

Study Guide for Teachers

Mexico Beyond Mariachi
Journey Through Mexico
presented by
Young Audiences New Jersey & Eastern PA
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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Entertaining, educating, and exciting, the Mexico Beyond Mariachi experience is a journey that ignites the imagination and opens the senses. Expand your students' perceptions of Mexico through enchanting pre-colonial instruments and vibrant interpretations of music and dance. Students come away with a fresh and authentic perspective on the diversity of Mexican culture and see how Mexican music and dance has developed over time.

Mexico Beyond Mariachi redefines the perception of Mexican culture for the next generation, promoting the values of cultural intelligence, diversity, tolerance, and equity in the arts.

LEARNING GOALS

Students will

- Learn about the history and culture of Mexico, from the ancient Mexican Indians to the folk traditions of present-day Mexico.
- Be able to recognize the influence that geography has on cultures and traditions.
- Learn new vocabulary and become familiar with Spanish language.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Many people think that the Mariachi band of musicians, wearing the traditional sombreros and outfits from the state of Jalisco, is all there is to Mexican music, dance, and culture. Mexico Beyond Mariachi encourages students to look beyond that stereotype and into the fascinating story and history of the Mexican people. The performance brings students on a journey that begins over 500 years ago, first with the Aztec civilization, then continuing in chronological order to show how time, geography, climate, and foreign influence have affected folk traditions to the present day.

The indigenous music of Mexico prior to colonization uses a fascinating array of instruments made from elements found in the natural environment and that mimic the sounds of nature. The indigenous people were great recyclers.

With the arrival of the Spanish, things began to change for the Mexicans. Their food, clothing, and music changed. The Mexicans were deeply influenced by Spanish music. String instruments arrive with the Spanish, bringing new melodies and harmonies.

BEFORE THE PROGRAM

1. Brainstorm a list of words and phrases by asking students what comes to their minds when they think of Mexico.
2. Inform students that there are 32 states in Mexico, and each has its own identity, just like our states in the U.S. Each state provides different cultural traditions, including dance, music, and food. Have students work in groups to learn more about a few Mexican states' cultural practices and share with the rest of the class. Focus on Tabasco, Veracruz, Jalisco, Michoacan, and Chihuahua, which will be explored in greater detail during the performance.
4. Discuss the similarities and differences between the cultures of each state and have students revisit and add to the list created from the first suggested activity.

AFTER THE PROGRAM

1. Have students write about and/or draw an image, depicting an aspect of the performance that meant the most to them.
2. Have students discuss the performance. You could have them share their drawings or writing from the previous exercise, or extend the discussion with the following questions: How did the musicians and dancers communicate their feelings? Did they relate to each other on stage? How? What was your favorite part? Why? What part didn't you like? Why?
4. As you saw in the performance, several different European cultures have influenced Mexican music, dance, and culture. What other countries or cultures can you name that influenced Mexican music, dance, and culture?
5. Find out more about the different festivals of Mexico: Cinco de Mayo, Day of the Dead, Independence Day, and Las Posadas. What is each celebration about? What are the traditional costumes, dances, music, or traditions associated with each holiday? How is each similar or different from holidays that we celebrate in the U.S.?
6. Invite students to share food, dance, and music from their families' heritage.

VOCABULARY WORDS

- BUENOS DIAS:** Good morning
CHOCOLATE: Chocolate
HUEHUETL: Sacred Mexican drum
OCARINA: Flute made out of clay
RANCHERO: Cowboy
REBOZO: Type of shawl find in Mexico
SOMBRERO: Hat
VIEJITO: Old man
ZAPATO: Shoe

ARTIST INFORMATION

Mexico Beyond Mariachi was created to address the needs of communities to know more about traditional Mexican performance culture beyond stereotypes.

While Mexican influence is all around us, what do people really know about the traditions of Mexico's music and dance culture? Or the origins of the stories, legends, and myths that are interwoven together? And how do we effectively communicate that knowledge to young audiences?

Responding to that need, Mexico Beyond Mariachi created their in-depth school performance and arts-in-education program that has reached over 100,000 students in over 250 schools and community venues on the East Coast.

RESOURCES

Elizabeth Silverthorne, *Fiesta! Mexico's Great Celebrations*.

Gerald McDermott, *Musicians of the Sun*.

Leonard Everett Fisher, *Pyramid of the Sun, Pyramid of the Moon*.

Tom Moran, *A Family in Mexico*.

Ancient Aztec, Olmec, & Mesoamerica Resources:

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

An Exploration of Mesoamerican Cultures:
www.mesoweb.org