

LA NUEVA GENERACION



A NEW GENERATION OF MARIACHI
MARIACHI HERENCIA DE MÉXICO

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE
A K-12 EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE EXPERIENCE

MARCUS
PERFORMING ARTS
CENTER

**2025/26 MARCUS PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
STUDENT MATINEE SERIES**

Study Guide

OVERVIEW



LA NUEVA GENERACIÓN: SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

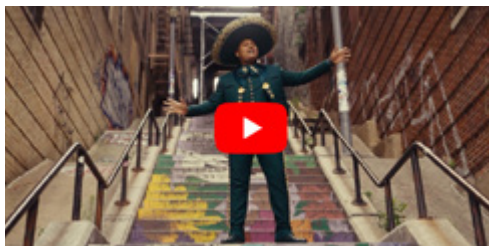
2x Latin GRAMMY-nominated **Mariachi Herencia de México** performs a 60-minute student show tailored to K-12 schools. **La Nueva Generación** is a lively concert experience that takes students on a musical journey through México, highlighting the importance of this rich, cultural tradition in music today.

ABOUT MARIACHI HERENCIA DE MÉXICO

The historic tradition of mariachi music has its roots of origin in cities such as Guadalajara and Mexico City. As the ever-evolving genre's influence spread, it reached Chicago and birthed **Mariachi Herencia de México**. The 2x Latin GRAMMY-nominated band has issued five chart-topping albums and has performed all across the North American continent paving the way for a new generation of mariachi musicians. **Nuestra Herencia**, their debut album, topped the Latin streaming charts and earned the band their first Latin GRAMMY nomination for Best Ranchero/Mariachi Album. 2018's **Herencia de la Tierra Mía** and the two-volume series, **Esencia and Esencia, Vol. 2** issued in 2019 and 2020, respectively, charted atop all major streaming platforms and industry charts. In 2022, **Herederos** appeared as the band were performing a wildly successful North American tour. Herederos received a 2023 Latin GRAMMY nomination for Best Ranchero/Mariachi Album. The young, virtuosic band is composed of 14 musicians, ages 18-32, representing a new bicultural generation in the U.S.

HOW IT BEGAN

The unlikely story started with an idea that came to Chicago resident **César Maldonado**. A product of **Chicago Public Schools (CPS)**, Mr. Maldonado founded the **Mariachi Heritage Foundation (MHF)** in 2013 with the goal of promoting mariachi music to new generations. In 2016, MHF began an all-city, audition-based music program for CPS students to receive advanced mariachi training. The most advanced students from the program were placed in an elite ensemble that later became **Mariachi Herencia de México**. The band recorded their first studio album in 2017 titled **Nuestra Herencia**, which later received a **Latin GRAMMY nomination** for **Best Ranchero/Mariachi Album**. Since then, **Mariachi Herencia de México** has released **five studio albums** and has **toured all over North America**. The band members are former CPS students, now attending college and thriving as professional mariachi artists.



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Mariachi Herencia de México

ABOUT MARIACHI

Mariachi music is meant to move you! It's all about expressing emotion and connecting with the listener. Joy, sorrow, pride, passion, loneliness, romance, and drama—every feeling lives in the heart of mariachi.

DEFINING MARIACHI

Since the days of the Chicano Movement beginning in the 1960s, mariachi has become a movement of its own throughout the U.S., attracting millions of fans and music makers across the country.



THE HISTORY OF MARIACHI

Mariachi music originated in the 1850s in the ranches and small towns of western Mexico, especially in the states of Jalisco, Michoacán, Nayarit, Colima, and Aguascalientes. Following the Spanish invasion of Mexico, traditional instruments were gradually replaced by those introduced by the colonizers, such as violins, guitars, and harps, along with brass and woodwind instruments. The Indian and mestizo (of mixed race) musicians not only adapted to these European instruments but also innovated by crafting their own, often altering their shapes and tunings to create a distinctive style. Although mariachi has deep historical roots, there are very few well-known musicians from its early history, as the genre primarily represented the music of rural communities. It wasn't until the early 1930s that mariachi groups began to gain recognition beyond their local areas.

MARIACHI MUSIC IN THE UNITED STATES (AND BEYOND)

As mariachi music spread beyond Mexico, the influence of Spanish-derived instruments continued to shape its distinctive sound. Mexican musicians developed unique instruments, such as the vihuela mexicana and the guitarrón, which became fundamental to the mariachi ensemble. Today, mariachi music thrives in the United States, where it is performed in various settings, from major concert halls to intimate gatherings like birthday parties, wedding receptions, and restaurants. This vibrant tradition continues to celebrate Mexican heritage while reaching new audiences and adapting to diverse cultural contexts.

PRESERVING HERITAGE

According to the U.S. Census, there are over 54 million Latinos in the U.S. today and Latinos represent nearly a third of Chicago's total population of 2.7 million residents. Maldonado hopes that through the integration of mariachi into the schools' curriculums, it will help students form a deeper connection to their roots and nurture a positive sense of pride and self-esteem. The preservation of cultural traditions through the arts is critical both for Latino students and those who want to learn more about the traditions of their neighbors and friends.

MARIACHI INSTRUMENTS

A traditional mariachi band includes four to seven violins, two to three trumpets, a harp, and a guitar—all standard European instruments that students might already recognize. The vihuela (small guitar) and guitarrón (large bass guitar) complete the mariachi ensemble with instruments unique to this style.

GUITARRÓN



A deep-voiced **guitar** known as the guitarrón serves as the bass of the ensemble. Although these instruments have European origins, they are distinctly Mexican in their current form.

VIHUELA



The high-pitched, round-backed guitar known as the **vihuela** is essential to mariachi music. When strummed in the traditional manner, it imparts a rhythmic vitality that defines the mariachi sound.

GUITAR



The **guitar** plays a crucial role in creating the dynamic and upbeat sound that lies at the heart of mariachi music. Its percussive strumming and bright tones add energy, while its ability to play both chords and single-note melodies allows for a diverse range of musical expression.

HARP



The **harp** in mariachi music adds a rich and complex layer of sound to the ensemble, with its delicate and airy qualities complementing the strong, rhythmic strumming of the guitar.

VIOLIN



The **violin** is one of the oldest stringed instruments, with origins tracing back to medieval Europe. In mariachi music, the violin contributes significantly to the genre's rich and emotive sound, weaving beautiful and intricate melodies that complement the other instruments and evoke deep emotion in listeners.

TRUMPET



The **trumpet** is a brass instrument that is essential to mariachi music. Its bright and piercing sound adds a lively and upbeat feel to the music and often plays the lead melody in mariachi songs.

AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AND DISCUSS AS A CLASS OR IN SMALL GROUPS

1. Which song was your favorite and why?
2. Do you remember any of the rhythms that were played during the show? Can you recreate them?
3. Do you remember the different instruments used? How did each instrument sound?
How did their unique sounds contribute to the overall feeling of the piece?
4. What did you notice about the clothing worn by the performers?
5. Did the performance remind you of anything you have seen, heard, or experienced before? If so, how?
6. The mariachi performance was bilingual, as some of it was presented in English and some of it in Spanish. Do you or someone in your family speak more than one language?



CREATE AN ALBUM COVER

Ask students to imagine that **Mariachi Herencia de México** wants to invite them to help design their next album cover. To start, ask students to consider what elements are featured and what choices were made in the covers of their last three albums.

Share the Design Criteria: The band wants the new album cover to celebrate the music and culture of mariachi and Mexican American identity. Ask students to identify several important ideas and images that come to mind when they think about the concert and what they learned. Ask students to sketch a few design ideas on scratch paper. When they have settled on a final design, have them create their final rendition! Provide opportunity for peer response and ask students to consider their answer to the following:

- What elements did you include in your design and why?
- Are there other elements that you considered but did not use?
- Why did you use the colors you chose?
- Why should the group choose your design?
- What does your design tell people about the musicians' music or culture?



CONNECTING TO MUSIC

OBJECTIVE

To research an element of mariachi music or culture.

OPTION 1: MEET THE INSTRUMENT

Students will break into groups and research one of the instruments played by mariachi groups and report their findings to the class. Assign each small group a different instrument from the list and invite them to research.

OPTION 2: MEET THE MUSICIAN

Students will research one of the artists **Mariachi Herencia de México** pays homage to on the *Herederos* album, including Juan Gabriel, Rocío Dúrcal, Frank Sinatra, Héctor Lavoe, Cuco Sánchez, among other artists and composers.

PRESENTING THE RESEARCH

Students may present their research to the class. Have students report their findings in a format of their choice (google slideshow or essay). If students found audio clips of their instrument being played, or music by the selected artists, allow them to share these with the class as part of their report.



Juan Gabriel
Singer & Composer



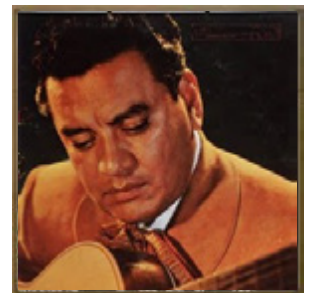
Rocío Dúrcal
Singer



Frank Sinatra
Singer



Héctor Lavoe
Singer



Cuco Sánchez
Singer & Composer

CONNECTING TO LANGUAGE ARTS



OBJECTIVE

Using the album *Herederos* by **Mariachi Herencia de México** as inspiration, students will write their own lyrics to a song or poem about their neighborhood, tierra, or place in the world.

ACTIVITY

Part of the mariachi tradition is in telling stories from life. Stories can be about love or lost love, a hometown, nature, or missing a place or someone special. Have students consider where they find “home.” Is it the place where they currently live with their family, or somewhere far away? Is “home” a neighborhood, a city, a country or a place that only happens when certain people gather together?

Have students complete a 5 minute-free-writing using their 5 senses. What does home (however they choose to define it) feel like, taste like, smell like, look like, and sound like? Encourage them to be as detailed and creative as possible, drawing on personal experiences and emotions to enrich their writing.

After free-writing, have them review their list to consider what might work well in their song or poem.

They might find it useful to use a format of repeating:

My home feels like . . .

My home looks like . . . etc.

More experienced writers may choose to find a format that works for them.

Have them share their work about home with the class, in small groups, or through a performance.

CONNECTING TO SELF

Members of **Mariachi Herencia de México** live in Chicago and many members of the group have Mexican heritage. Heritage means a tradition or something that is passed down from one generation to another. Mariachi music is a rich tradition shared and celebrated across generations, reflecting the diverse experiences of those who participate in it.

OBJECTIVE

Students will explore a traditional practice from their family or community and write a brief explanation of its origin and how they have experienced it in practice.

Note: There is an inherent challenge in celebrating heritage, as it involves finding the balance between honoring tradition and embracing the diverse ways in which students connect with different aspects of their identities. Providing students with the opportunity to share their personal, familial, religious, ethnic, geographic, or cultural backgrounds not only honors their individual origins but also highlights their contributions to the classroom, school, and broader community. It's essential to offer multiple contexts for engagement. If some students find it easier to connect with community or school culture rather than their familial heritage, this may provide a helpful entry point into the topic!

ACTIVITY

Students Discussion: We all have traditions within our families and communities. For instance, some families gather to enjoy specific foods each year to celebrate a holiday, while other communities may come together to dance or sing. Elements such as the music your family enjoys, the clothing you wear, and the language you speak can all be integral parts of your heritage.

Give students time to jot down and brainstorm some possibilities. Discuss in small groups for feedback and narrow down their list to one or two ideas.

- Interview a family or community member about how a tradition began or how it has changed over the years.
- Try to imagine explaining the tradition to someone who has never heard of it before. What details might feel familiar and ordinary to you but could be intriguing to others? Aim to narrate the story of celebrating the tradition from beginning to end—including all the details you can recall.
- Look up the history of the tradition on www.kiddle.co. Remind students that the more specific you can be, the better! For example, searching for “History of Easter Egg Hunt” yields better results than simply searching for “Easter” or “Easter Egg Hunt.”

Compile research findings into Google Slides, with one slide for each student, or have each student create a poster about their heritage practice that can be displayed or collected into a class book.



RESOURCES AND SOURCES

WEBSITES

Official Website

<https://www.mariachiherenciademexico.com/>

Official Youtube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/@MariachiHerenciaMex>

Herederos CD

<https://lnk.to/Herederos>

BOOKS

Mariachi by Patricia Greathouse

<https://www.amazon.com/Mariachi-Patricia-Greathouse/dp/1423602811>

Canta, Mariachi, Canta by Jose Hernandez

<https://www.amazon.com/Canta-mariachi-canta-Traditional.../dp/1495062406>

Mariachi Music In America by Daniel Sheehy

<https://www.amazon.com/Mariachi-Music-America-Experiencing-Expressing/dp/0195141466>

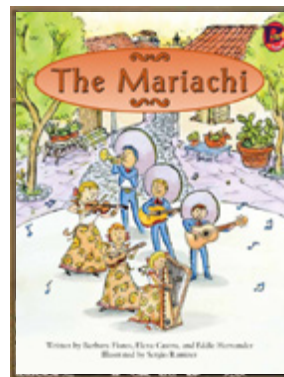
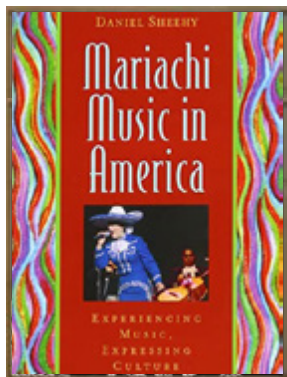
The Mariachi by Elena Castro, Barbara M. Flores, Eddie Hernández

https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-mariachi/teachers_guide

MOVIES

Coco

The Book of Life





*Bring your
lessons to life!*

ABOUT MPAC'S STUDENT MATINEE SERIES

Student matinees are a series of special abbreviated daytime performances for K-12 students featuring internationally-renowned artists. A student matinee is the perfect way to bring the arts to life in a fun and memorable way. To learn more and view this season's matinee schedule, please visit

[MarcusCenter.org](https://marcuscenter.org)

Please take a moment to review our [House Policies and FAQ](#). This includes our guidelines on safety, accessibility, food and drink, backpacks, cell phones, photography, recordings, and more.

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS STUDENT MATINEE SERIES SUPPORTERS!



Special thank you to Mariachi Herencia de México for providing this study guide.