



Smithsonian Folkways

Mariachi: Music from the Heart of Mexico

A Smithsonian Folkways Lesson

Designed by: Jane Lin

University of Washington

Summary:

This unit contains a total of four lesson plans. Three lessons are based on a variety of pedagogical approaches and activities including singing, moving, listening, and playing the song “Si no dejan” for ages levels of elementary through high school (music notations are included.) There is a general-music lesson plan built on videos from the Smithsonian Folkways for the purpose of educational experiences that lead to student learning of music and culture of Mariachi music.

Suggested Grade Levels: 3-5, 6-8, 9-12

Country: Mexico

Region: North America

Culture Group: Mexican

Genre: Mariachi

Instruments: Shakers, Band, Voice

Language: Spanish

Co-Curricular Areas: Social Studies

National Standards: 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9

Prerequisites:

- For Segment 1, Grades 6-8, music reading skills
- For Segment 2, singing or musical instrument playing ability
- For Segment 4, mallet instrument playing ability

Objectives:

- Express music through music
- Play rhythms from the score
- Overall stylistic feature of Mariachi song
- Better understanding of Mariachi Music and the Mexican-American culture of Mariachi Music
- Perform on instruments with others

Materials:

- CD tracks from Daniel Sheehy’s book (#13, 14)
- Videos and background info from the Smithsonian Folkways website

Lesson Segments:

1. **The Rhythmic Foundation of Mariachi Music** (National Standards 5, 6)
2. **Play and Sing Mariachi Music** (National Standards 2, 5, 6, 9)
3. **Understanding the Culture of Mariachi Music** (National Standards 8, 9)
4. **Play Mariachi Music with a Marimba Ensemble** (National Standards 2, 5)

1. The Rhythmic Foundation of Mariachi Music

- **Prerequisites:**
 - Grade 3-5: None
 - Grade 6-8: Music reading skills
- **Objectives:**
 - While listening to “Si nos dejan” rhythmic track, students will identify and will express through movement the metrical pattern
 - Students will be able to read the score and play the rhythm on the score
- **Materials:**
 - CD track from Daniel Sheehy’s book (#13: José Alfredo Jiménez, “Si nos dejan” excerpt demonstrating vihuela and guitarrón rhythm. Mariachi Los Amigos. 2003.)
 - Grades 3-5: Can be done without music scores
 - Grades 6-8: Music - rhythmic score by Jane Lin
 - Clapping is the recommended method but percussion instruments are optional: Drums, sticks, and shakers
- **Procedure:**
 - a. While listening to the recording, ask the students to listen for the two different rhythms being played (identify by the different instruments timbre – high and low guitar sounds)
 - b. Divide class into two groups (i.e. left and right half of the room)
 - c. Grades 3-5: Perform without music score
 - i. Have group one clap eighth notes
 - ii. Group two clap half notes
 - d. Grades 6-8: Distribute the rhythmic score sheet
 - i. Have one group play the top percussion line either by clapping or with sticks or shakers
 - ii. Have the other group play the bottom line, percussion two, either by clapping or with drums

Assessment: Listen and identify two different rhythms being played simultaneously. Play two different rhythmic patterns. Read music score and play the notes as indicated

Note:

In a mariachi band, the rhythm section is very important because it is the foundation. This constant beat plays against the smooth and lyrical melodic vocal line and harmonies played by brass or string instruments. This rhythm section typically include two different sizes of guitars: *vihuela* (small guitar), and *guitarrón* (big bass guitar.)

2. Play and Sing Mariachi Music

- **Prerequisites:** Abilities to sing or play musical instruments: violins, trumpets, and bass string or guitar

- **Objectives:**
 - While listening to “Si nos dejan” CD track, students will listen for the overall stylistic feature of a Mariachi song
 - Students will be able read the score and play the music with their instruments.

- **Materials:**
 - CD track from Daniel Sheehy’s book (#14: José Alfredo Jiménez, “Si nos dejan.” Mariachi Los Amigos. 2003.)
 - Score sheet from Jane Lin – Instrument transcription with voice.
 - Spanish to English translations

- **Procedure:**
 - a. Play recording “Si nos dejan”
 - b. Pass out music score “Si nos dejan” with vocal line
 - c. Designate players to each instrument part
 - d. Play song

Assessment: Sing and play the song on their own musical instruments. Sing the song in Spanish without the teacher’s help. Play a song in a Mariachi style.

Spanish to English Translations:

Si nos dejan (If they let us)

By: José Alfredo Jiménez

by José Alfredo Jiménez

Si nos dejan
Nos vamos a querer toda la vida
Si nos dejan
Nos vamos a vivir a un mundo nuevo
Yo creo podemos ver
El nuevo amanecer
De un nuevo día
Yo pienso que tú y yo
Podemos ser felices todavía

If they allow us
We will love each other a lifetime
If they allow us
We will live to a new world
I believe we can see
The new dawn
Of a new day
I think that you and me
We can be happy still

3. Understanding the Culture of Mariachi Music

- **Prerequisites:** None

- **Objective:**
 - Understand of Mariachi Music and the Mexican-America culture of Mariachi Music

- **Materials:**
 - Videos and background info from the Smithsonian Folkways website:
http://www.folkways.si.edu/archives_17.aspx
 - Direct link for video I:
http://www.folkways.si.edu/feature_popup_20A.aspx
 - Direct link for video II:
http://www.folkways.si.edu/latino_heritage_popup_vid1.aspx

- **Procedure:**

- a. Play the first video of Nati Cano's Mari los Camperos performing at the Viva el Mariachi Festival in Fresno, California on March 25, 2007:

http://media.smithsonianfolkways.org/video/CFV10073_700k_640_W.swf



- b. Play the second video of Nati Cano's Mari los Camperos performing at the Mexico Lindo Smithsonian Folklife Festival in 2004:

http://media.smithsonianfolkways.org/video/CFV10013_700k_640_N.swf



- c. Classroom group discussion:
 - i. What does it mean when the musician says: “I don’t care about technique?”
 - ii. What is the role of singing in Mariachi music? You sing when you are happy. Every bonds by the experience.

- iii. How do you feel when you listen to this type of music? What kind of emotions are you feeling?
- iv. Does this music make you want to move? Get up and dance?

Assessment: Students will have a better understanding of the Mexican-America culture and the Mariachi music.

Additional Info: http://www.folkways.si.edu/explore_folkways/mariachi.aspx

Mexican mariachi music is made to move you. It is direct, driving, and designed to instill emotion. Happy, sad, proud, angry, desolate, romance-stricken, and rebellious are some of the moods inspired by its extroverted singers, suave harmonies, and romping rhythms. “Mariachi” means a certain repertoire of music, a special grouping of instruments, and a distinctive style of singing that create an unmistakable sound unique in the world. It has special meaning for many Mexican Americans as an emblem of their cultural heritage and a source of pride and community connections. And since the days of the Chicano Movement beginning in the 1960s, it has become a *movimiento* of its own, attracting millions of fans and music makers throughout the USA.

The History of Mariachi:

Mariachi music has origins deep in Mexican history. The sound of its string instruments and its oldest rhythms are rooted in Mexico’s colonial times (1519-1810); people from Spain and African slaves and their descendants mingled with hundreds of American Indian cultures to create a new Mexican culture marked by many regions, each with its own signature musical tradition. The music that was called “mariachi” as early as the 1850s emerged from the ranches and small towns of western Mexico, particularly in the states of Jalisco, Michoacán, Nayarit, Colima, and Aguascalientes. When big-city radio stations, movie studios, and record companies took mariachi music to new audiences throughout Mexico and abroad beginning in the 1930s, mariachi music was transformed into one of Latin America’s favorite musics. By the 1950s, its standard sound of two trumpets, three or more violins, vihuela (small guitar), and guitarrón (big bass guitar) was set. Since then, its repertoire of fast-paced sones, expressive canciones rancheras (“country” songs), polkas, syncopated huapangos, romantic boleros, and more has been heard throughout the Americas and around the world.

4. Play Mariachi Music with a Marimba Ensemble

- **Prerequisites:** the ability to play mallet instruments
- **Objectives:**
 - Perform on instruments with others including a varied repertoire of music
 - Read and play music from a score

- **Materials:**
 - CD track from Daniel Sheehy's book (#14: José Alfredo Jiménez, "Si nos dejan." Mariachi Los Amigos. 2003.)
 - Music score arranged by Jane Lin.
 - Three mallet instruments: Can vary in types– Marimba, vibraphone, and xylophone.

- **Procedure:**
 - a. Play the recording of the song
 - b. Pass out the score sheet
 - c. Designate three individuals or groups to three different mallet instruments
 - d. Play music

Assessment: Students will be able to read music score and play the notes as indicated.

Marimba Ensemble

José Alfredo Jiménez Arranged by Jane Lin

Mallets 1
Vibraphone

Mallets 2
Xylophone

Mallets 3
(bass)

This system contains three staves. The top staff, labeled 'Mallets 1 Vibraphone', is mostly empty with a few rests. The middle staff, labeled 'Mallets 2 Xylophone', features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The bottom staff, labeled 'Mallets 3 (bass)', provides a bass line with chords and single notes.

al. 1

al. 2

al. 3

This system contains three staves. The top staff, labeled 'al. 1', has a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The middle staff, labeled 'al. 2', has a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The bottom staff, labeled 'al. 3', provides a bass line with chords and single notes.

al. 1

al. 2

al. 3

This system contains three staves. The top staff, labeled 'al. 1', has a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The middle staff, labeled 'al. 2', has a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The bottom staff, labeled 'al. 3', provides a bass line with chords and single notes.

Marimba Ensemble

al. 1

al. 2

al. 3

al. 1

al. 2

al. 3

al. 1

al. 2

al. 3

Marimba Ensemble

al. 1

al. 2

al. 3

al. 1

al. 2

al. 3

al. 1

al. 2

al. 3

Si nos dejan

Rubato

José Alfredo Jiménez

Arranged by Jane Lin

Voice
(Or Solo Instrument)

Violin
(Trumpet)

Acoustic Bass
(Guitar)
(Guitarron)

Vln.

Bass

Si nos de jan Nos va mos a que-rer to da la

Vln.

Bass

vi da Si nos de jan Nos va mos a vi rir aun-mun do

2

Si nos dejan

nue - vo Yo creo po de mos ver el nue vo a mane cer deun nue vo

di a Yo pien so que tuy_ yo Po de mos ser fe lices des do da vi a

*go go coda

Coda

lices ces do da vi

