stay in school. As these programs continue to have positive outcomes for their students, it will remain in their best interest to keep track of student achievement. For these reasons, in school districts with large Latino populations like the cities mentioned above, the primary goal is academic achievement through participation in a mariachi program. Cultural maintenance, positive impact on student self-esteem, and their effect on increasing

parental school involvement are understood as additional positive outcomes of these programs.

At the college level, particularly in the Southwest, mariachi performance ensembles are offered as courses for credit. Additionally, through lecture courses focused on Latin or Mexican music, mariachi may be the topic of a lecture in any given class. With the proliferation of mariachi education programs at the K-12 level, it important to note that a higher academic degree, focused exclusively in either mariachi performance or mariachi education, does not yet exist. A limited number of schools offer either mariachi certifications or allow students a mariachi emphasis with their performance or education degree.

In 2004, Southwestern College in Chula Vista, California became the first community college to offer an Associate of Arts - Mariachi specialization degree under the direction of Jeff Nevin, a professor there who earned his Ph.D. in music theory and composition from the University of California, San Diego. In 2007, Pima Community College in Tucson, Arizona became the second institution to offer a similar degree.

Currently, the state of Texas has the highest concentration of formal educational opportunities for the study of mariachi music. For undergraduates at the University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College, students seeking a Bachelor of Music are able to earn a certificate in mariachi studies. The mariachi certificate is aimed at producing "highly competent mariachi educators" and requires additional course work that can be completed in one year. At the graduate school level, Texas State University San Marcos offers a Master of Music - Music Education and a Master of Music - Music,

offering the option of an emphasis in Latin Music focusing on the genres of mariachi and salsa. Additionally, the University of Texas-Pan American offers a Master of Music Performance, a Master of Music - Music Education, and a Master of Music in Ethnomusicology (emphasis on Mexican-American Music only). Integrated within the curriculum through courses such as the Seminar in Music Pedagogy, attention is given to the study of instruments of Mexico. UTPA also has the most celebrated mariachi ensembles in the nation. UTPA's Mariachi Aztlán has won virtually every award and competition that exists for mariachi performance. While Aztlán is a mixed-gendered group, UTPA also established the very first all-female university mariachi, the UTPA Mariachi Femenil, which has also won numerous awards. This is by no means a comprehensive list, and there is no agency or formal group that keeps track of all academic mariachi programs. I only know of these particular programs by meeting students and instructors who are associated with them through the various mariachi festivals and competitions I have attended. From this short list, it is clear that Texas is leading the way when it comes to mariachi degrees in higher education, a fact that is commonly discussed amongst mariachi educators at festival workshops.

As mariachi education programs become more numerous and existing programs develop and grow, the demand for qualified instructors is rising. Most public schools require that teachers hold their states' mandated teaching credentials, which means earning a college degree. As mentioned in my previous chapters, one does not need a formal education to become a professional mariachi musician. While some schools have

come up with creative ways to overcome this problem, others have settled for less qualified mariachi instructors in their programs.

Through its inclusion in the academic setting, mariachi music is understood to be undergoing a process of legitimization. Pierre Bourdieu discusses how academic institutions can bestow legitimacy, and how this process occurs in mariachi and its eventual outcome provides this study with an interesting means of investigating the formalization of musical practice. The academic mariachi movement, especially at the K-12 level, is trying to develop quality materials and resources for use in the classroom. The development of these materials poses serious problems: mariachi is still an understudied genre, there is a lack of sources in both English and Spanish, and the individuals and organizations who have taken it upon themselves to fill this void may not always have adequate experience or qualifications. In this chapter, I examine the issues surrounding the education movement. First, by investigating the motivation and development of the very first mariachi class at UCLA's Institute of Ethnomusicology in the 1960s, I demonstrate the far-reaching impact this program has had in the establishment of early mariachi education programs. Secondly, in examining a brief history of twentieth-century educational practices for Latinos in the United States, I situate the importance of mariachi programs for student achievement. Finally, by probing some of the current mariachi education resources and programs, I question the ultimate goals of these programs and discuss what their future impact may be on the mariachi tradition.

Mariachi Uclatlán—UCLA Institute of Ethnomusicology

While UCLA holds the distinction of initiating the world's first mariachi program, its early history remains largely untold. From its beginnings in the early 1960s, the program began as a small student-run study group. Many of the early participants were not of Mexican descent, and music performance was the group's primary focus.[76] The goals of civic engagement and social empowerment, which are prevalent themes in today's mariachi programs, were not a motivating factor for the group at that time. It is important to note that several participants went on to found programs of their own, which in turn produced other students, who then went on to found their own programs. Through interviews and archival research, this next section aims to dispel some of the rampant misinformation concerning the development of this program and bring to light the contributions of those who for various reasons have been excluded from the popular history.[77]

[76] I obtained this information while reading Donald Borcherdt's notes, letters and papers currently housed in the Borcherdt Collection in the UCLA Ethnomusicology Archive. There are a series of letters that describe Mariachi Uclatlán's activities and personnel from 1961 through 1965.

[77] A simple Google search will yield various newspaper and magazine articles that print the wrong year of the group's founding and credit its founding to the wrong person.

Figure 6.1: Photo of Donald Borcherdt circa 1960s. UCLA Ethnomusicology Archive, Donn Borcherdt Collection 1966.01. Used with permission.

Donald R. Borcherdt, known as "Donn" by his friends and colleagues, received his BA from UCLA in Music in 1956. He earned his M.A. in Music in 1962, and by 1966 had advanced to doctoral candidacy in music with a specialization in ethnomusicology.[78] Figure 6.1 shows Borcherdt in his *traje de charro* playing a *guitarrón.* After advancing to candidacy, he embarked on a final fieldwork trip to continue his studies on mariachi music in Jalisco and Michoacán, where he died unexpectedly. Famed mariachi instrument maker Roberto Morales could not remember the exact year Borcherdt died, either 1968 or 1969, but recalled that Borcherdt died of food poisoning in Guadalajara. Borcherdt had first met Morales's father, Abundio Morales, in 1958, and began to study the *arpa jalisciense* with him According to Roberto, Borcherdt was a talented musician

[78] Before his untimely death, Borcherdt deposited his fieldwork recordings, papers, letters, notes and an outline of his dissertation in the UCLA Ethnomusicology Archive in 1966. Included with his dissertation outline is a copy of his CV, which is the source of this information.

and his dedication to learning the mariachi harp style was evident in the six to eight hours he would spend a day practicing. [79]

As a graduate student Borcherdt carried out fieldwork with the Los Angeles Armenian community, and even went to Chile to conduct field research. Even with his diverse interests, he focused the majority of his research on Mexican music, specifically mariachi music in Jalisco and Michoacán.

From 2004 to 2011, I spent time in the UCLA Ethnomusicology Archive examining the Borcherdt collection. Before leaving for his final fieldwork trip in 1966, he deposited all of his materials in the Ethnomusicology Archive. The collection consists of pictures and recordings taken in the field from 1958 to 1966, in addition to his personal papers and notes. The collection, with the exception of his field recordings, remains largely unprocessed. I had first heard of Borcherdt while I was an undergraduate after having read an article that referenced him as the director of UCLA's first mariachi group. Because he died before finishing his dissertation or publishing any works he is only ever mentioned as the founder of the very first mariachi class. After listening to his field recordings and reading his notes and correspondence, it is clear that had he lived to finish his dissertation, it would have been a seminal work within the field. Housed in a shoebox are close to 2,000 index cards filled with the outline of his dissertation, complete with transcriptions. If the collection were to be processed and made readily available to researchers, it would prove to be an invaluable resource.

[79] Personal interview, October 22, 2005.

In 2005, I was contacted by my good friend William "Bill" Faulkner, who teaches mariachi harp and courses on Mexican and Hawaiian music at Hartnell College in Salinas, CA. He asked me if I knew about the Borcherdt collection, and if I had heard any recordings of Abundio Morales playing the harp. At the time, I was unfamiliar with Abundio Morales and did not make the connection between Abundio and Roberto Morales. Faulkner, a close friend of the Morales family, had promised Roberto years earlier to try to find out what had happened to the recordings he remembered a young student from UCLA had made of his father in 1962. Faulkner discovered the newly available Borcherdt finding aid online, and found Abundio's name listed. Knowing I was as student at UCLA, he called me to see if I could get copies of the recordings. Since I was already planning a trip to Guadalajara to attend the mariachi festival, I made arrangements with John Vallier, the ethnomusicology archivist at the time, to have copies of the recordings made in order to repatriate them to the family. Roberto, his son, Ruben, and grandson, Ruben Jr., had no recordings of Abundio playing the harp. Roberto was able to give me additional information concerning the songs, and informed me that his uncle Secundino, playing the *guitarra de golpe*, had accompanied Abundio on several of the recordings. The family was elated to have these recordings but also shocked when I told them that they were being housed in a library and available for researchers to study. Roberto told me that his father and uncle were unaware that Borcherdt had recorded them the entire time they were making music (about four to five hours). They treated the session as a party, while Borcherdt provided the alcohol. If they had known that their

performance would be housed in an archive at a prestigious university such as UCLA, they would have practiced and prepared for the recording [80]

The recordings, which include "La Negra" and "El Sinaloense," while familiar, are quite different from the versions that are popular today. Through careful examination of Borcherdt's notes, I found a few references to repertoire items that were later learned in the Uclatlán study group and were directly related to these recordings.

In the fall of 1961, Borcherdt established the Conjunto Uclatlán as a study group for Mexican music. The goal of the program was to provide students with the opportunity to perform Mexican music, particularly the genres of *son huasteco, son jarocho* and mariachi. Through a careful study of both field and commercial recordings, the group tried to recreate what they heard. In this context, it is important to point out that the motivation of this particular group was solely to study musical form and performance practice. Throughout his notes, Borcherdt meticulously analyzes the musical structures of the pieces he is examining, and actually learned to play what he had recorded in the field. Social empowerment and civic engagement were not primary goals of this first academic mariachi class.

Early Uclatlán membership consisted of professors, students, and interested community members. The majority of those who participated were not of Mexican or Latino heritage. Nestled within a stack of papers dating from 1964, an undated page shows a list of Uclatlán members. It is likely that this list represents the group's membership in 1964; it includes Lawrence Saunders, Donn Borcherdt, Richard Toral,

[80] Personal interview, October 22, 2005.

Russell Kidd, Hardja Susilo, Timothy Fox Harding, Martin Diskin, Linda Stell, Suenobu Togi and Jim Koetting as members. The following year, Borcherdt wrote down the following list of members who participated in Spring, 1965: David B. Kilpatrick, Robert Saxe, Gordon C. Thomasson, and Arthur Gerst. By 1965, Uclatlán had established itself as a performance-ready group and were being asked to perform regularly. Many of the performance requests were being made by other educators who had heard the group perform at UCLA. Eventually word-of-mouth endorsement publicized the group amongst various academic venues. Important for understanding how the group existed prior to becoming well known in the 1970s is a letter Borcherdt wrote (figure 6.2) that includes promotional material for the group:

April 29, 1965
Dean Hector Lee
Sonoma State College
Rohnert Park, California

Dear Dean Lee:
Here is the publicity information which you requested. I will make an attempt to get you a photograph within a week, but it may be difficult as I will have to have one made. If it comes, it will be "gravy." I also wish to confirm the dates of August 1-4 as per our telephone conversation.
Sincerely yours,
Donn Borcherdt

The Conjunto Uclatlán was organized in the Fall of 1961 as a study group in Mexican music at the Institute of Ethnomusicology, University of Los Angeles. Since that time it has performed throughout California. Notable among its appearances have been the four International Festivals of Music and Dance of the Institute, the second annual UCLA Festival with the dancers of the University of Guadalajara and a tour of the Southland and San Francisco with dancers from the University of Guadalajara. In addition, they have performed on several occasions, both in demonstration and concert, for the California Folklore Society and for the Latin American Conference given at UCLA in the summer of 1964.

The group is comprised of five persons, under the directions of Donn Borcherdt and Lawrence Saunders.

Donn Borcherdt has done research in Mexico with four extended trips to various regions of Mexico. He has performed in Guadalajara and presented a colloquium for the students of the University of Guadalajara on the regional music and dance of Jalisco.

Lawrence Saunders is a student in Ethnomusicology at the University of California, and is the Acting Assistant Director and arranger of the ensemble. He is proficient in various regional violin, guitar, and vocal styles of Mexican traditional music and has done extensive research in each of these areas.

Linda Stell is the featured singer with the ensemble. She performs the music of the ranchera tradition and has studied in Mexico City. At present she is a teacher in the Los Angeles area.

Arthur Gerst is a graduate student in Sociology at the University of California and is a guitarist and a harpist with the ensemble. The diatonic harp style of the region of Veracruz at which he is adept has its root in the diatonic harp music of the 16th century and in Andalucian folk music.

Robert Saxe is a student in Zoology and a performer of the violin and the regional guitar from northeastern Mexico.

The ensemble performs authentic traditional music from the three major musical regions of Mexico, with traditional instruments and costumes.

Figure 6.2: Unpublished letter written by Borcherdt, 1965. UCLA Ethnomusicology Archive, Donn Borcherdt Collection 1966.01. Used with permission.

In Borcherdt's supplied publicity materials he refers to the ensemble as Conjunto Uclatlán. While the term *conjunto* is often used in describing Tex-Mex and Mexican *norteño* ensembles, it is also a generic term that can be used to describe any kind of ensemble. Since Uclatlán focused on three Mexican genres, the use of the term *conjunto* is appropriate. In his other correspondence, it is clear that when the group was asked to only play mariachi, they called themselves Mariachi Uclatlán. Although all correspondence ends with the date the materials were deposited in the archive in 1966, it is evident that the ensemble was sought after for educational events, festivals, and other performances throughout California.

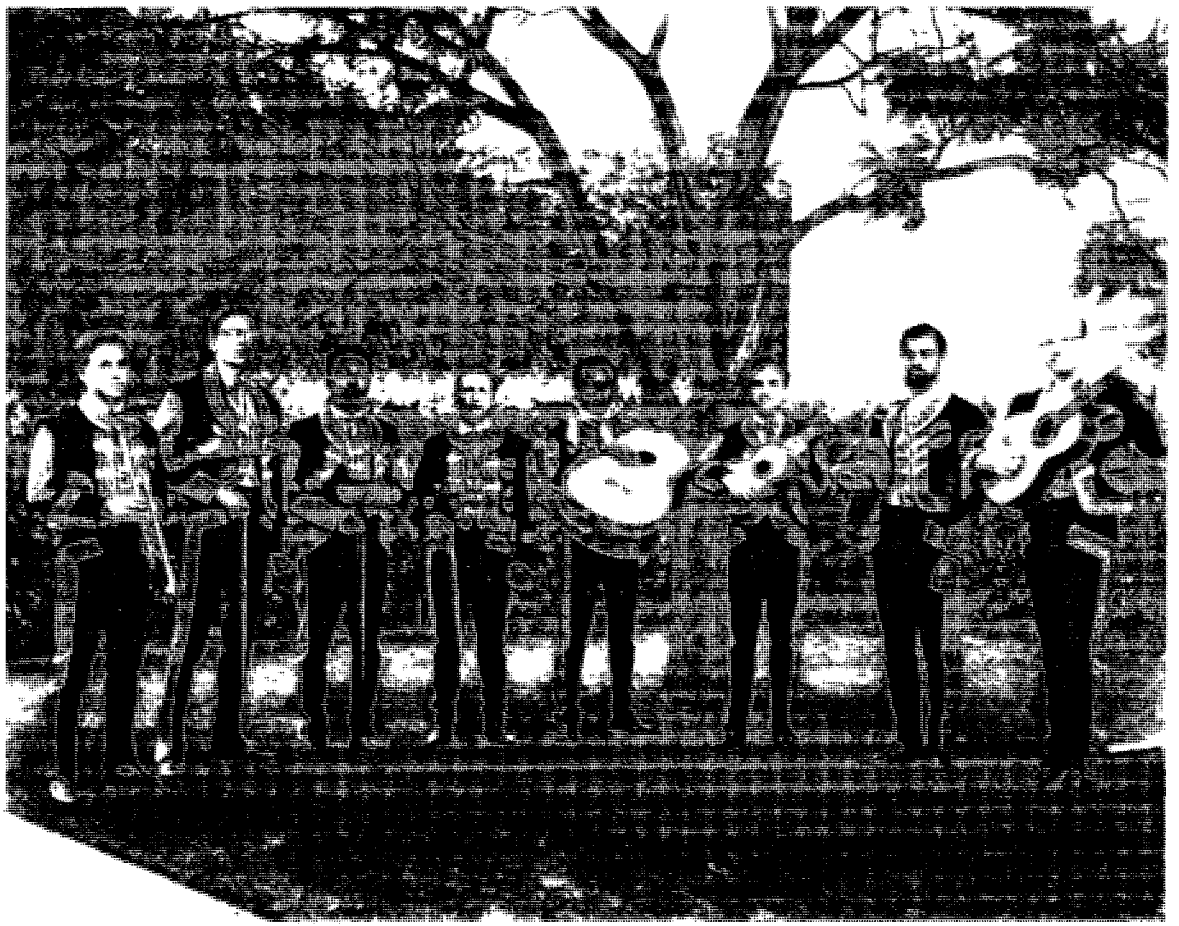

Figure 6.3: Photo of Mariachi Uclatlán (1963). UCLA Ethnomusicology Archive, Donn Borcherdt Collection 1966.01. Used with permission.

Many of the participants in the ensemble during the 1960s went on to have successful careers as professors and professional musicians. Suenobu Togi, a master gagaku musician, taught gagaku at UCLA from 1961-1993, and played the violin in the ensemble. Hardja Susilo was a practicing musician and dancer in the Javanese gamelan tradition who received his M.A. in Music through the Institute of Ethnomusicology in 1967, and played the *guitarrón*. He went on to teach gamelan in the music department at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. Timothy Harding first heard of the Mexican music study group in 1962, while he was teaching at UCLA's School of Education. Playing the

vihuela and harp, Harding continued to play with the group after 1963 when he secured a job at California State University, Los Angeles as a professor of Latin American History (Harding/Sonnichen Interview 1999).[81] By 1964, Harding established a mariachi ensemble at Cal State L.A. called Mariachi Calistatlán. James Koetting earned his M.A. in 1970 and his Ph.D. in 1980 at UCLA, playing with Uclatlán for six years before becoming a member of the faculty at Brown University from 1975-1984. Although the music of Ghana was his main research focus, Koetting did write a frequently cited article on the *son jalisciense* (Koetting 1977). David Kilpatrick received his doctorate in 1975 and taught as a professor of ethnomusicology at the University of California, Santa Cruz. His Mexican music ensemble directly influenced his then-student Laura Sobrino, who participated in his classes as an undergraduate.[82]

Figure 6.4: Lauryn Salazar and Laura Sobrino. Photo Diana Verdugo. Used with Permission.

[81] Sonnichen, Phillip and Timothy Harding. 1999. Unpublished interview transcript with Timothy Harding.
[82] Personal interview with Laura Sobrino, February 7, 2004.

Sobrino is known as a pioneering female mariachi musician who started playing professionally in the 1970s. Figure 6.4 was taken of both of us at the 2000 mariachi festival in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Currently the musical director for Mariachi Mujer 2000, she is also a well-respected mariachi educator who also teaches the mariachi ensemble at University of California, Riverside and taught mariachi for UCLA's World Music Summer Institute in 2009. When asked when and how she got her start as a mariachi musician, she always talks about the influence Kilpatrick's classes at UCSC had on her, and how she participated in all of his courses pertaining to Mexican music.

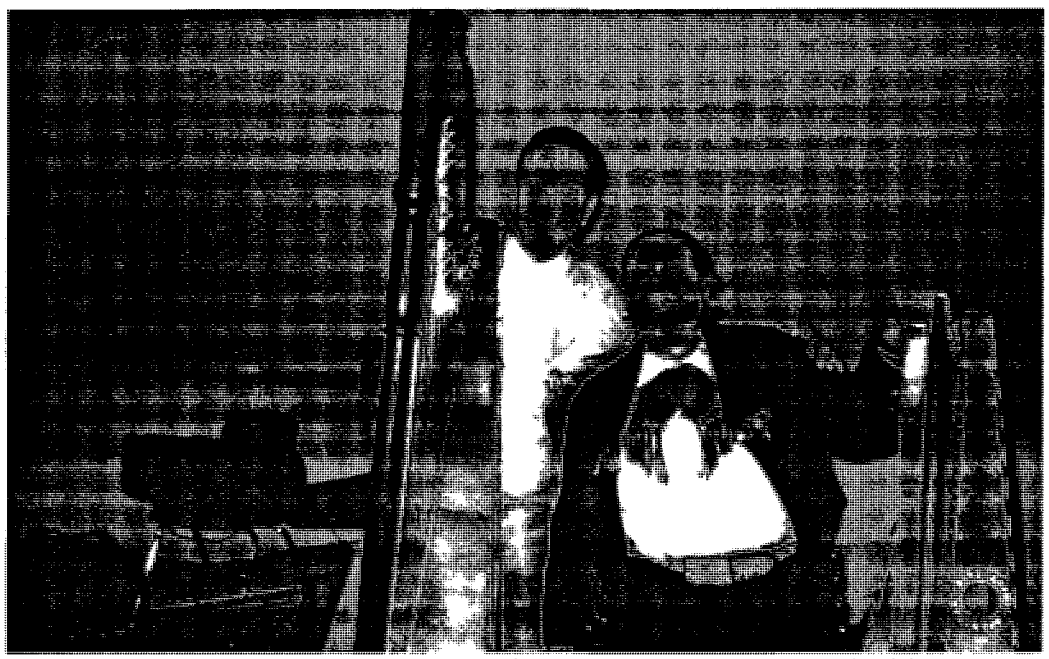

Figure 6.5: Arthur Gerst and Lauryn Salazar. Photo Diana Verdugo. Used with permission.

Another notable student from this period is Arthur Gerst, who went on to play the harp professionally with Mariachi Los Camperos and most recently with Sol de Mexico, until his retirement in 2008. In this capacity he taught several harp workshops at multiple

mariachi festivals.[83] Figure 6.5 was taken of both of us at the 2005 Chula Vista Mariachi Festival. He currently teaches harp lessons at Plaza de La Raza in Lincoln Heights in Los Angeles.[84]

Figure 6.6: Photo of Jesús Sánchez circa 1970s. UCLA Ethnomusicology Archive, Donn Borcherdt Collection 1966.01. Used with permission.

Although not listed as an official lecturer until 1968, mariachi musician Jesús Sánchez began coaching Mariachi Uclatlán around 1963 or 1964 (Harding/Sonnichen Interview 1999).[85] During this time he received a stipend as a native informant, and

[83] Although I have never formally interviewed Gerst, I studied privately with him for four years. I came to learn a lot about his career and his participation as a member of Uclatlán throughout our numerous informal conversations.
[84] Through Plaza de La Raza's music program, I was able to take private lessons with him from 2006-2009.
[85] Timothy Harding e-mailed me a transcript of an interview Phillip Sonnichen had conducted on him in 1999.

continued teaching at UCLA until 1975. Figure 6.6 shows Sánchez holding his violin. According to Gerst, Sánchez taught by rote and made a point to work with each individual musician throughout their rehearsals. In 1964, Harding brought Sánchez to Cal State L.A. to coach Mariachi Calistatlán. Sánchez, also known as Don Chuy, began teaching in various high schools throughout Los Angeles throughout the 1970s (Perez, 2002: 151). Jésus Sánchez passed away in 1982 (ibid.:152).

By the 1970s, notable graduate students Lawrence Saunders, Mark Fogelquist, and Daniel Sheehy, all Uclatlán members and at various times the group's leader, each wrote seminal theses or dissertations on mariachi, son huasteco and son jarocho. Mark Fogelquist's "Rhythm and Form in the Contemporary Son Jalisciense" (M.A. thesis, 1975]; Lawrence Saunder's "The Son Huasteco: A Historical, Social, and Analytical Study" (M.A. thesis, 1976); and Daniel Sheehy's "The Son Jarocho: The History, Style, and Repertory of a Changing Musical Tradition" (Ph.D. dissertation, 1979) are still amongst the first academic writings in English on these topics and are frequently cited.

Figure 6.7: Mariachi Nuevo Uclatlán mid-1970s. Photo from the collection of Daniel Sheehy. Used with permission.

As Uclatlán gained popularity, it became an economically sustainable, fully-functioning mariachi group. Eventually, Mariachi Uclatlán became a professional mariachi group in the mid-1970s, and Fogelquist began to audition non-UCLA students. By the 1980s, most of the original UCLA students were no longer in the group. In 1976, Mariachi Nuevo Uclatlán (pictured in figure 6.7) was formed under the direction of Sheehy. He led the group until 1978, when anthropology doctoral student Steven Pearlman assumed leadership. Pearlman went on to guide the ensemble for the next ten years. His 1988 dissertation, entitled "Mariachi Music in Los Angeles" provides an in-

depth case study of the mariachi tradition in Southern California. Unfortunately, I have never been able to contact Pearlman for an interview. I have met many mariachis at Boyle Heights who remember him, but none know how to contact him. Additionally, the Ethnomusicology Archive has little useful information concerning the mariachi program in the 1980s.

Figure 6.8: Photo of Mariachi Uclatlán (1971). UCLA Ethnomusicology Archive, Donn Borcherdt Collection 1966.01. Used with permission.

While Mariachi Nuevo Uclatlán remained affiliated with UCLA as a student study group, Mariachi Uclatlán, under the direction of Mark Fogelquist, thrived as a successful professional mariachi. Figure 6.8 shows Mariachi Uclatlán in the early 1970s. The group shows an equal mix of both UCLA and non-UCLA students. In 1981, Fogelquist opened a restaurant named El Mariachi in Orange, CA. During this time, Mariachi Uclatlán recorded albums, accompanied famous singers, and even appeared in

movies. Finally, in 1993, Mariachi Uclatlán disbanded, and Fogelquist moved to Wenatchee, Washington to teach bilingual education.[86] Fogelquist has become a leading authority in mariachi education programs. After successfully establishing a mariachi program in the Wenatchee Washington school system from 1993 to 2000, he was hired in 2001 as an instructor in California's Sweetwater School District mariachi program. Since then Folgelquist has served as member of the MENC national advisory board for mariachi music education, and under his direction the student group Mariachi Chula Vista has won numerous awards at various mariachi competitions in California and the southwestern United States (Dannheisser 2009).

Daniel Sheehy has written numerous articles, and his book *Mariachi Music in America* (2006), one of the few sources that provides an accessible, informative case study of mariachi music, is used in classrooms across the nation. He is currently the acting director of the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage.

[86] Personal interview, July 16, 2003.

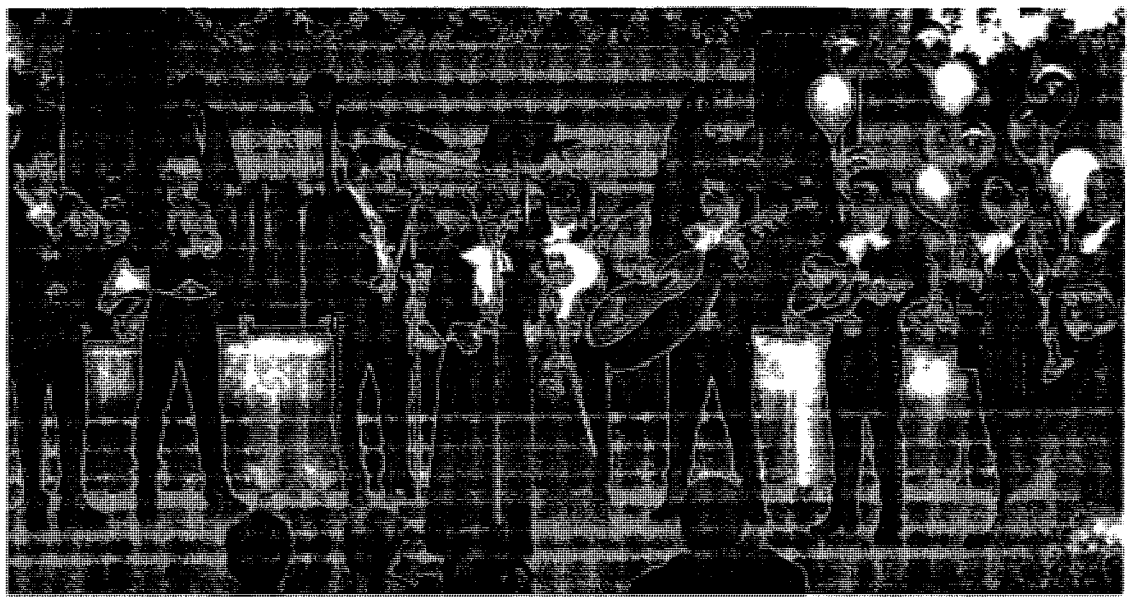

Figure 6.9: Mariachi UCLA, circa 1995. From the Collection of Sergio Alonso. Used with permission.

In 1989, UCLA hired two prominent mariachi musicians to teach the mariachi class—Nati Cano, the director of Mariachi Los Camperos, and Juan Manuel Cortez, who had served as the musical director for Mariachi Uclatlán when it was performing at El Mariachi restaurant. During the 1990s, various members of Mariachi Los Camperos helped to teach the class, including Juan Morales, Juan Jose Almaguer, and Jesús "Chuy" Guzmán.[87] Figure 6.9 is a photo taken of advanced mariachi students from the 1990s who performed regularly for a variety of events both on and off campus. Among the notable ethnomusicology students who have become fixtures in the mariachi community are Sarah Truher Carpenter, who is now a music teacher with the Los Angeles Unified School District; Susie Garcia, who played with the Grammy-winning Mariachi Divas and directs her own Latin fusion band; Judith Kamel, a current member of the well-respected

[87] Juan Morales teaches mariachi classes in Delano, CA and Juan Jose Almaguer directs his own group, Mariachi Monumental de America. They have both have given me brief accounts of their experiences teaching the class in the 1990s.

Mariachi Reyna de Los Angeles; and Sergio Alonso, the current harpist for the Grammy-winning Mariachi Los Camperos and renowned mariachi instructor in the San Fernando area.

Mariachi de Uclatlán - New Generation

Figure 6.10: Mariachi de Uclatlán 2008. Photo by Romeo Guzmán. Used with permission.

In 2000, Jesús "Chuy" Guzmán became the official instructor for the Music of Mexico class, which focuses specifically on mariachi music. When I first started as Guzmán's teaching assistant in 2002, the class had close to ninety students enrolled, a fact that presented several challenges. Some students treated the class as a social hour, while others sat in the back of the class and worked on their homework. The remaining twenty-

five serious students sat in the first two rows of the classroom, brought their own instruments, and carefully listened to everything the instructor had to say. In addition to behavioral issues, the only syllabus on file was inadequate to meet the needs of such a large class. With Guzmán's approval, a comprehensive syllabus that stated the goals and expectations of the class was written. The following year we initiated a policy according to which all students were required to bring their own instrument. While enrollment diminished by half, the behavioral problems of the previous year were eliminated, since only those students interested in the material enrolled. Beginning students with no prior experience were required to bring guitars, and Guzmán focused the first hour of class on basic guitar skills.

While the majority of the students enrolling in course were beginners, a handful of more advanced musicians expressed the desire to learn more challenging repertoire. It became clear that the needs of advanced mariachi student musicians were not being adequately met, and in the fall of 2006, an exciting opportunity presented itself. Advanced mariachi students, representing each of the necessary instruments, enrolled in the Music of Mexico class. My colleague and fellow graduate student Leticia Soto and I realized the significance of this opportunity, and decided we would establish a performance-ready mariachi. We recruited music education major Mary Alfaro as an additional student leader and registered Mariachi de Uclatlán as a student group.[88] Soto

[88] We originally tried to register under the name Mariachi Uclatlán, since we felt it was important to honor that legacy. Unfortunately, university policies mandated that no student group/club could have any part of U.C.L.A. as their name. While we were unable to successfully argue that we could keep Mariachi Uclatlán due to historical significance, we were able to modify the name by adding "de" to signify that were are the mariachi "from" UCLA. For whatever reason this distinction was allowed, and we were pleased that we

and Alfaro led our musical rehearsals, while I focused on the administration of the group. Both Soto and Alfaro had professional mariachi performance experience. Soto, having played professionally for twenty years, was a member of Mariachi Las Adelitas, a well-known female mariachi group, and most recently was the only female member of Mariachi Monumental de America. Alfaro, a product of San Fernando's Mariachi apprentice program, a group led and directed by Nati Cano and members of Mariachi Los Camperos including Sergio Alonso and Jesús Guzmán, had also performed professionally with various groups. To support our endeavor, Guzmán generously gave us permission to use his arrangements, and even coached our rehearsals, which took place twice a month. The photo depicted in figure 6.10 was taken after a 2008 performance at the Los Angeles Mexican consulate. Many of the members pictured were part of the original group from 2006.

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would be able to use Uclatlán as our official name. This current incarnation of the group is called Mariachi de Uclatlán.

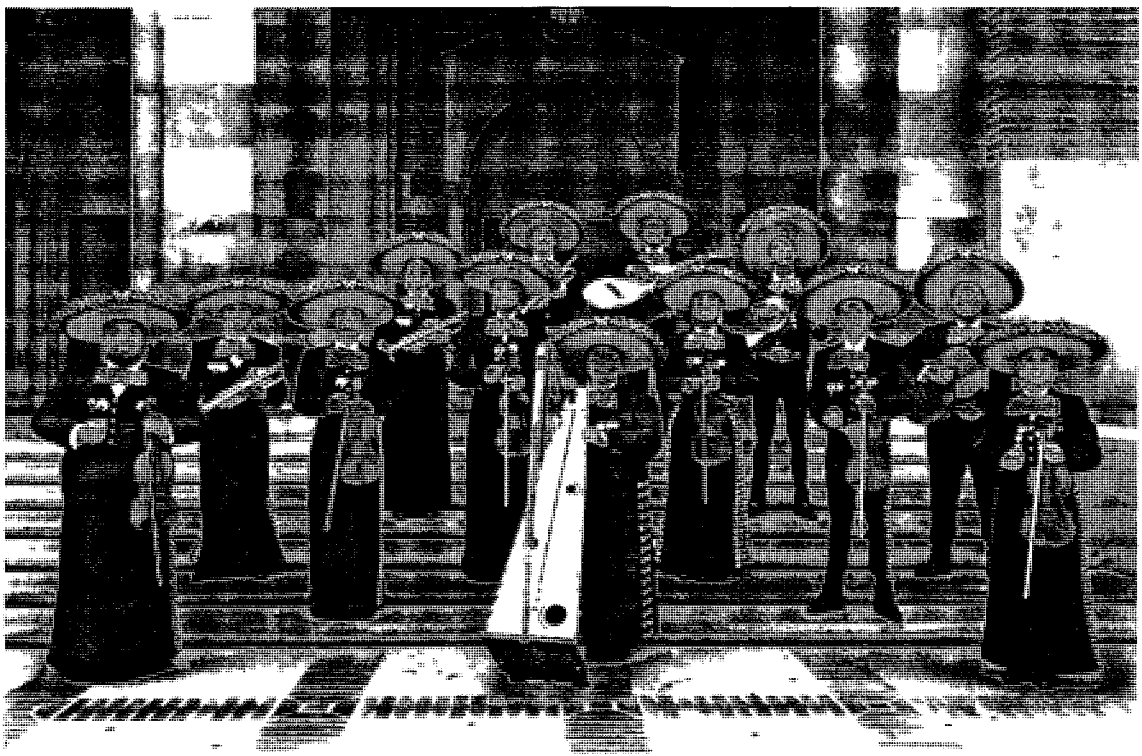

Figure 6.11: Mariachi de Uclatlán 2010. Photo by Romeo Guzmán. Used with permission.

In 2010, it became clear that if we were going to become a professional mariachi, the group needed to be restructured. Under new leadership, undergraduates Miguel Pasillas and Jazmin Morales and fellow graduate student Jessie Vallejo and I shared the leadership and management duties of the group. Rehearsals take place twice a week for a total of six hours, and Guzmán continues to coach the group once a week. Through these sessions we have been able to learn and perform more challenging repertoire, and we are working towards participating in some of the more rigorous mariachi competitions in 2011. Figure 6.11 shows the most recent membership of the group.

Education

Newly released census results from 2010 have confirmed a trend that has been developing in the United States for the last thirty years. Latinos are among the youngest and fastest growing ethnic groups in the country. The census results also show that the Latino population is growing in cities in the Midwest and Southern United States (Census 2010). However, as the population continues to increase, and despite thirty years of educational reforms, Latino students continue to lag behind other groups. Due to low expectations, poverty, and possible language barriers, Latinos, particularly Mexican-Americans, are plagued with low academic achievement and high high-school dropout rates (Torres and de la Torre 1997:100). The American education system has historically served to Americanize foreign peoples. Schools were used to "civilize" Native Americans through the 1819 Civilization Act and by 1879 a major boarding school movement in which Native American children were removed from their families and sent to boarding schools designed to take away their language and culture were common (Spring 2004:20). While Native Americans were being sent to boarding schools, African-American and Mexican-American children were being sent to segregated schools that were inferior to the schools Anglo-Americans attended. By the early twentieth century the government no longer sent Native American children away from their families, and like other minorities, they too attended segregated "day" schools. In California, Anglo-American law makers attempting to thwart any efforts by the Mexican-American community for equal schooling concluded in 1927 that Mexicans could be treated as Indians and continue to be sent to segregated schools. Attorney General Webb stated that

"It is a well known fact that the greater portion of the population of Mexico are Indians and were such Indians to migrate to the United States, they are subject to the laws applicable generally to other Indians" (Valencia, Menchaca, and Donato 2002: 86). The landmark Supreme Court case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* in 1954 ruled that segregation based on race was unconstitutional. Earlier cases such as *Méndez v. Westminister* (1946, 1947) which made the segregation of Mexican children illegal in California, helped to pave the way for the Brown case. The actual process of desegregation has been complex and difficult, and according to some education scholars has yet to be fully realized (ibid.:89). Using race, language and biased IQ testing have all been methods to segregate and marginalize Chicanos in public education (ibid.:86).

The need for programs that can boost academic achievement in this demographic is especially crucial considering the growth of the population. It is in this context that mariachi education programs are seen as an alternative, albeit non-traditional, form of retention. However, the process of incorporating mariachi into the academic setting is inherently problematic due to the fact that the music has been historically associated with negative machismo stereotypes such as drunkenness and womanizing. However, in the United States, mariachi music is going through a process of legitimization directly associated with its inclusion into the academy. In his book *The Field of Cultural Production*, Pierre Bourdieu makes the distinction between the field of restricted production, i.e., "high" art, and the field of large-scale production, i.e., "middle-brow" art (Bourdieu 1993:15). Academic institutions have the ability to bestow legitimacy through a process of "consecration." According to him, "[The] educational system, claiming a

monopoly over the consecration of works of the past and over the production and consecration (through diplomas) of cultural consumers, only posthumously accords that infallible mark of consecration, the elevation of works into 'classics' by their inclusion in curricula." He goes on to say that "it is impossible to understand the peculiar characteristics of restricted culture without appreciating its profound dependence on the educational system, the indispensable means of its reproduction and growth. Among the transformations which occur, the quasi-systematization and theorizing imposed on the inculcated content are rather less evident than their concomitant effects, such as 'routinization' and 'neutralization' " (ibid.:123). In an American context, Joan Shelley Rubin's discussion on middlebrow culture is also relevant. In her book *The Making of Middlebrow Culture*, she defends middlebrow culture as she sees it as a means of improving the quality of life for Americans. With an emphasis on self-improvement through education, both informal and formal, middlebrow culture is about access to knowledge and culture (Rubin 1992:xi). Through the creation of virtuosic highly professional show groups, the learning of sophisticated arrangements through the use of sheet music, and the recent trend of playing with symphony orchestras, mariachi music has elevated itself from a "lowbrow" art form. It is evident that mariachi is already going through a process of transformation, and its acceptance into widespread music programs will further validate it as "middlebrow" art within mainstream culture. Within this context, mariachi music represents a positive aspect of Mexican and Mexican-American culture.[89]

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[89] While "middlebrow" for some has a negative connotation, I agree with Rubin and view middlebrow

At this point in time, mariachi's entrance into the academy is still in the process of defining itself. Unlike jazz education programs that exist in many, if not most, music programs across the nation, mariachi is still struggling for wide-spread recognition as a legitimate genre to be studied. However, as successful programs emerge, the academy will "consecrate" the genre by bestowing on it with the legitimacy necessary to gain wide spread acceptance as a worthy art form within the context of an academic institution. While the main argument of my dissertation is that of mariachi as an American genre, and I challenge the notion of a cultural border between the United States and Mexico, mariachi is still viewed as a foreign import. Yet, the process of legitimization through academic institutions is changing the mariachi tradition.

Traditionally, mariachi has been passed down by family members or through apprenticeships with individual mariachis and groups. The music was learned by ear from other musicians or by listening to and copying the style heard in recordings. In contrast, academic institutions favor standard pedagogies and curriculums. Gaining superior technical skills through the learning and practicing of set drills and exercises is a common method of learning. The issues being faced by mariachi educators today is that there is no prevailing method or approach to teaching and learning mariachi music. Many of these issues are not unique to mariachi education. Music educators across the nation are also struggling with ways in which to incorporate multicultural musics into their classrooms. In her article, "Ethnomusicology and Music Education: Crossroads for knowing music, education, and culture," Patricia Campbell argues that both music

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culture in a positive way.

education and ethnomusicological theory and methods should be incorporated to provide the best resources possible (Campbell 2003:21). In her opinion, the more schools integrate multicultural musics into their music education curriculums, the more it is necessary that music educators and ethnomusicologists collaborate (ibid.:17). Campbell, while discussing the influence of both fields on one another, does not discuss the impact that music education programs can have on the musical tradition being taught in a school setting. It is highly likely that the creation of mariachi curricula and pedagogy will probably lead to the standardization and codification of the repertoire and performance practice within mariachi education programs. The students produced by these programs will no doubt develop their own student mariachi culture, which will most likely favor the method in which they were taught. Many of the violin, trumpet, and guitar students I have met at mariachi festivals are encouraged to study classical music on their instrument, specifically with the aim of improving their technique. However, in watching Jesús Guzmán play over the years, it is obvious that he has developed his own virtuosic technique independent of a classical approach. For example, his bowing technique would make most classical violin teachers cringe, as he does not hold his bow at the frog and tends to place all of the hair on the string while putting a lot of weight on the bow to achieve a heavy and sometimes "scratchy" sound. However, his technique allows him to capture the style of the genre, and "style" is something that cannot be communicated through sheet music.

Jazz

Many of the issues currently facing academic mariachi programs parallel those central in the development of academic jazz programs. In his book *Is Jazz Dead? (Or Has It Moved To A New Address)*(2005), the fifth chapter, entitled "Teachers Teaching Teachers: Jazz Education," Stuart Nicholson explores the impact of jazz studies on the jazz tradition over a thirty-year period. To briefly summarize, jazz education has turned into a profitable business and many academic institutions that have music programs at the high school and university levels offer courses in jazz performance. One of the first universities to offer a college jazz degree, the University of North Texas (UNT) initiated its program in 1947 (Larson 2002:203).[90] On UNT's jazz studies website they write that, "From one teacher, a handful of students, and almost no printed music, the division of jazz studies at North Texas has grown into a program which includes small groups, vocal jazz, and many special kinds of performing ensembles."[91] Nicholson begins his chapter with a quote by Bill Kirchner, a saxophonist, educator, and jazz historian: "Jazz education has taken the place of the jazz-apprenticeship system that has largely disappeared because of economics, changing times, and the deaths of the Miles Davises, Woody Hermans, and Art Blakeys of the jazz world who, with many others, gave valuable professional experience and seasoning to countless young musicians" (Nicholson 2005: 99). According to Nicholson, jazz education programs have produced musicians who have good technique but fail to capture the spirit of jazz. As jazz

[90] The University of North Texas (UNT) used to be known as North Texas State (Larson 2002:204).
[91] http://jazz.unt.edu/node/119

education programs proliferated in the 1950s, mastery of bebop style became the standard to the exclusion of other jazz forms such as cool, free and fusion. Individuality of playing style has been sacrificed in favor of adherence to particular methods (ibid.:115). He finds it problematic that "[Experienced] professional jazz musicians are far outnumbered by the countless graduates who have entered academia, sometimes with a minimal amount of professional experience. In practice, large numbers of graduates are taught by educators who themselves have come through the jazz education system, many of whom have little or no experience as professional jazz musicians and for whom the "jazz life" of paying dues in the hope that modest success might eventually come their way is more abstract notion than lifestyle choice (ibid.:116). He ends his chapter with the sentiment that, "In America, the social forces that helped shape jazz, as in the past have largely been replaced by jazz education" (ibid.:127).

Nicholson argues that, by favoring a curriculum that favors one particular style and the lack of influential apprenticeship opportunities, many jazz education programs cease to fully educate their students. While he does not believe that jazz is dead, I have heard other jazz fans and aficionados proclaim that among other things, education programs have effectively stagnated and killed the art form. When I was an undergraduate, the death of jazz was a common topic of conversation in the music department as some of the students wanted to learn other jazz styles while the instructors insisted on adhering to the set curriculum.

During my short "apprenticeship" on the street corner of First and Boyle, some of the mariachis I got to know over a seven-month period, held negative views of the

mariachi education programs. Some resented the competition coming from student groups that were not financially dependent on performing, as the students would charge significantly lower rates. In 2008, the standard pay was $50 an hour, meaning that a six-member mariachi would charge at least $300 per hour. As I waited on the corner sometimes for five to six hours, I conversed with as many of the mariachis as I could. A few of the older musicians were of the opinion that sheet music has no soul, and therefore no place in mariachi music. As a classically trained musician, I am a very good sight-reader; however, learning by ear is extremely difficult for me. It is generally easier for me to transcribe what I hear first and then play it. While the technical skills of some of these older musicians varied widely, their knowledge of the vast repertoire was impressive. Other mariachis I encountered felt validated by the fact that mariachi being taught in schools, as some of them had faced prejudice and discrimination as mariachis in Mexico. On a few occasions I did hear some mariachis discussing the possibility that mariachi education programs would be the death of the mariachi tradition.

Program Development

In 2006, The National Association for Music Education (MENC) established its mariachi advisory committee. MENC recognized the need for resources and materials for mariachi educators. Their book *Foundations of Mariachi Education* (2008), edited by William Gradante, provides materials and resources to help fill the void of what is available. In his foreword, Daniel Sheehy states, "The expansion of mariachi education outpaced the ability of the system to accommodate the demand and to keep the quality of

instruction high. Well-intended school administrators mandated ill-prepared music instructors to teach mariachi music. Music scores and instructional guides were either nonexistent or of varying quality" (Sheehy 2008:vii). Each chapter discusses an important aspect in creating a mariachi program. Choosing appropriate repertoire, tuning instruments, and practical advice for each individual instrument are among the wide variety of topics discussed. What is missing, however, from both the book and the website, is a concrete discussion of the quality of the materials that are represented. While providing one of the more comprehensive lists of existing material, the book does not present the resources in any critical way. While it is generally acknowledged that the quality of materials varies, none of the existing resources are ranked. This makes it difficult for someone who knows little of the tradition to make an informed choice as to which materials to use. Additionally, some of the ethical issues, such as impact on the tradition, are not discussed.

While MENC has taken a positive direction in terms of trying to provide resources to mariachi music educators, its model is in need of further development. Although, I served as a member of the advisory board from 2008 to 2010, my studies prevented me from fully participating in the development of new materials. At the one meeting I was able to attend, the discussion seemed mostly concerned with providing material for the online newsletter. As an influential and national organization, MENC could perhaps establish recommended guidelines for what quality resources should contain. MENC is a respected organization, and its inclusion of mariachi in its activities is a positive step in the mariachi education movement.

In chapter eleven, titled "Mariachi Education as a District Initiative: Development of the Clark County School District Program," Javier Trujillo and Marcia Neel discuss how they developed a comprehensive mariachi curriculum. I first met Trujillo in 2003 at the Tucson, AZ mariachi festival. As a former member of Mariachi Cobre, a renowned professional mariachi group originally from Tucson, AZ but with a permanent job at Florida's Disney Epcot Center, he was hired to create a mariachi program in Nevada. He was at the festival trying to recruit instructors for their newly formed program in Nevada. In a brief conversation he informed me that finding qualified instructors was proving difficult as Nevada required music education licenses. In the book chapter, this situation was handled by granting the mariachi instructors the business and industry (B&I) category of teacher licensing. In order to qualify, these teachers needed to have at least three years' successful performance experience in a professional mariachi ensemble (Trujillo and Neel 2008:160).

Another important aspect of this program was the creation of a standards-based curriculum. The Arts Standards, which were developed in the 1990s, provide school districts with a basic framework and structure for developing curricula that link instruction and assessment to what a student should learn in an arts program.[92] After examining the arts standards for both California and Nevada, it is clear that there are many similarities. It is also evident that while both documents do include units on multicultural musics, the majority of the standards are based on Western classical, band, and jazz. I cannot help but wonder if a standards-based mariachi program is an ideal

[92] More information about the Arts Standards can be found at MENC's website at: http://www.menc.org/resources/view/national-standards-for-music-education

model. While the standards clearly provide a model that promotes musical technical proficiency, and even include history and culture of musical traditions, one must ask if this is really a feasible program.

For example, some of the goals listed state that: (a) Students will gain an understanding of the historical development of mariachi music and (b) Students will explore and experiment with different musical styles and techniques to further their understanding of improvisation and musical interpretation, in addition to five other goals.[93] While a standards-based curriculum will no doubt appeal to school boards and other educators, I wonder if the creation of a mariachi curriculum developed in its own context on its own terms was ever discussed. The first two goals, while logical, are highly problematic. As academic scholarship pertaining to the mariachi tradition is sparse, the teaching of the historical development as stated implies that mariachi music developed in a specific way. Which history will be taught? Multiple developments have taken place throughout Mexico and United States. Will the "rural" developments in addition to the "urban" developments be discussed? How will issues of race, gender and stereotypes be handled in this context? The second goal, in which students will experiment with different musical styles and techniques, is also problematic. While certain stock musical formulas exist that help with the process of improvisation, learning the stylistic nuances take years of practice and study. How is this process to be distilled throughout the school year? This means an instructor will decide which stock formulas will be learned and how students will interpret them.

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[93] The Nevada Arts Standards can be found on the Nevada Department of Education website at: http://nde.doe.nv.gov/Standards_Arts.html

Additionally, in the *al talón* performing situation, the instrumentation is not always standardized. For example, only two violins, instead of the standard three, may be available, and there may or may not be two trumpets. Will a standards-based curriculum prepare students with how to change their melodic part in the face of different instrumentation? In most groups three violin parts are played and doubled if there are more violinists. In a situation where only two violins are present, the second violinist is required to combine the second and third parts to create a new part that will harmonize well with the first violin or melody. It is also not uncommon for violinists to cover trumpet parts and for the trumpets to cover violin parts depending on the performance situation. So, while a standards-based curriculum will prepare students to meet the goals of its own particular curriculum, it may not necessarily prepare the student to meet the expectations of the marketplace. Overall, Clark County School District's mariachi program is well-thought-out and organized and has no doubt become a model on which other programs will be based.

The Chula Vista, California, Sweetwater school district is fortunate to have Mark Fogelquist as the director of its Mariachi Chula Vista. After hearing them perform multiple times, it is my opinion that Fogelquist's group rivals some of the professional mariachi groups of Southern California. Due to his expertise, a few alumni of his program now play in professional mariachi groups. In the summer of 2010, two recent graduates of this program participated in UCLA's Summer World Music Institute, a week-long mariachi course. Both students lamented that there were so few colleges with rigorous mariachi programs. When one considers that mariachi education programs are

being used as a tool to boost high school retention and graduation rates, mariachi programs would do well to provide opportunities for college and graduate students as well.

In light of the issues surrounding teacher qualifications and credentials, it is clear that there is a growing demand for more universities to start offering comprehensive mariachi education programs. Degree programs that offer teacher certification opportunities would help meet the demand for qualified mariachi instructors.[94] The main problem, however, is the actual development of these programs. This is an opportunity in which a multidisciplinary approach in necessary. Ethnomusicologists, music educators, and professional mariachis working together will, in my opinion, help to create comprehensive programs.

Impact

Mariachi music plays a significant role within Mexican and Mexican-American culture. In areas with large Latino populations, mariachi music is an important part of many social events. Throughout the California and the Southwestern United States it is not uncommon for mariachis to be hired by non-Latinos, who associate the music with important celebrations like weddings and birthdays. Often the goals of education

[94] This problem is not unique in the United States and other countries that are incorporating multicultural musics in their music education programs are struggling with ways in which to hire teachers who may not have access to recognized qualifications. In her unpublished paper "Traditional music in public schools and other educational settings: examples from China, the United States, and Britain," Helen Rees explains that Indian classical music classes have become popular in many K-12 schools, and in the 1990s two music colleges instituted formal training in Indian music in order to help teachers recruited from the recent immigrant population to gain recognized teaching qualifications (Rees 2010:10).

programs are not synonymous with the expectations of the audience. In chapter 2, I discuss the importance of a mariachi group being able to play any song that is requested of them. Most Latino audiences expect this and take for granted the extensive knowledge a musician must have in order to perform under those circumstances. While there will always be a demand for live mariachi music in regions with large Latino populations, the question remains, will academic programs train students to perform in this type of setting? In the next thirty to forty years will the same types of mariachi apprenticeship opportunities still exist, or will it turn into a situation where those graduating from programs end up as teachers teaching teachers. Only time will tell.

I personally view mariachi education as a positive phenomenon. As the Latino populations continue to rise across the United States, any program that can aid in higher academic achievement while bolstering student self-esteem and keeping students connected with their culture should be nurtured (Census 2010). It is also my belief that it is possible to create curricula that will prepare students adequately while maintaining the essence of the mariachi tradition. This will no doubt require the development of an innovative approach or approaches to mariachi education. Due to the transnational popularity of mariachi music and the frequent travel of musicians to and from Mexico and the United States, it is unlikely that the art of improvisation or the *al talón* style of performing will disappear any time soon. We are witnessing first-hand the development of a new industry that is concerned with creating course materials and the publishing of mariachi scores. The decisions made today that prevail will have a significant impact on the way mariachi is taught in schools and on the mariachi tradition in general.

Chapter 7

Tag Ending

This conclusion summarizes the main points discussed throughout my dissertation. I prefer to call this section a "tag ending" rather than an outright conclusion, since like most "tag endings" that are used in mariachi music, there are many that can be used to signal the end of a song. Multiple endings are possible with many of the song forms, and which tag ending is used depends on the mood of the musicians. This particular "tag ending" represents the culmination of the issues I have encountered over a ten-year period. Several of these issues, especially those pertaining to mariachi education and the budding publishing industry, are relatively new, and it will take years before their effects on the tradition are known. My goal has been to identify them and discuss how they are currently affecting the mariachi tradition.

In chapter one, I argue that mariachi music, as a transnational genre, has become a legitimate American musical tradition. By introducing many of the issues that will be discussed in later chapters, I demonstrate that many important aspects impacting the tradition greatly, such as mariachi festivals, educational programs, and the publishing industry, are all American innovations that influence the tradition in Mexico as well. My second chapter focuses specifically on the mariachi tradition as a whole. Encompassing a vast repertoire, with some elements indigenous to the tradition while others are borrowed, the flexibility of mariachi music to incorporate and "mariachize" popular song forms has allowed the style to remain popular and meet the needs and expectations of its audience. Equally important are the distinctions between different types of mariachi ensembles.

Ranging from highly professional groups to short-term *al talón* freelance mariachi musicians, each type focuses on the varying needs of the market. By familiarizing the reader with a brief history of the tradition in Mexico, the basics of the economics involved, and finishing with an overview of the more popular song form, I give readers the essential context for the later chapters.

Chapters three through six focus on important aspects of the American mariachi tradition. In chapter three, through archival research, I am able to show that a rural tradition existed in California in the 19th century. Although the term mariachi was not specifically used to describe it, the *son jalisciense* song form and the basic instrumentation of violins, guitar and Mexican harp were popular throughout Alta California. The discovery of a *son jalisciense* "La Zorrita" recorded on a wax cylinder by Charles Fletcher Lummis in Los Angeles in 1904, predating the very first Mexican mariachi recordings of 1908, demonstrates the much longer history of this genre in the United States. By exploring this early history, I am able to challenge some of the false assumptions that persist concerning the history of mariachi music in the United States.

The remaining chapters, four through six, are all interconnected and highlight a web of issues surrounding each topic. Mariachi festivals, the publishing industry, and educational programs have become interdependent on one another, and the issues and challenges being met by one program affect the others. Chapter four deals with mariachi festivals that provide forums for students groups to interact with leading professionals through performance-based workshops. The older and larger festivals attract as many as one thousand mariachi workshop participants and often offer additional ballet folklórico

workshops for two hundred fifty to five hundred students. Providing invaluable networking opportunities, they also give mariachi instructors a chance to obtain quality music scores and other resources from leading professional mariachi groups. Additionally, it is not uncommon for instructors to give each other tips on teaching methods and information on where to obtain instruments, strings and the *traje de charro* (mariachi suit).

In many cases, festivals provide the best method for obtaining resources, or at least information on how to find the best available materials, as relatively few quality sources exist. They often serve as fundraisers for non-profit organizations, and festival organizers may or may not be knowledgeable about mariachi education or mariachi music in general. This has led to a situation where the actual quality of education given and the overall experience of student participants vary greatly from festival to festival. In addition to fundraising, festivals function to highlight mariachi music as a legitimate art form worthy of being studied, as well as creating a sense of community and pride in one's heritage.

For students, mariachi festivals offer a unique experience that many participants would not normally be able to access due to socio-economic factors. It is not uncommon for school programs to fundraise year-round so that their students can participate in a mariachi festival, and for some students it can be their first experience traveling on an airplane, staying at a hotel and in many cases being away from home for a few days. Additional student-centered activities such as student showcases and competitions provide important performance experiences in an organized professional setting. By

interacting with other students and professional mariachi musicians, students are given an opportunity to improve their own musicianship skills, and also learn they are a part of a much larger community that values what they will accomplish at the festival. In addition to building student self-esteem, as more school districts initiate mariachi programs, the fundraising aspect has not been lost on school officials, and currently more and more schools are organizing their own festivals.

As festivals and educational programs fuel the need for mariachi resources, namely sheet music, the mariachi publishing industry is a growing and expanding field. However, creating these materials is problematic due to the overall dearth of resources of any kind on mariachi music. In general, mariachi instructors must either make their own materials, buy them from the few resources that do exist, or engage in questionable sheet music exchanges online. Finding qualified individuals who can transcribe mariachi music accurately and can then translate that knowledge into the creation of pedagogic materials for use in school programs is highly problematic. Currently there are individual mariachis who sell their own transcriptions online, and there are even music educators who are creating method books as well, but the quality of these materials varies greatly. In general, the transcriptions made by mariachi musicians tend to serve as a general roadmap, and intimate knowledge of the mariachi tradition is necessary in order to fully utilize their transcriptions. Materials produced by non-mariachi musicians may or may not adequately portray some of the subtleties of playing style. At this point in time, beyond the general use of Western classical music notation, there is no standard way in which mariachi music is transcribed. Certain song forms, such as the *son jalisciense*, are

intrinsically difficult to write down due to the rhythmic alternation between 3/4 and 6/8 time. Depending on the preferences of the transcriber, there is great variation in how a song is represented.

In the last decade a number of established music publishers, such as Mel Bay Publications and Alfred Music Publishing, have begun to recruit scores from established mariachi musicians and educators. However, a common criticism is that "misunderstandings" take place, and as publishers "correct" aspects of the score, they render it something other than the song form it is supposed to represent. Additionally, some of these materials have been criticized for simplifying the music—in an attempt to make it accessible to a wider audience—to a point where it no longer sounds like mariachi music. Identifying and obtaining quality sheet music is a pervasive problem for most mariachi education programs. Avoiding this issue, mariachi festivals use sheet music provided by the professional mariachi ensemble who is headlining the final concert and also responsible for the music learned in the actual workshops. In this setting, through introductory assemblies, the professional mariachi is able to personally demonstrate exactly how the music is supposed to sound, thereby giving the students an idea of what is expected of them. Therefore in practice many of the scores provided are merely guides and represent the transcription writing style of the group supplying the music. However, the lure of obtaining sheet music created by the most professional mariachi groups is a contributing factor to an underground mariachi sheet music trading scene largely facilitated by internet websites, and often without the permission of the groups who provided the music in the first place. As guides and taken out of the festival

context, these scores may not adequately fit the needs of many educational mariachi programs. Furthermore, copyright will become a larger issue as the mariachi publishing industry continues to grow. Currently a small industry, it has potential for expansion, and as the number of mariachi education programs continues to grow across the nation, the potential for profit cannot be ignored.

Chapter six focuses exclusively on mariachi education, which is another American innovation having great potential to impact the mariachi tradition. By highlighting a brief history of the mariachi program at UCLA as a case study, I am able to show how participants in the program later went on to found their own programs in other institutions. While other programs at the elementary school level were also initiated in the late 1960s in other states, Mariachi Uclatlán, formed in 1961 as a musical study lab as part of the Institute of Ethnomusicology within UCLA's Department of Music, has had a wide-reaching effect on the mariachi education movement within the United States. It is important to note that the initial student participants in the program were not Latino; however, many of them went on to write seminal theses, dissertations, and articles on the topic, have professional careers as mariachi musicians, and found their own education programs that in turn influenced others who went on to do the same. The legacy of Mariachi Uclatlán continues to inspire individuals to study mariachi music in an academic setting. In California, few colleges and universities provide mariachi instruction opportunities. High school students who have participated in rigorous programs often seek out programs in other states like Texas, whose institutions offer more demanding programs.

Historically, in addition to Native and African Americans, Mexican-Americans have a high record of low academic achievement, culminating in alarmingly high school dropout rates. Like many minorities, because of decades of racist educational policies, e.g. segregation and being tracked in non-academic classes, Mexican-Americans have, in general, not performed well in schools. However, while past racist policies are no longer tolerated, Mexican-Americans often still perform poorly in K-12 academic settings. According to leading experts, low performance expectations on the part of teachers, language barriers, and lower socio-economic status have all been linked to low achievement. Academic mariachi programs have been shown to dramatically improve student learning by helping to make school culturally relevant. In addition to the numerous studies that link the study of any musical instrument with improvement in school, mariachi programs also instill a sense of pride in one's culture, improve self-esteem and even help with increasing parental involvement. School boards in predominately Latino areas are motivated to initiate their own mariachi programs as a means of social empowerment and an important part of civic engagement initiatives; however, because mariachi is an understudied area despite its popularity, few academic and educational resources exist.

Additionally, the most qualified mariachi instructors—actual mariachi musicians—may not meet the educational requirements necessary in order to teach in public elementary schools, high schools and community colleges. At this point in time, few colleges and universities offer mariachi performance degrees or even mariachi education degrees at the M.A./M.Music or Ph.D. level. The need for such programs is

clear, and hopefully music departments will begin to develop curricula to meet this demand.

As a stop-gap, many schools either have to develop creative ways to hire mariachi musicians to teach, or often band/orchestra teachers who may have little knowledge of the mariachi genre may be hired to teach mariachi classes. These non-specialists may or may not have the mariachi experience or even the desire to teach these classes. As well as finding qualified instructors, creating a relevant curriculum for classroom use that effectively meets the needs of the students is a major concern for new programs. Few comprehensive curriculum guides exist, and the quality of those that are available does not generally meet the specific needs of an individual program. While all programs focus on performance instruction, few incorporate aspects of culture and history into their teaching plans, and as a result, instructors who have not done their own careful research are still perpetuating erroneous myths such as the French word origin story that has largely been disproved by Mexican scholars.

Motivated by concerns for civic engagement and social empowerment, programs that boost academic achievement and improve graduation rates are deemed great successes. However, an honest dialogue concerning the overall impact of these programs on the mariachi tradition is lacking. And while improving the overall educational experience for Mexican-American students is an important achievement, the aims of a mariachi education program may not adequately prepare a student wanting to pursue mariachi as an ultimate career goal. The growing demand for mariachi instructors in schools is also providing additional job opportunities for practicing mariachi musicians.

Therefore, the need for practical curricula and quality instruction is vital for the future success of mariachi educational programs.

Professional music education organizations such as The National Association for Music Education (MENC) have recognized the need to provide support for mariachi educators through the establishment of a website and advisory board comprising prominent mariachi educators from across the nation. Through the creation of newsletters and a forum, the website also provides perhaps the most comprehensive listing of mariachi resources available. Unfortunately, critical reviews of these resources are not available, and materials of varying quality are simply posted in alphabetical order. Including mariachi education in MENC's music education agenda is a major step in acknowledging the growth and importance of these programs, and its incorporation alongside other established programs such as band, choir, jazz and orchestra furthers mariachi's place as a legitimate genre worthy of study in schools. Mariachi music continues to be an important genre in the United States, and as festivals and education programs expand across the nation; their importance will impact the future of the tradition.

An ever flexible and changing tradition, mariachi music has become a popular and important genre in the United States. Serving as a cultural anchor for Mexican-Americans, this vibrant tradition, through a process of legitimization, has shed its early negative stereotypes. Learning to play mariachi music gives students a sense of pride in

their heritage. Performing mariachi music is now seen as a positive influence, and in many school districts parents are generally happy to have their children participate.[95] For me, one of the most excited innovations associated with the American mariachi genre is seeing the ongoing development of the publishing industry. This industry will have a direct and important impact on how mariachi music is learned, which will certainly affect the future of the tradition. It has been my observation that since 2000, individuals and companies have been eager to develop resources such as sheet music and method books. Granted some are better than others however, a real discussion is taking place within the mariachi community as to what this development means. On a personal level, I have been urged by my friends who are mariachi musicians, my informants and even members of my dissertation committee to use my expertise to create my own publishing company. While it is unclear whether the creators of existing resources have thought about the implications for directly impacting the mariachi tradition, the enormous responsibility of undertaking such a project is important to consider. Not only is there a demand for sheet music but also for comprehensive method books. To do so in a respectful and meaningful way requires that great thought be taken with regard to the decisions of how mariachi music should be taught and learned. What would be the goal a method book? What would it convey? On the one hand, school boards are motivated by the potential for mariachi programs to aid in high school retention rates and increased academic achievement, while the music educators I have met are interested in teaching students to

[95] Over the years I have had many informal conversations with parents. It is my observation that Mexican-American parents tend to be enthusiastic about their child's participation in a mariachi program. Parent's born in Mexico have differing viewpoints. In general after learning more about mariachi education programs most parents look upon them in a positive way.

play their instruments and learn musicianship skills. As an ethnomusicologist, I am interested in collaborating with educators and mariachi musicians to create materials that are culturally relevant but still accessible and useful in a classroom setting.

MENC's decision to include mariachi music education within its organization has served to benefit both new and existing programs. By acknowledging mariachi as a pathway for reaching a student body that has traditionally not had access to music education mariachi music is understood as a legitimate genre worthy of being taught in schools. Will mariachi education follow the same path as Jazz studies? Or will a new way of learning and teaching mariachi music emerge? I imagine that this will depend largely on whether or not more universities and colleges develop degree granting programs in mariachi music. It is an exciting time to be studying mariachi music and I am eager to see how the future of mariachi plays out over the course of the coming decades.

As I reflect on this particular "tag ending" to my dissertation, it is clear that further research is necessary to adequately grasp the vastness of the mariachi tradition. Although I have focused primarily on the genre in the United States, mariachi music has become popular across the globe, and the impact of American programs such as festivals and academic courses is increasing with time. Undertaking a comparative study of budding educational programs that are being initiated in Mexico and Colombia is a goal for further research. With mariachi music's growing popularity and the importance of academic mariachi programs, this understudied field is in need of further examination. It is my hope that this dissertation will inspire others to continue research on other important aspects of the mariachi tradition. As a vibrant and flexible tradition, mariachi

music will continue to gain popularity and enrich Mexican and Mexican-American culture. ¡Si Señor![96]

[96] ¡Si Señor! ¡Yes Sir! is often exclaimed at the end of a particularly lively song during performances. It seems an appropriate exclamation for my "tag ending."

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