



CARNEGIE HALL
Weill Music Institute

GLOBAL ENCOUNTERS

MUSIC OF MEXICO

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MEET THE ARTIST

CELSO DUARTE



Celso Duarte

Harpist Celso Duarte is heir to a rich South American and Mexican musical heritage. He performs on the Paraguayan harp, Celtic harp, and Mexican jarocho harp. His ensemble of classically trained musicians and improvisors interprets songs from the jaranero movement, along with original versions of South American folk music, often integrating the rhythms and traditions of jazz and world music. The strength of the ensemble lies in its execution of traditional music from the Spanish Baroque, as well as music with indigenous and African roots, and its experimentation with a fusion of jarocho rhythms and jazz.

Celso has participated in festivals in Mexico, the US, Europe, and Japan, and he has performed alongside such artists as Lila Downs, Wynton Marsalis, and Mercedes Sosa. Celso's music embraces the vibrant musical landscapes of Mexico and South America, and contributes to that region's continued musical evolution.

In 2007, Celso released the album *From South to South*, which marked the recording debut of his ensemble. The harp, along with such instruments as the cajón and the quijada, invites us to travel from the Veracruz region of Mexico (with its *son jarocho* music) to Paraguay and Brazil (with the rhythms of the Galopa Paraguaya and the Brazilian samba). The album represents a journey through South American roots and cultural identities.

CELSO DUARTE ON HIS MUSIC

When our band plays, we're kind of meditating. We become one with what we are listening to; our senses connect with the music. When we rehearse, we focus on listening to each player's individual voice. We work a lot in the structures, the dynamics, and the particular coloring of each of our pieces. There is a hidden script in every melody: If you understand that, it is possible for you to convey a single musical idea in every song.

In life, rhythm is everywhere—in breathing, in the heartbeat. It is at your side from the moment that you are born and it never leaves you. The earth rotates with a rhythm. Rhythm is the basis for everything.

In our music, structure is based on folklore because folklore dictates its own structures, both harmonic and melodic. Our folklore is a mixture of pre-Columbian, Spanish, and African influences. The most important physical element in my music is the harp.

For me, improvisation involves theory and technique, intuition, and heart. Improvisation means finding the soundtrack for a specific place and time, for the minutes and seconds that will never return. When I'm soloing, I think only about my music. I focus on my instrument and on the point to which I want to send its sounds. A unique interaction between the musician and the public is created in a very natural way. My ensemble has the freedom to experiment with different combinations of instruments, and to recreate the rhythmic freedom of the *son jarocho* genre, which has lately been disappearing. We pay attention to the jarocho tradition while enriching its modes of expression.

What I love the most in life is making music, and that love is what I want to express when I am alone with my instrument.



ABOUT SON JAROCHO MUSIC

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SON JAROCHO

Son jarocho is a style of mestizo traditional music from the central and southern areas of the state of Veracruz, Mexico. The origins of son in Mexico are generally thought to have become recognizable by the beginning of the 19th century, with relevant musical elements that date back even further. Like the other regional styles of son, son jarocho has a set of musical instruments that are particular to the style: the jarana and the guitarra de son (also known as the requinto jarocho) as primary instruments, with the son jarocho harp (regional version of the diatonic harp), the pandero (similar to a tambourine), and the quijada (jaw bone rattle) as other instruments that are found within the tradition depending on the style of son jarocho being played, availability, and expertise.

Son jarocho developed musically and culturally through a social event known as the fandango. A fandango is a social dance organized by a small town, a neighborhood, or even an institution such as a school or cultural arts center. Most importantly, people of all ages come as active participants rather than audience members. The center of the fandango is the tarima, a slightly raised wooden platform that can accommodate between two and eight dancers, around which everyone gathers.

RHYTHM AND IMPROVISATION IN SON JAROCHO

"I see the jarana as a drum with strings. Really what we do is pure percussion. And so there's a dialogue among various instruments, and with the zapateado ... They're not pieces. They're rhythmic and harmonic structures that permit musicians to improvise, and that's why a son doesn't have a time limit."—Gilberto Gutiérrez (Grupo Mono Blanco)

Improvisation in son jarocho refers as much to instrumental soloists as it does to the understanding between musicians of the rhythmic and melodic possibilities that exist within the style during performance, and it is another way in which performances differ from one another.

While melody is one aspect within which improvisation takes place, rhythm is the means by which the ensemble is collectively playful. Rhythm in son jarocho is fluid rather than fixed. The dominant meter in the tradition is 6/8, and there are two common ways of counting it (2 groups of 3, and 3 groups of 2). It is the rhythmic tension between the two counting methods, and the variety of ways to mark the rhythm, that define son jarocho. This tension is where the sense of "feel" comes into play and why fixed and formulaic rhythmic concepts are not true to the style. In the context of a fandango, the play of rhythmic subdivision is often remarkably demonstrated by the dancers on the tarima, an aspect that reveals the deep connections between the style and the dancing accompanies it.



SOCIOLOGY OF SON JAROCHO

To understand son jarocho is also to understand the meanings of geography and race in Mexican history and contemporary society. Son jarocho, like all of the regional son traditions, is mestizo music, emanating from the mix of Indian and European cultures that generally define Mexican society. As a regional folk tradition, it is historically based in the experience of people from the countryside rather than the city.

Veracruz, one of Mexico's major port cities, is where African slaves were brought into Mexico during the colonial era. Slavery was outlawed in the early 19th century, and in Veracruz there is a significant cultural influence from the Africans who were brought there. The word "jarocho," now understood as a nickname for people from Veracruz, was originally a derogatory term referencing a person of mixed African and Indigenous ancestry. This history places Veracruz and son jarocho in the larger world of the African diaspora. For example, the use of instruments such as the pandero and quijada, as well as the adoption of the cajón, is but one way in which son jarocho shares in the African musical heritage of the Americas. The people of Veracruz recognize the "Three Roots" of their culture: Spanish, African, and Indigenous.

"Southern Spanish elements include the harmonic structure, verse forms, the staccato heel dance style and the stringed instruments. African influences are evident in the syncopated rhythmic patterns of the son jarocho ... Evidence of African singing characteristics includes choral and individual call and response to a lead singer, slurring or bending of the notes and a sarcastic or irreverent attitude. While Indian influence is more difficult to identify, one characteristic is the frequent choice of animals as lyrical themes. Prior to the Spanish arrival, animals symbolized deities and divine forces in indigenous religions. Son jarocho lyrics depict the iguana, the hawk, the woodpecker, etc., and give these animals human characteristics."

—Timothy Harding, liner notes for El Son del Pueblo's CD, *Jarocho de Corazon*.

Mexico generally has recently become more interested in the African root—jarocho musicians now take pride in acknowledging the cultural distinctiveness of their musical tradition.

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ABOUT MEXICO

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Mexico is the third largest country in Latin America, after Brazil and Argentina. Mexico borders the US to the north, Guatemala and Belize to the south, the Pacific Ocean to the west, and the Gulf of Mexico to the east. The Rio Grande River creates a border between Mexico and the states of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. Mexico's capital is Mexico City, located in the center of the country, and its currency is the Mexican peso.

The majority of this 758,449-square-mile country lies on the Mexican Plateau between the Sierra Madre Occidental and the Cordillera Neo-Volcánica mountain ranges. The other two major regions of Mexico are the Yucatán Peninsula in the southeast and the Baja California Peninsula in the northwest, less than 20 miles south of San Diego. The country's highest peak, the volcano Citlaltépetl, is located on the Baja California Peninsula. Mexico has 31 states and a Federal District (similar to Washington, DC, in the US), which is where Mexico City is located. The official language of Mexico is Spanish. With a population of more than 107 million, it is the world's most populous Spanish-speaking country—approximately two-and-a-half times the size of Spain or Colombia. The predominant religion is Roman Catholicism, and the government is structured as a republic with two legislative houses. Mexico's head of state and government is the president.

Humans have inhabited Mexico for more than 20,000 years, including members of the Olmec, Toltec, Maya, and Aztec civilizations. In 1845, the US voted to annex Texas, triggering what came to be known as the Mexican-American War. This war ended with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848.

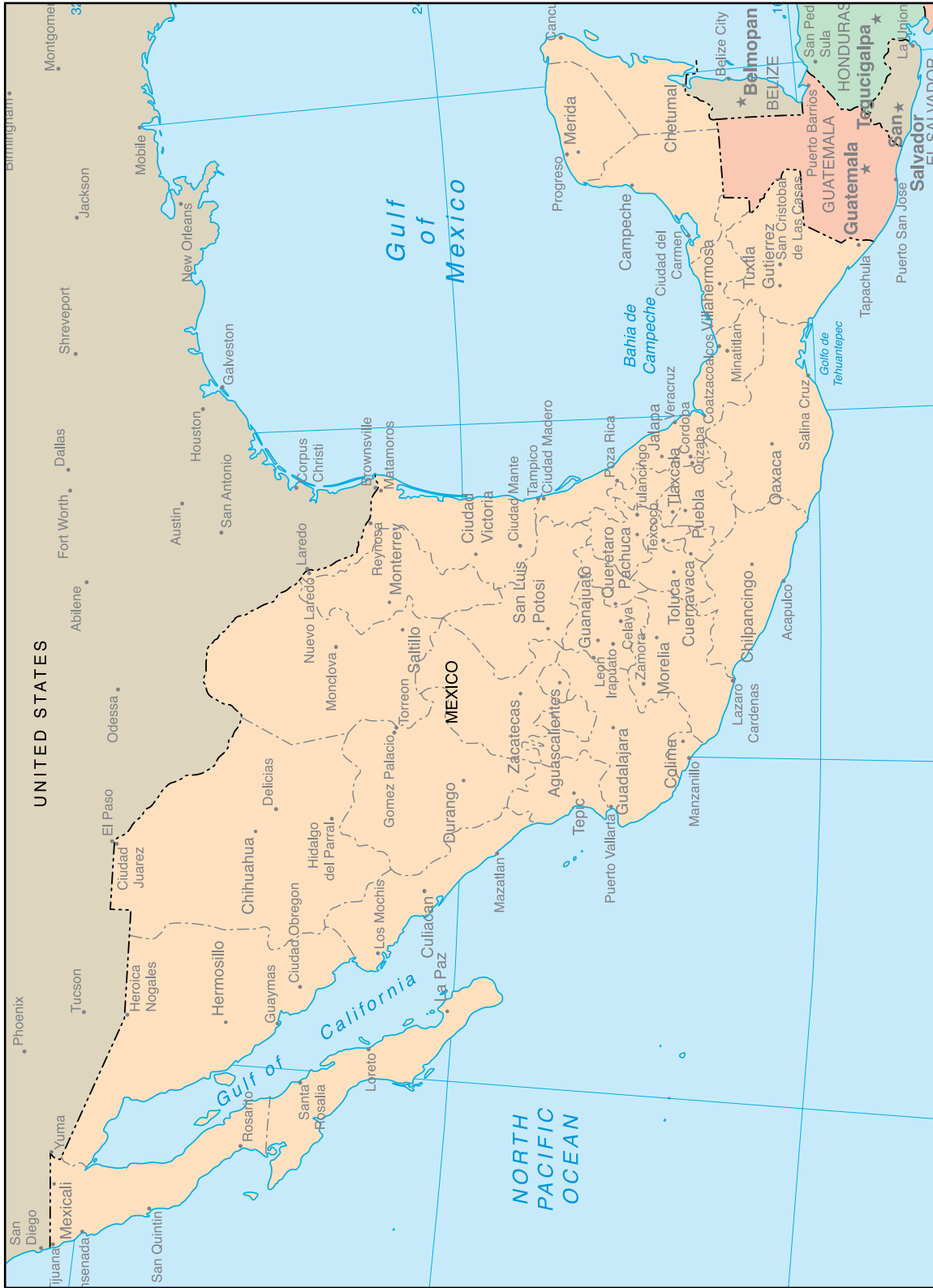
Mexico's economy has three main elements: agriculture, manufacturing, and petroleum and natural gas. Its major crops include corn, wheat, rice, beans, coffee, cotton, fruits, and vegetables. Mexico manufactures chemicals, transport vehicles, and electrical machinery, and it is the world's largest producer of silver.

Mexico City, the capital city of Mexico, is also known as the Federal District. The population of the city itself is approximately 8.6 million; when the metropolitan area is included, however, the population rises to 18.6 million. The next largest city, Guadalajara, has a population of almost 4 million. Mexico City is 571 square miles and accounts for approximately one-third of Mexico's industrial production.

Mexico City was founded in 1591 and is located on the site of the capital of the ancient Aztec empire. It has been a hub of politics, religion, and trade since the 13th century due to its centralized location between North and South America, as well as the barrier it forms between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. One can find the ruins of Aztec temples, ninth-century French-style mansions, and modern skyscrapers—all in Mexico City.



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SON JAROCHO HARP



History

Son jarocho is a traditional style of music from Veracruz, Mexico, dating back at least 200 years. A jarocho group is typically made up of three primary instruments, one of which is the harp. In its earlier days, the son jarocho harp was much smaller than it is today, and it was played by a seated musician. In its more recent form, it has become much larger and is played from a standing position, allowing the musician to play more aggressively for a stronger sound.

Materials and Techniques

Unlike the classical harp often seen in orchestras, the son jarocho harp has no pedals, so it cannot change keys during performance. It has between 32 and 36 strings which are wrapped around pegs that are tuned using a key. Often the harpist plays a bass line on the lower strings with one hand while plucking a melody on the higher strings with the other hand.

JARANA



History

The jarana has a body shaped very much like a guitar. It also has strings and frets (raised metal strips along the neck). It is directly related to Spanish baroque guitars of the 16th century, and it is often used in ensembles and to accompany dances. It probably got its name from a Yucatecan dance it is associated with.

Materials and Techniques

The body of the jarana is somewhat narrower than that of a guitar, and it has between eight and twelve strings. The body of the jarana is traditionally carved from a single piece of wood, and the sound differs depending on the type of wood and the method used to make it. The musician typically strums chords on the jarana to create rhythm and harmony.

CAJON



History

The cajón is a type of drum that is wooden and box-like in shape, with a sound hole cut in its body. It is believed to have been brought to the Americas by slaves from West and Central Africa in the early 19th century. It was incorporated into Peruvian and Cuban music, and it gained popularity in the later part of the 1800s. It is now one of the most widely used Afro-Peruvian musical instruments.

Materials and Techniques

The cajón is typically made from thin sheets of plywood, and the sound hole is cut out of the side opposite the side that is played. The musician sits on top of the drum, tilting it at an angle, and slaps the side to make the sounds. The musician can strike the cajón with different parts of his or her hand to vary the instrument's sound. Additionally, there may be screws on top for adjusting the quality of sound, or timbre, and sometimes musicians attach cords to the back to create a buzzing sound when the cajón is struck.



DOUBLE BASS



History

The double bass (also known as the bass, string bass, upright bass, and acoustic bass) is the largest and lowest-pitched string instrument in the modern symphony orchestra. The double bass is also used in many other genres, including jazz, 1950s-style blues, early rock 'n' roll, bluegrass, Afro-Cuban music, and tango.

Materials and Techniques

Double basses are constructed from several types of wood, including maple for the backside, spruce for the top, and ebony for the fingerboard. Like many other string instruments, the double bass is played either with a bow (*arco*) or by plucking the strings (*pizzicato*). In orchestral repertoire and tango music, both bowing and plucking styles are used. In jazz and latin music, the bass is mostly plucked, with the exception of some solos that are performed with the bow.

QUIJADA



History

The quijada is a percussion instrument. It is used in a number of different cultures, and its name may vary in each, but it is one of the earliest known rattles in Latin America. It is traditionally made from the jawbone of a donkey or horse.

Materials and Techniques

The jaw bone and teeth are worn down until the molars rattle in place to create the quijada's unique sound. The percussive sound and rhythm varies depending upon the way in which it is played. Most often it is held in one hand by the narrow end of the jaw, and the large end is struck with a palm. The quijada can also be played by scraping it with a stick.

TARIMA



History

The tarima is a raised wooden platform, like a small stage for dancing. A dancer or a couple creates the rhythm in a rapid movement of their feet, known as zapateado, on top of the tarima. It is often used in instrumental songs, where there are no words.



WEB RESOURCES

IMPROVISATION IN SON JAROCHO: A Smithsonian video (in Spanish with English subtitles).

Excellent connections to this curriculum.

casttv.com/video/0vvnv2k1/three-members-of-son-de-madera-talk-about-improvisation-in-son-jarocho-video

THREE ROOTS TRAILER: Trailer for a soon to be released documentary on the three roots of Mexican music; the first two minutes focus on son jarocho. Makes social/historical connections.

vids.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=vids.individual&videoid=35755032

VERACRUZ BLOG: Blog entries (text and video) from Katie Day Good, a Fulbright scholar in Mexico. Ms. Good produces podcasts that anthropologically explore the Mexican youth renaissance of performing various traditional music styles. A folk musician and independent radio producer, Katie works with the School of Mexican Music in Mexico City and the danzon and son jarocho circles of Veracruz to document this growing cultural trend.

fulbright.mtvu.com/author/katiegood/

CASCABEL (GRUPO CHUCHIMITE): Harp, jarana, and vocal duet version of *Cascabel*—similar in many ways to Celso's version; gives a good sense of how similar yet different a single song can be.

youtube.com/watch?v=Cilcx4xaTSY

CASCABEL (ESTANZUELA): A jarana-driven version (no harp) of *Cascabel*, filmed on the streets of the small but vibrant community of Tlacotalpan, Veracruz.

video.google.com/videoplay?docid=1789352198518006499#

BASIC INFORMATION ON SON JAROCHO

sonjarocho.com/44116/26037.html

INTRODUCTION TO SON JAROCHO: PDF from Mexican culture non-profit organization Mano a Mano: Mexican Culture Without Borders.

manoamano.us/files/Resources/What%20is%20SON%20JAROCHO.pdf

ARTICLE ON THE MUSICS OF MEXICO: Comparing son, ranchera, and mariachi.

latinmusic.about.com/od/countrie1/p/PROBASICS17.htm