



The History of the Tucson International Mariachi Conference

Library of Congress Bicentennial, 1800-2000:
Local Legacies Report

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This history is the product of a collaborative effort. Raquel Rubio-Goldsmith made it possible in each phase of the research by lending her vast knowledge and insights into the history and culture of southern Arizona. Alfred E. Araiza is owed a debt of gratitude for donating his photographic expertise and materials in providing us with the wonderful images herein. Also, the superb efforts of our students in “The Chicano Movement” and “Chicana Social History” classes were indispensable to constructing the final story. Whatever we have learned from the genesis and legacy of the Tucson International Mariachi Conference is due entirely to their hard work.



Today, as Americans try to understand themselves in a world that is changing with bewildering speed, they find music especially rewarding, for music is among the most enduring aspects of life. Music may be universal, but its meaning is not. Popular music has a special relationship to places; it represents a community's values, it expresses a way of life, and it offers a powerful symbol of a cultural ethos. Yet, as historian George Lipsitz's has recently noted, precisely because music travels from place to place, transcending physical and temporal boundaries, it alters our understanding and appreciation of place. Music that originally emerged from specific historical experiences in places with clearly identifiable geographic boundaries now circulates in forms that call attention to how people from different places create culture in different ways.¹

Regionalism in the United States is thought to have declined since the 1950s with the spread of interstate highways, chains of fast-food restaurants, and television. But just as ethnicity never seems to dissolve into the so-called melting pot, so regional differences have never fully disappeared in American life. Local identities and affiliations find powerful expression in musical styles, like southern gospel, the Chicago blues, the Detroit "Motown" sound, or in ethnic styles such as Appalachian bluegrass and Louisiana xydeco. During the last 30 years, there has been a proliferation of local music festivals, as well as books, journals, and websites dedicated to each genre.

In April 2000, Tucson will pay tribute to the music of the U.S.-Mexico border region by hosting the 18th Annual Tucson International Mariachi Conference (TIMC). This event provides a telling example of the ways in which music transforms, but does not erase, attachments to place. Although mariachi music has its origins in Mexico, today this musical tradition is symbolic of Tucson culture, and increasingly, the entire western United States. "What's more American than mariachi music?" ask many who live in the West. Tucsonans deserve much credit for its sudden popularity, and although the country is too large and diverse to turn all music into national pastimes, Tucson's premier local legacy—its cross-cultural and educational celebration of mariachi music—has fixed this musical tradition in the wider American consciousness.

"Imagine walking through the streets of a major downtown metropolitan city and hearing the vibrant blast of trumpets, the strumming of guitars, and the harmonic blend of voices in song," reads an advertisement for the 2000 conference,

Continue walking and smell the aroma of food being prepared on an outdoor grill. Listen as the sound of laughing children mixes with the rhythmic blend of music and dance on a wooden stage. Turn the corner and you've entered the world of downtown Tucson in April, as mariachis, dancers, children, and people from all walks of life come together in a unique blend of cultural interaction and education . . . If it's April and you're in Tucson, Arizona, then you have the opportunity to listen to and to see the best mariachi groups in the world; to watch the swirling of brightly colored dresses and hear the sharp clap of heels against stage floors as *baile folklórico* dancers perform native *jarabes*; to participate in an event that is, without question, the most successful mariachi conference in the United States.

In order to learn something about the popularity of mariachi music in Tucson, it is necessary to turn to the tradition's origins in the *mestizo* folklore of Mexico. Almost two centuries old, mariachi music is world famous, and its production has been continuous and prolific, particularly in the Mexican state of Jalisco. It was there that the mariachis originated and began to spread out to other regions. Traditionally, mariachis have been strolling folk orchestras. They were originally composed of stringed instruments only—*guitarra* (guitar), *guitarrón* (or large guitar), violin, and the tiny four-stringed *vihuela*. By the 1920s, innovative mariachis introduced cornets and trumpets that have now become a standard part of the ensemble.

In Guadalajara, a large city in Jalisco, mariachis are to be found around the old, well-known markets where people go to hear the music or to hire groups to play for *fiestas*, *serenatas*, [serenades], *casamientos* [weddings], and other special occasions. In smaller towns, they stroll around the main plazas and stop to play for anyone who will pay. In the early 1930s, a few mariachis went to Mexico City. They did well, so

others followed, establishing mariachis as the ubiquitous and quintessential songsters of Mexico. Their rallying-ground in the capital city remains to this day the Plaza Garibaldi. By the mid-twentieth century the spread of radio programs, recordings, and movies made the itinerant mariachi, in full *charro* regalia, one of the most enduring symbols of Mexican culture.

The roots of the Tucson International Mariachi Conference are solidly embedded in the multicultural communities of southern Arizona, particularly those of Tucson's Mexican Americans. According to John Huerta, one of the founders of the TIMC, it was in the early 1960s when a priest with a vast collection of mariachi music, Father Arsenio Carrillo, played a few songs for his colleague, Father Charles Rourke. An accomplished jazz pianist in another life, Rourke was immediately struck by the mariachis' unique tempo. "That's really fascinating," he exclaimed, "I'm gonna learn it!"² Rourke began working with Carrillo's two nephews, Randy and Stevie Carrillo, who were already learning mariachi songs. According to Huerta, Father Rourke "began working with these really simple songs, and he called [the performers together with their rudimentary repertoire] 'The Ugly Little Monkeys,' and that's the way this group started." The group—known in Tucson by their Spanish moniker, "*Los Changuitos Feos*"—would become by 1964 one of the most influential mariachi ensembles to emerge in Tucson.

Before the emergence of "*Los Changuitos Feos*," Tucson's mariachi culture was confined to those places where mariachis had traditionally performed in Mexican American communities—in restaurants, at parties, at weddings, and at other special occasions. A previous group, Mariachi Los Tucsonenses, achieved acclaim beyond Tucson in 1954,³ representing Tucson's budding reputation as a site for the cultivation of young mariachi talent. But it was really *Los Changuitos Feos* that would put Tucson on the international mariachi map.

Rourke's intentions for *Los Changuitos Feos* was to provide interested Mexican American youth with a rewarding experience that would also help build pride in their culture. Although originally intended as a neighborhood project for Mexican Americans, *Los Changuitos Feos* almost immediately attracted the interest of local Anglo Americans. As part of their experimentation with Mexican culture, local Anglos

hired *Los Changuitos Feos* (or the *Changos*, as they became known) for Mexican parties and other special occasions. Eventually, Anglo patronage helped establish a college scholarship fund for the group.

Some of the original *Changos* became increasingly successful. Their musical talents helped pay for university educations. Randy Carrillo got his degree and went to work for a city councilor; Macario Ruiz and Bobby Martinez graduated to become teachers at local high schools. In 1971, while he was still a student, Randy Carrillo, along with musical arranger Frank Grijalva, formed what would become Tucson's premier mariachi troupe, *El Mariachi Cobre*. The new ensemble became a full-blown mariachi orchestra, with the addition of local musicians, Gilbert Velez, Fred Tarazón, Ruben Moreno, and others. According to Moreno, it was a new generation of Mexican Americans who saw the importance of maintaining the mariachi tradition in Tucson. He explained:

There were so few venues for mariachis to play back in the 70s. After the golden era in the 60s, the interest started to fall off. Mariachi conferences revived here in the United States and my theory is because the second and third generation Mexican American kids wanted to recapture what they lost. They were removed from home. The grandparents were still from [Mexico]. They told them stories, stories that would move you to tears. I mean the connection between grandparent and parent, and what they can do to revive [Mexican culture]—well, the mariachi music became that, and that's why in this moment it was even stronger than in Mexico where they took it for granted. Over here, because we were removed from [Mexican culture], we had to preserve it because that's all we had. This wasn't Mexico anymore. . . . And there was something missing and will always be. It's soul, it's heart . . . [F]amily and the music reinforce soul and heart. So, the third/fourth generation, the Mexican Americans, embraced mariachi music to remind them [of their Mexican roots] because the lyrics said things—they were the same values from the day of Jorge Negrete, Pedro Infante, José Alfredo Jiménez, Javier Solís, Miguel Aceves Mejía—the great movie stars. I mean, it was such a golden era of values and bigger than life. Now it's greed. People wanted to live at a heroic level and so it was the embracing of the mariachi music that allowed that to happen here, and it was the conference that kept it transparent, and kids

started to see it and they attached themselves to it, it was theirs. It wasn't black, Afro-American; it wasn't white. It was theirs.⁴

In 1972, Mariachi Cobre won a major competition in Los Angeles, instantly acquiring a reputation outside of Tucson. In 1973 and 1974, the orchestra landed summer jobs performing at Disneyworld in Florida. Throughout the 1970s, however, Carrillo and his fellow artists performed primarily in Mexican restaurants—such as La Fuente and Las Yentes—before local Tucson audiences. Gilbert Velez and Ruben Moreno would leave “Cobre” to form their own highly competitive mariachi orchestra, Mariachi Internacional de las Américas (also known as International Mariachi America).⁵

In 1981, Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán invited Mariachi Cobre and Mariachi de las Américas to compete in the first mariachi competition of its kind in San Antonio, Texas. According to Mary C. “Marty” Lynch, one of the long-time backers of Los Changuitos Feos and Mariachi Cobre, “Randy came to me one day [and said] ‘Mariachi Vargas has invited us to come compete in San Antonio—we don’t have the money.’ So, we got together a concert down at the Santa Rita Hotel. Now, I don’t think I ever had as much fun in my life. We got that done and made enough money to take the boys to San Antonio.”⁶ Considered to be the most accomplished mariachi orchestra in the world, Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán sat as judges while Mariachi Cobre “blew them away!” According to fellow mariachi Ruben Moreno, “the Mariachi Cobre clearly out-danced and outshined everyone else. And the [San Antonio] barrio gave them the best Mariachi award . . . and a thousand bucks.”⁷ The next year, 1982, Mariachi de las Américas won first place in San Antonio’s mariachi competition and first runner-up internationally.⁸

To Randy Carrillo, the San Antonio competition was an eye-opener. “Randy saw [the San Antonio conference as] kind of disorganized, a running it ‘out of a shoe box,’ [operation],” noted Ruben Moreno. At one point during the competition, Carrillo turned to his confidant, Marty Lynch, and said, “I think we could do a better job having the Mariachi Conference in Tucson than they do here.” As Lynch notes, “truthfully, that was the beginning of the Tucson Mariachi Conference.”⁹

When Carrillo announced his idea of a Tucson mariachi conference, local Tucsonans got excited. But

precisely at the moment that Carrillo suggested the idea of a Tucson conference, he was distracted by an offer he could not refuse. As Marty Lynch remembered, “just as we were beginning to get this thing down here, some clown named Walt Disney decided that our mariachis, who were the Mariachi Cobre, should go to open Epcot Center. So, we lost the boys, the nucleus of our whole program.”¹⁰ Although Mariachi Cobre would return to teach and perform for the first conference, it fell to another to pick up Randy Carrillo’s vision and carry it through to fruition.

According to one early organizer, John Huerta, Fred Tarazón, “an aggressive, young violinist, member of Mariachi Cobre, who saw himself as an up-and-coming entrepreneur,” helped convince the Festival Society to become the official sponsor of the conference.¹¹ In order to get the Tucson Festival Society’s attention, Tarazón, who was a full-time employee of Senator Dennis Deconcini, in the senator’s Tucson office, and Lynch rallied numerous important Tucsonans to help in the quest to bring to life Randy Carrillo’s dream of a Tucson mariachi conference. It was not hard to convince influential Mexican American entrepreneurs—such as Roberto and Josephine Ruiz, owners of Ruiz Engineering and Maya Construction, Carlotta and Ray Flores, owners of El Charro Restaurant, and Bob Aranda, an affiliate of Valley National Bank (later Bank One)—that a mariachi conference would be a good thing for the city, especially its Mexican American community. In initial meetings, this informal committee decided to approach the Festival Society. This was partly because of the society’s credibility, and history of sponsoring events celebrating the various cultures of Tucson, and partly because Roberto Ruiz was on its board of directors. “I think it was a natural thing for the Tucson Festival Society to be involved with something like this,” recalled volunteer Delfina Álvarez.

The Tucson Festival Society focused on different activities. They had, I believe, a Silver and Turquoise Ball, where they had a Tucson Festival Society queen and it was a real honor to be elected queen. They had a beautiful pin I remember, you know, as a symbol. So, all the queens got a big, beautiful silver and turquoise pin, the crown was out of silver and turquoise and they had an activity at San Xavier [the historic mission church on the Tohono O’odam



reservation] and they sponsored a major outdoor activity, at La Placita, which used to be the older part of Tucson, between Broadway and Congress. There was a gazebo there and they had a lot of activities at it. [The Festival Society] was kind of social, kind of a focus on cultural groups in Tucson, and it highlighted the Hispanic community activities and the Indian community activities and there were Anglos that were interested in the culturally diverse activities.¹²

Seeing the mariachi conference as a perfect fit with their activities, Festival Society proponents gladly endorsed the idea. Sure of their abilities to mobilize resources for such an event, board members decided to reserve the Tucson Community Center for a conference to be held April 10-16, 1983.

However, the support of the society did not automatically smooth the way for the first conference. Many influential Mexican Americans got involved—including Gerald Garcia, the editor of the *Tucson Citizen*, Rudy Bejerano, a Tucson city councilman, and Joel Valdez, the city manager—and non-Hispanics such as Senator Dennis DeConcini. “There was a small amount of money given by the city through the Festival Society,” Marty Lynch recalled. “And that was not a very difficult thing to get. So that was fine to get that from the city, but it was not very much money either.”¹³ As the scheduled date for the first conference got closer, Tarazón continued to incur costs beyond the organization’s capacity. It soon became clear to Jarvis Harriman, executive director of the Festival Society, and other board members that their organization did not have the funds to achieve their goal, at least according to Tarazón’s plan. “Fred got in trouble,” remembered Ruben Moreno, “he promised too much . . . He promised mariachi groups in Texas that Clydesdale horses from Budweiser coming from St. Louis could pick them up and give them a ride to Tucson, and yet he’ll deny it to this day.”¹⁴ As John Huerta recalled:

Jarvis had determined that Fred Tarazón was in over his head. Fred had put together a wonderful organization on paper, using the names of community leaders and local companies. Unfortunately, behind his organization chart was nothing. In essence, he was a one-man show. Fred’s youth and inexperience were getting in the way. Anticipating a \$40,000 loss and possible bankruptcy [of the Festival Society], Jarvis wanted

desperately to avoid the disaster, so he asked us to step in to help.¹⁵

Marty Lynch said, “we then decided that we should take the conference to what we considered to be the best of the Hispanic philanthropies in town, La Frontera.”¹⁶ La Frontera Center is a non-profit, free mental health clinic that was founded in 1968 to serve the needs of the primarily Mexican American residents of South Tucson. The clinic’s board of directors was known for being astute, tenacious, and effective. Less than two months before the conference was to take place, the Festival Society board decided that Roberto Ruiz should contact his friend, Ernesto Portillo, a La Frontera board member, to see about making the conference a fundraiser for mental health services. Portillo recalled the occasion:

It was Sunday afternoon, I was at home with my family. We were having a *carne asada*. And I was making a nice big fire, when there’s the phone calling about 2:30, 2:00 or 3:00 in the afternoon. . . . It was Roberto Ruiz, a good friend of mine. At that time, he was connected with the Tucson Festival Society . . .

He said, ‘Ernesto, I need to talk to you. I need to ask you something.’

I said, ‘Listen, I am making some *carne asada*.’

He said, ‘Sit down and listen to me. We had a meeting [of] the Tucson Festival Society, probably you know, but they are working to put on the first mariachi conference in Tucson.’

I said, ‘So?’

‘Well, it’s going to go belly-up!’

‘What do you mean?’

‘Yeah, they’re going to go bust. Unless someone saves it.’

‘Why me?’

He says because you need to talk to your people on the board of La Frontera.¹⁷

Portillo arranged for himself and two other board members from La Frontera—John Huerta and Elva Flores—to have an emergency meeting with Jarvis

Harriman, director of the Festival Society Board of Directors. “We immediately saw this as an opportunity to raise money for La Frontera,” recalled Huerta, “so we agreed to an emergency weekend meeting before taking the matter to the [La Frontera] board. On Tuesday evening of the following week, Ernesto Portillo and I made a presentation to the board offering La Frontera sponsorship of the conference and the proceeds from the concert. The board was very hesitant because of the obvious financial risk and were prepared to turn us down.”¹⁸

“They weren’t buying it at all,” recalled Lynch.

[W]e’re telling you this year you may not make money, but you will make money. I think that’s what they were saying. And finally down along the table some little Mexican woman spoke up and she said, ‘I get so tired of making menudo’ [as a fund raiser]. This was the turning point and they all got in the program. They decided, ‘well, we’ll try something bigger than making menudo.’ So that was the turning point and from there on the mariachi conference got under the auspices of the Mexican people.¹⁹

Portillo, who also was in attendance, recalled:

I said . . . ‘Jarvis [Harriman] is here to present us with the opportunity to assist them, to get it all off their hands and for us to run with it so that we can perhaps raise funds for La Frontera.’ Someone says, ‘Well, what if it fails?’ Jarvis stood up and said, ‘We will not let you lose any money . . . Should the event lose any money, the Tucson Festival Society will be responsible.’ . . . We had a very, very good board. Extremely. One of the best boards I have ever been on. And someone says, ‘What if we, if this board, doesn’t want to accept the proposal?’ And I remember distinctly, John Huerta, as tall as he is, stood up and says, ‘Well, folks, let me submit to you, if the board per se does not take it over, there will be a few of us and/or other members in the community who will put a group together and will take it.’ End of story, it was approved.²⁰

“I threatened to take the committee that was working with me, put on the conference, and donate all the funds to La Frontera,” said Huerta, “all quite independent of the board of directors.”

The 22-member board was at first divided over the issue of using mariachi performances as a means of raising funds for mental health. Nelba Chávez, who

was then the chief executive officer of the La Frontera board, recalled one member from Green Valley who asked, “why should we be involved in doing musicals, music?” Chávez, who later became head administrator of the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, responded by stressing that “music was very important to people’s health.” Knowing full well that they had less than two months until the scheduled time of the conference, the La Frontera Board accepted the task of creating new funds for their neighborhood clinic. They did so, however, under strict conditions. Those conditions, according to Chávez, were:

One, this was going to be La Frontera’s fundraiser from here on out. Number two, it was not just going to be the concert. It was going to be an educational experience for young children and whoever wanted to be part of it. The educational piece was [aimed] at young people and old people who were interested in preserving not only the culture but learning more about the music, whether it’s violin or *guitarrón* or *guitarra*. That they would have that opportunity as part of the conference . . .²¹

The decision to implement an educational component, however, was not made by the La Frontera board that day. Tucson mariachis themselves had long insisted on the importance of using the conference to preserve the folkloric musical form. Ernesto Portillo noted:

It was the members of Mariachi Cobre and Los Changuitos Feos before who had the idea, who saw the need to have those training programs to say the least, to start educating people as young as they could once they were interested in the concept of mariachi music; for them to have the opportunity to have the real professionals show them how to play in this environment, the violin, the *vihuela*, the guitar, the trumpets—how to refine their skill. The element of teaching, and the love of the music, and the hope that new, young people would start following in those tracks, it was [the mariachis] idea.”²²

After the board “cautiously endorsed the idea,” said Huerta, “the whole fund raising committee, including Fred Tarazón, started to work in earnest.”²³ The organizers of the Tucson Mariachi Conference wanted it to be better than anything that had come before. They knew they needed to bring to town the



top Mexican mariachi orchestra, Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán. Ernesto Portillo explained what happened:

The following day, two days, I remember I sent Fred Tarazón . . . he wanted to very much make this a reality because he had seen the Carrillo boys [of Mariachi Cobre], had seen what had taken place in San Antonio. I said, 'Fred you get on that plane, get over, and get me those contracts.' Supposedly contracts with Mariachi Vargas. And when I say to you Mariachi Vargas, being the number one in the world, I also talk about Ruben Fuentes, the great composer and arranger who pretty much headed up the Mariachi Vargas and who had made some fantastic symphonic arrangements so the mariachi and the [Tucson] symphony could play [together]. We had in mind, obviously, the Mariachi Vargas, Mariachi Cobre, and the Tucson Symphony playing those arrangements. I got Freddy on the plane, he went to Mexico and brought back the contracts.²⁴

Meanwhile, other organizers went to work securing financial investments from sponsors, private contributions, and donations. "We were able to pick two major sponsors quickly," said Huerta, "Valley National Bank and Coors. The three weeks went very fast as we attempted to fill in all of the blank spots in the plan."²⁵

Arriving on the scene to play a major role was banker Michael Hard, the chief Valley National representative to the TIMC. Today, Bank One (formerly Valley National) is the title sponsor of the event. Hard, along with his spouse, Cathy, became the first co-chairs of the conference in 1983. Hard was a fan of mariachi music since the time he first heard it. "I literally was a dude from the East," he said. "I had heard classical music. My father was an opera fan and everything, but I heard this [mariachi] music and just fell in love with it . . . By the way, understanding no Spanish whatsoever." But, as Hard admitted, the love of mariachi music was something shared in Tucson across linguistic and ethnic lines. "So many people that I had met in Tucson grew up with this music, whether they were Anglo or Asian or Hispanic or black or white or whatever. It seemed like it was one of those things that was as natural as the desert soil. So, an opportunity to celebrate something like that rather than something new, or more popular, it just seemed to be the right thing to do."²⁶ For

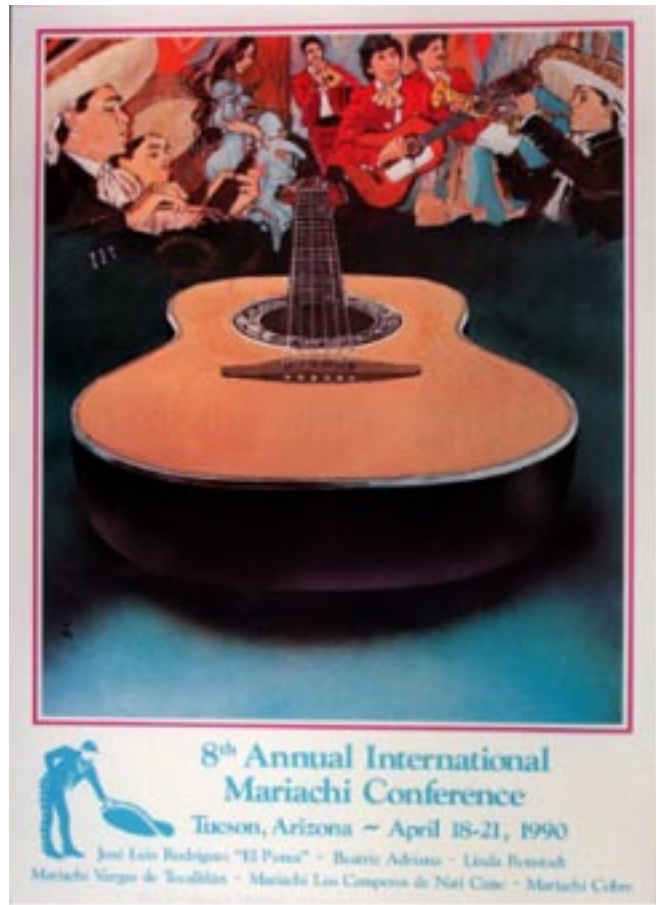
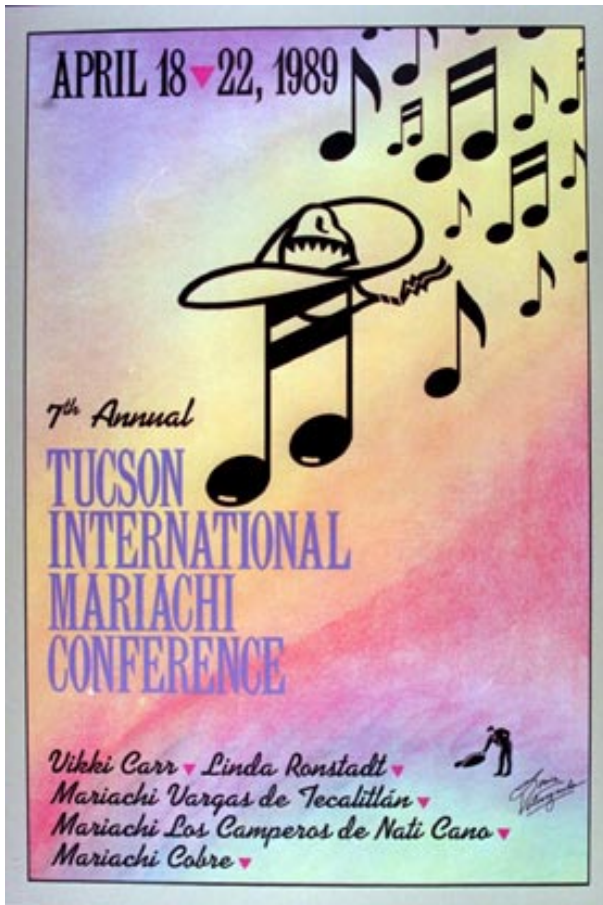
longtime supporter Marty Lynch, music was the perfect vehicle for facilitating communication across numerous social boundaries. "It just seemed as if this kind of performance would appeal as an international program," she remembered. "I kept stressing it as 'international.' We didn't have NAFTA then. We didn't have any of those things, and we were trying to get things that were working back and forth across this border. Music is a common denominator."²⁷

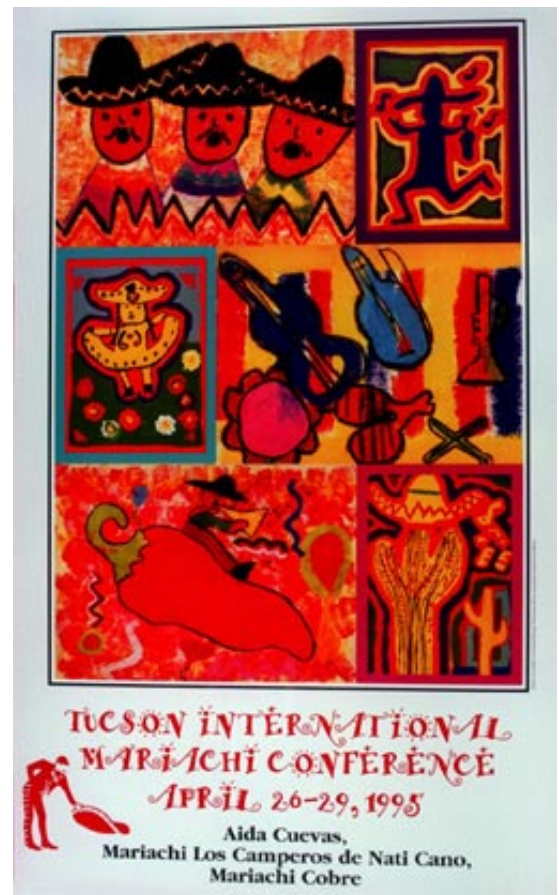
One facet of the developing plan was to hold a reception for important Tucsonans in order to attract attention to the conference. The "VIP night" was sponsored by Valley National Bank and organized by Michael and Cathy Hard. The event was aimed at a broad cross-section of renowned, influential, and up-and-coming Tucson personalities. Michael Hard explained the idea behind the event:

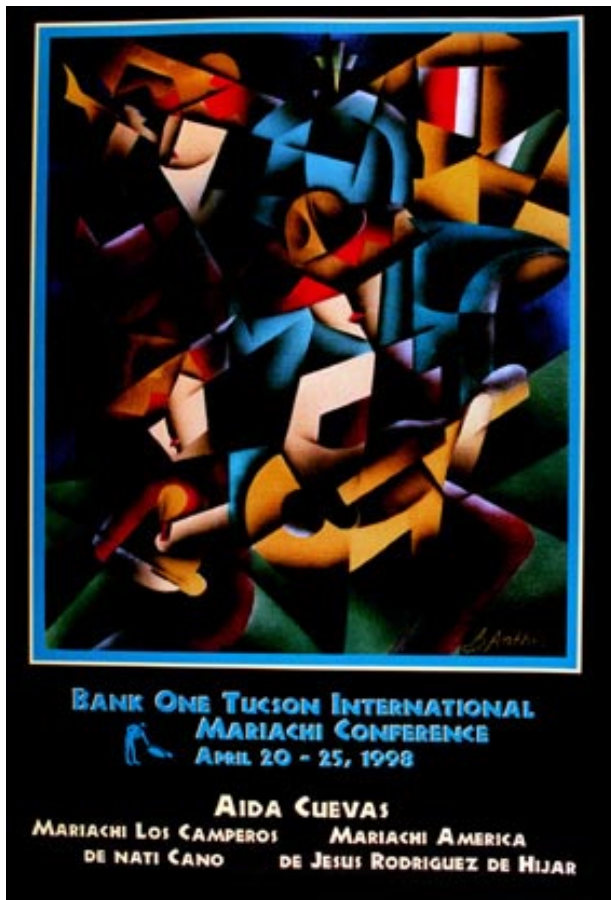
The idea again was, 'Okay. We have a good idea, but how can we get some key people involved in it so the word will spread to people that might be able to influence its success in the future?' So, we felt a great setting for that would be the pool at the Arizona Inn. So, I remember my wife and I, at the last minute that night, putting luminaries all around the pool at the Arizona Inn. Actually, Sean Elliot [now a professional basketball player] came with his mother. Odiemay Elliot came and introduced this shy, young boy that was playing basketball at high school . . . [Cathy and I] decided to invite a number of friends and long time people in the community . . . for example, Buck O'Reilly [the local automobile dealer] and his wife. My wife had gone to school with them, lifetime Tucsonans. And, Buck O'Reilly, I remember him saying, 'Oh my God, that's great!' . . . So, we knew that the kind of chords we were hitting were with different people out of different segments of the community.²⁸

Another piece of what was becoming nearly a week-long program was to provide a street fair that would re-create Plaza Garibaldi, home of Mexico City's strolling mariachis. "The idea in terms of the re-creation of Garibaldi," recalled Nelba Chávez, "was to also have booths. We decided that we would ensure that the community was part of that, especially a lot of the community programs. They invited community organizations to set up booths . . . The first year they selected about twenty. The idea was they would set up their own booths, whether it was a









Pages 9-12 show Tucson International Mariachi Conference posters from the first year, 1983, through 1998, with the exception of the one from 1993. The 1993 and 1999 posters are the only two that were designed horizontally. Both appear on the back cover.

Photographs of the posters are by A. E. Araiza of *The Arizona Daily Star*.



food booth or whatever they wanted, and they kept all the money they made.”²⁹

Without volunteers the work of putting a conference together never would have gotten done, she said.

Ninety-nine percent of [the conference workers] are working people that take time off from their regular jobs to come and work . . . from selling tee-shirts to hauling people from the airport to sitting down and planning the whole thing to negotiating contracts. It just goes on and on. They look at everything to try and cut costs so they can fulfill their mission. I guess the thing that the community will hopefully recognize is that these are all volunteers and they are doing it because they want to do it, not because they are getting anything. They are getting a big reward in seeing what they are doing is having an impact on the lives of other human beings . . . The community really needs to recognize [the volunteers], because not only did they start a national movement in this area, but number two they brought in a lot of money to our community . . .³⁰

“I got involved with the conference as a volunteer,” said Delfina Álvarez, who is one of many who got excited about the possibility of establishing Tucson as a center of mariachi enthusiasm. She explained:

I’ve always liked mariachi music and I was supportive of the person who was then director of La Frontera Center Board, which was Dr. Nelba Chávez. I had already done volunteer work at La Frontera Center with the building. The Frontera Center had a number of different spots that they worked out of and then finally they built the building on 29th [Street] and they had a big radio-thon fundraiser, I remember working all night on the fundraiser, just raising funds for the building. So, you know I was already familiar with La Frontera Center. So, this was just an event that seemed like it was fun and it would be more, something that I believed in, which was the mental health services. So, I did it.³¹

Álvarez first heard about the impending conference while working as a student counselor at Pima Community College under the leadership of Dr. Elizabeth González. “She was very involved when they took

over the mariachi conference,” remembered Álvarez, “so, they were looking for volunteers and I volunteered, and I think it was for the mariachi education component at that point. I remember having to pick up music stands from about two or three different high schools and transporting them in the cars and setting them up and picking them up.”³²

Lolie Gómez, the conference coordinator for the past ten years, also got involved as a volunteer. “I started as a volunteer in 1983 from the very beginning,” she noted, “and from that position as a volunteer I went on to be on the board of directors, then from the board of directors on to conference coordinator.”³³ Gómez learned of the first mariachi conference “through friends,” she remembered, “friends of friends.” According to Gómez:

Dr. Chávez called one of my friends and said, ‘we need help! We have a very short period in which to put this together.’ And so it was like, ‘we need lots of help and we need it right now! You call all your friends,’ and so, I believe it was Mary Lee Valdez, Joel Valdez’s [the City Manager’s] wife, that called me. And we started working on it.³⁴

La Frontera set in motion a massive mobilization of volunteers and resources to make the first conference happen, a task nothing less than remarkable. Portillo explained the process:

How could we recreate a Garibaldi setting? Well, there was a committee for that. How could we put together the components such as the *puestos* [stands/booths]? Who was going to manage the components or put together those *puestos*? What about traffic? What about the facilities for such an event? The City of Tucson—Joel Valdez being city manager at that time—very much wanted to assist us. Still, they needed to have direction. What about a group of ladies working the mechanics of the tickets? Who is going to handle what? We had to put all those committees in place. What about the two or three days prior to the event? Members of the Mariachi Vargas and Mariachi Cobre were implementing another first for Tucson—school training, if you please—music training at the Tucson Community Center. Who is going to be working what? This, nobody knew. We were perhaps trying to invent some kind of wheel, a musical wheel, if you please . . . and we needed to give it some direction as best we could



because no one had done it before. Not in Tucson, anyway.³⁵

Finally, all was in place for a program that would bristle with electricity and artistic flourishes. Huerta outlined the daily events:

The conference opened at the Tucson Convention Center on Wednesday [April 10, 1983] with the Mariachi Vargas [de Tecalitlán] conducting the workshops for students from all over the West. Traveling with Mariachi Vargas was the founder of the group, Silvestre Vargas, and Ruben Fuentes, one of Mexico's leading composer/arrangers and manager of Mariachi Vargas. On Thursday evening, we sponsored a VIP reception for the sponsors and special guests. On Friday evening the concert was held in the arena of the convention center; on Saturday morning the mariachi competition (the Student Showcase) was held in the music hall; and at noon on Saturday a street fair called Garibaldi started.³⁶

The culmination of the efforts set in motion by the groups and individuals drawn into the mariachi conference's preparations was a program that paid off richly in psychic and material rewards. One of the highlights, according to Carlotta Flores—who volunteered and fed many conference organizers at her restaurant, El Charro—was “That it was new! There were some Anglo people that were involved that enjoyed it as much as we did.”³⁷

Said Ernesto Portillo:

As I remember, one of the highest points . . . was when the Tucson Symphony was making things ready. Mariachi Cobre came in, lined up, Mariachi Vargas came in, took their positions, then Pepe Martinez, director of the mariachi conference. I remember distinctly, he took off his sombrero, put it down, and he took the baton, the director's baton, raised it up and, lo and behold, one of the most beautiful sounds started coming out. The Tucson Symphony, Mariachi Vargas, and Mariachi Cobre. I couldn't cry because there were a few people around me. I felt like that. And then, my, it just [rubbing his arms, as if chilled with goosebumps]. You talk emotion—a thousand percent. I will never forget that. Even in Mexico City, where I had seen some very beautiful functions at Bellas Artes, they never had a full symphony orchestra with Mariachi Vargas let alone two mariachi groups. It was just beautiful.³⁸

The concert was a sold-out event with about 9,000 in attendance. The evening's performance featured inspired solos by Mexican singing sensation Lola Beltrán. “I took one look at the audience from behind the stage,” recalled John Huerta, “and told Elva [Flores, soon to be Vice President of the newly-formed TIMC board], ‘We have a tiger by the tail.’ It was wonderful to see such a cross section of people together,” he continued. “In the main floor was the business community, professional people; on the sides were Tucson's middle class, both Hispanic and Anglo; in the upper sections were the working class families and ranchers from throughout southern Arizona. Nothing in Tucson history had brought the community together like the Tucson International Mariachi Conference.”³⁹ Don Silvestre Vargas, the patriarch of El Mariachi Vargas, also considered the conference to be a success. “I remember how impressed he was at what was happening around him,” recalled Huerta. “During the workshops he leaned over to tell me that he was finding it hard to believe that he had to leave Mexico to attend the first international mariachi conference. He said, ‘In my country, the young people are no longer interested in mariachi music. They are more interested in Michael Jackson.’ He died before the third concert.”⁴⁰ In part, the sell-out of the concert was due to giving tickets away. Nevertheless, the organizers saw a net proceed of \$10,000 and knew that this was the beginning of something special in Tucson.⁴¹

Although the success of the conference was modest at best, it prepared the ground for what would become a source of great pride in southern Arizona culture. In each successive year, the organizers focused on ways of improving and expanding the program offerings. “We did have a golf tournament that went well,” remembered Álvarez. The golf tournament went for about, maybe it was five or six years. And we tried one year a film festival—that didn't go over very well. And we added the artist exhibit, and that would start the night of the mariachi concert.”⁴²

One important aspect was the development of a visual accompaniment to the conference in the form of artistic posters. The first conference poster was provided by Tucson artist Roberto Borboa. In subsequent conferences the poster became a competition among enthusiastic artists. “Most of them were done by local artists” claimed Nelba Chávez. “One

year the poster was done by children at one of the local elementary schools . . . There was a lot of thought in that.”⁴³ According to Lolie Gómez, today, “a call for artists goes out I think in September and by December—we like to have something back at the end of December—and then at our board meeting we set them all out and we choose which one we like—very democratic.” As the Tucson International Mariachi Conference has grown in prestige, its poster competitions have attracted artists of high esteem. “We were fortunate enough in 1999 to have the DeGrazia Foundation volunteer to let us use one of DeGrazia’s paintings and that was very nice,” noted Gómez. “This year [2000] Armando Peña—he’s a very well-known southwestern artist from Santa Fe—is doing our poster. It’s the first time he’s ever done anything Hispanic. Usually his [works] are southwestern, Indian-type. And so he is doing his first ever mariachi painting. So we’re really anxious to see how it actually goes. I’m dying to see it!”⁴⁴

Another important development was securing the participation of Tucson’s distinguished, homegrown artist, Linda Ronstadt. “In 1985, I had the opportunity to start a process that would bring Linda Ronstadt to our stage,” Huerta recalled.

Linda had been in attendance at the first concert and acknowledged from the stage. Her family came to Tucson in the 1850s, and I knew her parents, her siblings, and her. In 1985, at the VIP reception, I approached Linda’s father, Gilbert (Gibby), about Linda’s involvement. I told Gibby that we were not getting any younger and it was about time that Linda came back to town to sing in Spanish. Gibby turned to his son Peter Ronstadt, then the chief of police, and told him to make sure that I got to talk to Linda. Within two weeks I was talking to Linda about singing in Spanish. Linda was excited about singing and recording, but she laid down some conditions. She wanted to make sure that the songs she was going to sing were songs that her father had taught her. “They have to be 50 years or older,” she said. She also wanted to receive copies of *cancioneros*, Mexican songbooks, to become familiar with the lyrics. Finally, she wanted to meet with Ruben Fuentes about the arrangements and recordings.⁴⁵

Another important figure who played an influential role in bringing Linda Ronstadt into the conference was María Urquides. Urquides was one of the

founders of bilingual education in the United States and also Rondstadt’s high school teacher. According to Marty Lynch, Urquides:

was a great, driving influence in the mariachi conference. She was an important person for the cooperation between the TIMC and the city—particularly the Hispanic big-wigs. She is the one who personally got Linda Rondstadt. That was a board action. Basically, they decided that ‘María, you are the one who can get a hold of Linda.’ It was not just making a regular phone call. María Urquides was the real person to talk Linda into participating.⁴⁶

When asked why she chose to get involved as a performer in the conference, Rondstadt said that it was “the fact that I could get access to those bands because, see, those bands are dwindling.” Moreover, she added, it had to do with acknowledging the virtuosity of the mariachi tradition itself. “All those guys in the Mariachi Vargas, they’re all great sight-readers,” she explained. “I mean all those guys in the Mariachi Vargas can do what the symphony players can do. But the symphony players can’t do what those guys can do. I mean they’re so flexible, they can do anything. But I like them best when they stick to traditional stuff.”⁴⁷ Ronstadt would lend her celebrity status to the event, donating her time and performances to La Frontera Center and the Tucson community. Nonetheless, she recognized the numerous personal rewards from her involvement. For example, in Lola Beltrán—the legendary Mexican vocalist—Ronstadt found a model of professional vocalization. “I would have walked through the ocean to see her!” she exclaimed. “She was fabulous.” Indeed, Ronstadt was intrigued by the stylizations of mariachi singing. She explained:

You have to have a strong voice. Those guys are incredibly strong singers. What you have to have the strength for mainly is to stand there and sing for hours and hours and hours. With the rock and roll band, I sang for two hours. Because I sang with an electric band my whole life, I have an overdeveloped volume, which in a way made it possible to stand up to those guys. And Lola Beltrán is very overdeveloped because she just sang forever and ever and ever. The projection is like an operatic tenor. It’s the same technique, basically. And it’s great. It’s a very efficient technique. It was Lola Beltrán who saved my



singing. She saved my voice. My copying of her gave me a different kind of technique. So, I have a whole lot of debt of gratitude. And because of this conference I was able to go do what the conference is doing, which is teaching these basic traditional skills . . .⁴⁸

In 1988, Ronstadt would record her famous Spanish-language album, *Canciones de mi Padre*, with the instrumental support of three great mariachi orchestras—Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán, El Mariachi Cobre, and Mariachi Los Camperos de Nati Cano—all of which performed and provided instruction at the Tucson conference. “It was wonderful to watch her use the conference to build her repertoire,” recalled Marty Lynch.

She really is a fine, fine lady who was awfully good for the thing. And I don’t know how much the mariachi conference has given credit to Linda, but it would not be there unless Linda had gotten on board. With her contacts, she got Vicki Carr to perform . . . I can’t remember where I saw her, [but] she said, ‘I’m going to Hollywood, to be in the Hollywood Bowl because I have to pay back Vicki for when she came here.’ Things like that. The Tucson conference’s success is totally, as far as I am concerned, responsible to Linda.⁴⁹

When asked whether or not she agreed, as did many, that she was “the pivotal part of the beginning of the mariachi conference,” Ronstadt called the assertion “ironic.” It was “ironic because it was me trying to find acceptance from the mariachi,” she said.

It was the mariachi that had the power. They’re the ones that are playing the music. It’s their tool. I only came as a student. I wasn’t very good the first couple of times, I wasn’t. I hadn’t been doing it long enough. But once I got the chance to be on the road with Mariachi Vargas, my skills came up and that became my own personal workshop—going on tour with those guys.⁵⁰

But Ronstadt contributed to the conference program in other profound ways. Perhaps, the single greatest addition to the conference program was the introduction—in performance and instruction—of Mexican *folklórico* dancing. Ronstadt was instrumental in bringing it into the conference program. “Mariachi is dance music,” she exclaimed. “I wanted to bring dance into the festival.” Ronstadt insisted that to separate mariachi music from its dance forms

would be “like taking clog dancing away from bluegrass.” She persuaded the mariachi conference board of directors to begin including folkloric dancing in each part of the program. Without dancing, Ronstadt insisted, the music “then becomes this rigid, sterile form.

If there’s not this interaction of the dance and the music, the tempo starts getting faster and the players start getting too stiff, and besides, the dance is an incredible way of showing your wares, in a sense. But there’s still a great deal of modesty that goes with it. It’s the only place where the man and the woman—the *macho* and the *hembra*—are equal. They meet—which doesn’t happen very much in Mexican culture because it’s very male-dominated. But that’s one of the places where women actually have equality and they can say, “look, here I am, I’m great! If you’re not that great you don’t get to have me because I’m going to dance right on down to another partner. But at the same time that it’s some of the sexiest stuff I’ve ever seen, it’s very modest. If you reach for something with desire and it’s responded to with a chaste modesty, the result is beauty. Mexican folklorico dancing is fabulous. It shows respect, it shows courtesy. It shows care for something that’s delicate. But there’s a lot of strength in that delicacy. And you can tell a lot when a couple dance together. My main dancer, Elsa Estrada, was just fabulous. You know she’s got these fabulous great, big eyes. And she keeps them down most of the time. And everybody goes, “oh well, that’s the woman being, you know, acting secondary.” And I’m going, “no it isn’t.” Because every time they come up it’s like an explosion. And down they go again. And you know you don’t have to have a skinny model’s body. You can bring your own.⁵¹

Of course, once the mariachi conference board decided to incorporate dance into the program, the task of pulling it off fell to the people on the ground. “I was involved in starting the folklorico part of it,” recalled Delfina Álvarez. Convincing the board to expand the dancing component wasn’t hard, she said.

We always included dances in the presentations, we invited groups from Tucson to participate and they came to Garibaldi, they came in the beginning, and they were not very coordinated. [We brought in] one of the coordinators from Up With People [Lynne Morris], because she knew how to move, you know, to have entrance

with dances. And they would come in at different times and the dancers themselves said, “if you’re going to invite us, why don’t you have workshops [for dancing] too?” So, it was all very natural, it had to be. So, since I was with a folklórico group, when I was at Pima [College] I was allotted the coordination. And through my friend Angel [Hernández]—I knew a lot of instructors and the best instructors—so, I used my past experience to contact them and bring them in. And we always try to bring the best, we try to bring different instructors, too. We bring instructors from Mexico City, from Hidalgo, from Monterrey, from Guadalajara, and again the students come because they get a different instructor, and we do use local instructors, too.⁵²

According to Álvarez, one remarkable outcome of the past ten years of dance instruction and performance at the conference is that strong ties have been formed between folklórico teachers.

In subsequent years, the TIMC became nationally and internationally recognized as the leading proponent of the mariachi tradition. Yet, for many Tucsonans and *Tucsonenses* the impact of the annual event has been immeasurable. For the people of southern Arizona the mariachi conference has become an essential—even compulsory—component of life. Beginning with the second annual conference, in 1984, *The Arizona Daily Star* estimated that “20,000 Tucsonans showed up at the community center for the free Garibaldi Night.”⁵³ For many, the event provided an occasion for family reunions. “A lot of people would come from California,” recalled Nelba Chávez.

They’d just love going down there to Armory Park [for Garibaldi] because they were seeing people they hadn’t seen in 10, 25, 30 years. It also brought back a lot of old acquaintances. It also reacquainted a lot of people with people they had grown up with in childhood. You have no idea how many letters I would get from people saying, ‘*muchas gracias*. I got to see this friend of mine that I grew up with 50 or 30 years ago.’ There was something else that was created. It was like re-bonding people with very critical milestones in their life.⁵⁴

The mariachi tradition became a vehicle for instilling pride in a Mexican cultural heritage, but conference organizers also hoped it could be reward-

ing in equitable ways across gender lines. Although the traditional music is male oriented with respect to the performers, the conference organizers paid attention to questions of gender equality. “Some of my favorite memories over the years,” reflected conference founder Michael Hard, “are some of the females who stepped forward and became very recognizable. As a matter of fact, I just saw recently a picture of a new mariachi group I have never seen before. I picked up the picture and there wasn’t a single female in the group and I thought, “That’s not good!”⁵⁵ Indeed, when an all-female mariachi—Mariachi Las Adelitas—emerged on the scene, the Tucson organizers provided them with their first major showcase.

“The other piece that is really important is the sense of pride that you’re instilling in many of these children,” said Chávez. At the end of the third conference, one organizer noted, “you know, we had 850 kids and there was not one fight. We had 1,000 kids here and nothing bad happened.”⁵⁶ “It’s not just the music the kids are being taught,” observed Chávez. “They were also being taught showmanship: how you walk, how you behave. All those things that are so important in terms of character. I remember seeing these four-year-olds with tiny violins to the person that was 85 years old, all of them together in the violin class. Awesome, awesome, awesome!”⁵⁷ Displaying similar concerns for the impressions made on youth, Álvarez said:

Now we have a dress code for instructors because a couple of years ago we had a couple of musicians who would appear with tee-shirts that had bad messages and so we have a dress code. And in fact last year [1999] was the first year that we provided very nice polo shirts for all the instructors. And, you know, it’s up to the coordinators—the coordinator of the mariachi, the coordinator of the folklórico. About two years ago the coordinator asked all the instructors to come in a shirt and tie, but it depends. Last year it was really nice with the polo shirts. All the instructors had the black polo shirts and it said “*Maestro*” and then I believe they all wore white pants. For the folklórico instructors it’s kind of different. They have to wear something like sweats or a dance skirt, something that you can work in. But they did wear the shirts when they first showed up. All of our instructors are role models for our students.⁵⁸



One important effect of the TIMC has been the introduction mariachi music into the curricula of elementary and high schools. A number of Arizona schools, especially in Tucson, now offer mariachi music instruction as a choice, along with classical and jazz music. “Tucson Unified School District has a formal mariachi curriculum that works with us,” Álvarez explained, “as do a number of schools that have mariachi groups, a number. And that’s a direct result of the mariachi conference.”⁵⁹ “Initially we drew most of the mariachis from out of state,” noted Celestino Fernández, a University of Arizona sociology professor, who is the current president of the TIMC board of directors.

Some of the initial individuals that were mariachis graduated from college and were able to return to teach. They went back to the schools and taught mariachi music. At the beginning of the conference the teachers weren’t there [in local schools], students did not have an option of orchestra, band, or mariachi. When mariachi started to be an option, some students picked mariachi and then suddenly they discovered “hey, this is neat,” and the program expanded.⁶⁰

Richard Carranza began attending the conference while still in grade school. Today, he teaches mariachi music at Pueblo High School where he leads a highly successful, touring mariachi orchestra. Indeed, many former conference students have returned to the conference and their communities as successful mariachis in their own right—and as certified instructors.⁶¹

Yet as the Tucson International Mariachi Conference began to increase its drawing power—as participants came from Texas, California, Nevada, New Mexico, Indiana, Illinois, and from Latin America, Europe, and Japan—“copycat” conferences began to emerge across the United States and in Mexico. According to Fernández, as a result of the spreading mariachi enthusiasm across the country, Tucson has instigated “a mariachi movement.”⁶² Our conference was the first of many,” He asserted.

There are now several cities that have either mariachi concerts or mariachi conferences. They have all modeled theirs after our own, including (you’ll find this interesting) the one in Guadalajara. They’ve only had six. They just finished their sixth annual. When the people from

Guadalajara wanted to start a program, they came here to learn about it, to model it after ours. And here it is, Guadalajara—the birth place, or *la cuna del mariachi*, the birthplace of El Mariachi—and they came here to learn, because our conference was so successful. We literally have gotten international attention. We have had audience members from France, Sweden, Canada, Japan, and of course from Mexico. People have come from several other countries to our concert, to listen to this music . . . Frankly, now that this movement is so successful there is more competition. They have a program in Las Cruces [New Mexico], for example, Albuquerque, Salinas in California, and Santa Barbara, and other places. In Phoenix, they have a Christmas concert, and in Las Vegas [Nevada] they have one for *16 de Septiembre* [Mexican Independence Day]. So, all of these have basically become competition. Also, the schools . . . Pima Community College and the University of Arizona both have mariachi programs. Of course, lots of schools throughout the Southwest, and now extending into the Midwest, have mariachi music programs. UCLA has a mariachi program, as does Stanford and other colleges . . . We basically were the foundation of all this education and all these concerts and conferences taking place in Mexico and the United States.⁶³

“I just heard on Monday, Mexico City now is going to have their first mariachi conference, all stemming from this one,” observed Lolie Gómez.⁶⁴ Nelba Chávez, however, noted that:

The big difference in terms of [the Tucson conference] is that all the money goes for mental health services, to a non-profit organization. To this day, it goes to Frontera and scholarships. There has been some criticism; the criticism has been ‘well, you don’t bring in the big stars [anymore].’ Well, guess what? A lot of these big stars command big dollars. Now that they’ve made it they want big, big dollars. They are forgetting what is the purpose of this thing. They can go over to the Hollywood Bowl and draw down enormous dollars and have a mariachi conference and pay [Mariachi] Vargas \$150,000 for performing. Well, the mariachi conference in Tucson can’t do that . . . [T]hey are trying to raise money to recycle back into the community, to provide services for children, families, and adults.⁶⁵

Nevertheless, the organizers in Tucson continue to stay on the cutting edge of innovation. “This coming year, for example, we are making major changes,” explained Fernández.

We’re providing a revolving stage in the center of the arena. This is the first time ever that a mariachi concert will be held on a revolving stage. This change brings everybody closer. Instead of being at one end of the arena, we are bringing the stage out to the middle and this allows everybody to be a little closer. This change permits us to create a more intimate program.⁶⁶

“I think that one of our dreams, maybe at some point, would be to have a mariachi institute,” declared Lolie Gómez, “to have an ongoing mariachi school all the time . . . hopefully it’ll happen.”⁶⁷

While many might think that the most important local legacy of conference has to do with entertainment, innovation, the production of knowledge and community pride, there are many who agree with Nelba Chávez and see another cause as more important. These vocal advocates see the raising of funds for the only free mental health clinic in Arizona, La Frontera Center, as the worthiest of causes. “There has been quite an evolution of entertainment and education from the beginning,” observed Alfonso Dancil, a current mariachi conference board member.

I actually started volunteering to help them on fiesta Garibaldi on Saturdays. I volunteered about five years and then about six or seven years ago they asked me to sit on the board. I felt very honored. To actually put my name with the mariachi conference, I just felt very proud to be a part of this fundraising event for Tucson, southern Arizona. After the event, it’s so heartwarming; it feels good to be able to say, “Okay La Frontera, we’re going to donate this money back to you this year” after working so hard for one week and thirteen months of planning. Through the years I know that we’ve donated over a million dollars to La Frontera.⁶⁸

Looking back, many conference founders are delighted by their marvelous accomplishments. Chávez provided a telling example:

I remember in 1985 that we we’re having a board meeting on a Saturday, because we had debriefings afterwards in terms of the conference, ‘what are some of the things we can learn or

want to improve or change.’ I remember sitting there and somebody, I think it was Czarina López or Becky Montaña, said ‘we have it scheduled for next year. Well, why don’t we call the community center right now and let’s schedule it through the year 2000.’ [Laughingly] Never did any of us believe it would survive until the year 2000. But we went ahead and scheduled it. We called the community center, I think Sammy was there and we said, ‘hey Sammy, get out the book. Do you have this available?’ So, it’s scheduled until the year 2000, not knowing where any of us would be, not knowing if this would survive. But, by golly, we wanted to schedule it through the year 2000.

The effects of the Tucson International Mariachi Conference have indeed been profound and widespread. Yet nowhere are they more deeply felt than in Tucson’s up-and-coming generations. For example, at the age of nine, Nicole Martínez was “awestruck” by a performance of Mariachi Cobre. “Singing is what I want to do,” said Martínez, now a fourteen-year-old freshman at Tucson High Magnet School. “Mariachi is what I’m reaching for.” She knew immediately that she would pursue mariachi music the first time she heard its signature guitars, violins, and trumpets. “It just grabs you,” she claimed. At age thirteen she was one of three chosen to be a featured soloist at the 1998 mariachi conference in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Mariachi music motivated her to succeed in her fourth-grade guitar group and in her violin-playing and singing in her school mariachi orchestra. “I didn’t have many problems getting her motivated to sing,” explained Alfredo Valenzuela, the director of the Davis Bilingual Learning Center’s mariachi troupe, Las Aguilas de Davis. Davis has had a mariachi group for about five years. Up to forty second- through fifth-graders perform at various public events. Another one hundred pupils are working their way up to performance level. As for Martínez, she is now in demand—as a musician and singer—at professional boxing matches in Las Vegas, Dodger baseball games in Los Angeles, and other gigs. “We don’t have to go looking for them. All the kids want to perform mariachi,” Valenzuela said. “They say this is the mariachi center of the world.”⁶⁹



NOTES

- ¹ George Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism and the Poetics of Place* (New York: Verso, 1994).
- ² John Huerta, interview with Rainer Paetzke, 18 November 1999, Tucson, AZ, in possession of the Mexican American Studies & Research Center, University of Arizona. Hereafter MASRC.
- ³ Ruben M. Moreno, interview with Denise Ferguson and Yudith Arreguin, 3 December 1999, Tucson, AZ, MASRC.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ La Fuente was owned by John Huerta, a founder of the TIMC. Las Yentes is actually derived from the Yiddish word “Yenta” that means “gossiper.” Las Yentes was a Mexican restaurant owned by a Jew named Aaron Bok. After the TIMC proved to be a big-drawing attraction, Gilbert Velez opened his own restaurant, named “El Mariachi.” Ray Flores, interview with Char Hubble and Anna Valle, 16 November 1999, Tucson, AZ, MASRC.
- ⁶ Mary C. “Marty” Lynch, interview with Heather Hopkins and Sarah Schick, 22 October 1999, Tucson, AZ, MASRC. Hereafter Marty Lynch.
- ⁷ Ruben Moreno, interview.
- ⁸ J.C. Martin, “’85 Crucial for Mariachi Conference, Booster Says,” *The Arizona Daily Star*, 18 April 1985, section F, p. 1, column 6.
- ⁹ Marty Lynch, interview.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ John Huerta, interview.
- ¹² Delfina Álvarez, interview with Gloria Montaña, 28 October 1999, Tucson, AZ, MASRC.
- ¹³ Marty Lynch, interview.
- ¹⁴ Ruben Moreno, interview.
- ¹⁵ John Huerta, interview.
- ¹⁶ Marty Lynch, interview.
- ¹⁷ Ernesto Portillo, interview with Megan Watson and A. Patricia Rodriguez, 12 November 1999, Tucson, AZ, MASRC.
- ¹⁸ John Huerta, interview.
- ¹⁹ Marty Lynch, interview.
- ²⁰ Ernesto Portillo, interview.
- ²¹ Nelba Chávez, phone interview with Jonathan J. Higuera, 23 November 1999, interview conducted in Tucson, AZ, with Chávez in Rockville, MD, MASRC.
- ²² Ernesto Portillo, interview.
- ²³ John Huerta, interview.
- ²⁴ Ernesto Portillo, interview.
- ²⁵ John Huerta, interview.
- ²⁶ Michael Hard, interview with Marco Gámez, 17 November 1999, Tucson, AZ, MASRC.
- ²⁷ Marty Lynch, interview.
- ²⁸ Michael Hard, interview.
- ²⁹ Nelba Chávez, interview.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Delfina Álvarez, interview.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Lolie Gómez, interview with Yvette Espinosa, 16 December 1999, Tucson, AZ, MASRC.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Ernesto Portillo, interview.
- ³⁶ John Huerta, interview.
- ³⁷ Carlotta Flores, interview with Anna Valle, 4 December 1999, Tucson, AZ, MASRC.
- ³⁸ Ernesto Portillo, interview.
- ³⁹ John Huerta, interview.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ⁴¹ Nelba Chávez, interview.
- ⁴² Delfina Álvarez, interview.
- ⁴³ Nelba Chávez, interview.
- ⁴⁴ Lolie Gómez, interview.
- ⁴⁵ John Huerta, interview.
- ⁴⁶ Marty Lynch, interview.
- ⁴⁷ Linda Ronstadt, interview with Char Hubble, 1 December 1999, Tucson, AZ, MASRC.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid.
- ⁴⁹ Marty Lynch, interview.
- ⁵⁰ Linda Ronstadt, interview.
- ⁵¹ Ibid.
- ⁵² Delfina Álvarez, interview. According to Marty Lynch, Lynne Morris deserves much credit for the incorporation of folklórico dancing into the conference program. She introduced a professional touch in staging, lighting, stage sets, and numerous other related activities. Marty Lynch, interview.
- ⁵³ J.C. Martin, “’85 Crucial for Mariachi Conference, Booster Says,” *The Arizona Daily Star*, 18 April 1985, section F, p. 1, column 1.
- ⁵⁴ Nelba Chávez, interview.
- ⁵⁵ Michael Hard, interview.
- ⁵⁶ Becky Montaña quoted in Nelba Chávez, interview.
- ⁵⁷ Nelba Chávez, interview.
- ⁵⁸ Delfina Álvarez, interview.



- ⁵⁹ Ibid.
- ⁶⁰ Celestino Fernández, interview with Antonio J. Sotelo, 15 October 1999, Tucson, AZ, MASRC.
- ⁶¹ Ibid.
- ⁶² Ibid.
- ⁶³ Ibid.
- ⁶⁴ Lolie Gómez, interview.
- ⁶⁵ Nelba Chávez, interview.
- ⁶⁶ Celestino Fernández, interview.
- ⁶⁷ Lolie Gómez, interview.
- ⁶⁸ Alfonso Dancil, interview with Eliu Haro, transcribed by Anjelica Yrigoyen, 2 November 1999, Tucson, AZ, MASRC.
- ⁶⁹ Hipolito R. Corella, "Mariachi Fervor," *The Arizona Daily Star*, 30 November 1999, section B, p. 1, columns 1-3.



