Fiesta Navidad

starring

Mariachi Los Camperos de Nati Cano

Jesús “Chuy” Guzmán, Musical Director
Nati Cano, Director

This evening’s program will be announced from the stage.

Cast

Mariachi Los Camperos

Violin Jesús “Chuy” Guzmán, Raúl Cuellar, Ismael Hernández, Jimmy Kyle Cuellar
Guitarrón Juan Jiménez
Harp Sergio Alonso
Vihuela Nati Cano
Trumpet Javier Rodríguez, Ariel de la Rosa

Dancers courtesy of Danza Teoctl, Miguel Díaz, Artistic Director.

Fiesta Navidad Production Staff

Lighting & Projection Design Matt O’Donnell
Audio Design & House Engineer Gilberto “Gil” Morales
Producer José Delgado

Pleiades Management manages Mariachi Los Camperos de Nati Cano. Call (323) 665-8040 for more information.


Sunday, December 21, 2008, 3pm
Zellerbach Hall
**Mariachi Origins**

In 1852, Cosme Santa Anna, a priest in Rosamorada parish of the west Mexican community of Santiago Ixcuintla, wrote to the archbishop in Guadalajara to complain of “mariachis”—entertainment with music, drinking, gambling and loud talk by “men on foot and on horseback”—that occurred on Holy Saturday in the town plaza in front of the church. This was the first known written record of the word “mariachi” connected to music and merrymaking. In 1859, the cleric Ignacio Aguilar wrote that in Tlalchapa, Guerrero he heard a music performed by mariachis, about one yard wide, two yards long and one-and-a-half feet off the ground, placed between stands of the outdoor market in the town plaza: “All night long, and even during the day, people danced lively jarabes to the sound of the harp, or of violin and vihuela [guitar], or of violin, snare drum, cymbals and bass drum, in a deafening quartet.”

Twentieth-century Mexico was a time of enormous population growth and urbanization. From 1900 to 2000, Mexico’s population increased eight-fold to around 100 million people, and the population of greater Mexico City increased by a factor of 40, to over 20 million people, more than a fifth of Mexico’s inhabitants. People from the rural areas, musicians included, flocked to the cities in search of opportunity and the conveniences of urban life. In 1905, the four-member mariachi led by Justo Villa of the town of Cucula outside of Guadalajara traveled to Mexico City to perform for the birthday of President Porfirio Diaz, considered to be the first performance by a mariachi in the capital. Many other mariachis followed. Growth of the electronic media and the commercialization of music also marked the 20th century. In the period 1908–1909, “all three major American phonograph companies—Columbia, Edison and Victor—recorded the Cuarteto Cuculense in Mexico City.” Cuarteto Cuculense was the name given to Villa’s group. Thanks to Chris Strachwitz and his Arhoolie record label, many of these and other early mariachi recordings are available today.

Radio and cinema brought mariachi music into the lives of Mexicans in all corners of the nation. The powerful station XEW broadcast mariachi music throughout the Republic and beyond beginning in the 1930s. Movies with ranchero (country) themes, like Allá en el Rancho Grande (1936), Jalisco nunca pierde (1937) and Ay, Jalisco, no te rajes (1941), featured mariachis, and charro cantante (singing cowboy) film superstars like Jorge Negrete and Pedro Infante were accompanied by mariachis. Professional songwriters wrote new compositions in a música típica, pseudo folk music, vein, contributing in this way to shaping the media-driven images of rural people and themes. The era following the Revolution (1910–1917), particularly the nationalistic regime of President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–1940), saw the crafting of images evoking national identity, with mariachi music being one of the most prominent of those images. The radio, recording and cinema industries continued their expansion in the 1940s, and the presence of the mariachi in national life increased. The advent of television in the 1950s further centralized the creation and diffusion of culture. The mariachi, through its adaptation to these revolutionary changes and its inclusion in the products of popular culture, was able to maintain an identity connected to its rural origins and to the joys, passions and problems of everyday people.

Over time, urban growth and the electronic media drove a transformation of the rural mariachi, evolving from ensembles of three to five musicians emanating from small towns in Jalisco and surrounding states, to larger groups of eight or more musicians based primarily in large cities. Local mariachi instrumentation, particularly the “lowlands” (Bajo) style with guitarrón (large bass guitar), guitarrón de golpe (five-stringed, flat-backed guitar) or vihuela (five-stringed guitar with a round, spined back), and violins welded with the “highlands” style that preferred the large harp over the guitarrón. A single trumpet was added to the ensemble in the 1940s, and during the 1950s, two trumpets became more the standard. From the mid 1950s to the present, the preeminent model for modern mariachi groups has been Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán. Originating in 1898 in the town of Tecalitlán, Jalisco, the group relocated to Mexico City in the 1920s, achieving great success, appearing in over 200 films and making countless recordings with RCA Victor of Mexico.

Today, the typical mariachi ensemble consists of two trumpets, three violins, guitarrón, vihuela and six-stringed guitar. The mariachi de bajo (deluxe mariachi, like Mariachi Vargas and Los Camperos) would typically have two trumpets, four or more violins, harp, guitarrón, vihuela and six-string guitar. The latter half of the 20th century saw some further experimentation with other instruments, flutes, for example, by mariachi arrangers, but no further lasting innovations in instrumentation have occurred.

Mariachi repertoire also has evolved. The fast-paced, syncopated son, once the main staple of the mariachi repertoire, became relegated to one of many musical genres played by the mariachi. The canción ranchera, with its focus on the vocal expression of a solo singer, came to dominate the song repertoire in the 1950s. The suavely interpreted, romantic bolero, popular in Mexico since the 1920s, has been a major category of mariachi song since the late 1950s. The huapango, inspired by the distinctive rhythms, complex violin playing and falsetto vocal ornaments of the regional folk huapango of the Huastecan region in northeastern Mexico, also is an important vehicle of mariachi song. Polkas, pasodobles, waltzes, schottisches, melodies from regional Mexican and Latin American folk music traditions, zarzuela and opera overtures, and other forms have been arranged for mariachi. More recently, cumbias and merengues from the Latin Caribbean, as well as North American rap music, have been taken up by the mariachi.

Daniel Sheehy, Director and Curator, Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

**The Instruments of Mariachi**

The original mariachi came from rural Western Mexico, primarily the states of Jalisco, Colima, Michoacán, Nayarit and Sinaloa. The first groups were string-based ensembles, making the term mariachi “band” inappropriate as bands, by definition, emphasize bass andwoodwinds. The first mariachi instrumentation consisted primarily of violins and the diatonic harp—a non-pedal and therefore non-chromatic instrument. The harp...
provided rhythmic and harmonic support while the violins played the melodic lines.

As the mariachi ensemble developed, a small, generally five-stringed flat-back guitar, called a **vihuela**, a rounded-back instrument, along with the more recent addition of the guitar, provides the underlying rhythm essential for the musical sound of every mariachi ensemble.

The **guitarrón**, a larger rounded-back instrument, plays the bass line. The original **guitarrón** used four or five gut strings; eventually the instrument became standardized with six nylon strings, giving it sufficient volume to support the bass. Because it is capable of modulating to different keys (and easier to carry), the **guitarrón** eventually replaced the harp in most ensembles.

In the early 1930s, when the ensembles began to think in terms of arrangements and commercial possibilities, a trumpet was added, the rationale being that it would create a better, more penetrating sound for radio broadcasts. In later years, two trumpets have become a standard part of mariachi ensembles, although it is not uncommon to find three or more in some of today’s groups.

**Program Notes**

**Mariachi Los Camperos de Nati Cano** has existed for 47 years and is noted for demanding musical arrangements that highlight the individual skills and voices of the players. The ensemble employs the finest musicians from Mexico and the United States and has performed for audiences throughout the United States and Canada.

Mariachi Los Camperos was one of four mariachis that collaborated on Linda Ronstadt's album, *Canciones de Mi Padre* ("Songs of My Father"). In 1988–1989, the group worked on the promotion of the album, including national television appearances on programs including *The Tonight Show* with Johnny Carson and the Grammy Awards. They also appear on Linda Ronstadt’s *Mas Canciones.* In 2005, they shared a Grammy with other artists that recorded a tribute album honoring Ella Jenkins, titled *cELLAbration.*

Los Camperos have been featured in three PBS specials, including *Americanos, Mariachi, the Spirit of Mexico* and *Fiesta Mexicana.*


**Jesus “Chuy” Guzman** (Musical Director) joined Mariachi Los Camperos in 1989. Widely recognized as an arranger, director, instructor and musician in the genre, he is the musical director of the ensemble and master of numerous traditional mariachi instruments: trumpet, **vihuela**, **guitarrón**, guitar and violin. Over the last decade, Mr. Guzman has served as head instructor for over 55 international mariachi festivals in the United States and Mexico and continues as the instructor for Ethnomusicology 91K, Music of Mexico, at UCLA. His career highlights include collaboration on the orchestration and musical arrangements for the Symphony Orchestra of Jalisco and a recording as a guest artist with the prestigious Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlan. Mr. Guzman also toured and recorded with Linda Ronstadt on her Grammy Award-winning album, *Canciones de Mi Padre,* and has appeared in several Hollywood films, including *Mi Familia,* starring Jimmy Smits and Edward James Olmos, *Jerry Maguire,* starring Tom Cruise, and *Sex and the City.*

Both a traditionalist and a visionary, **Natividad Cano** has both mirrored and shaped the history of mariachi music. He was born in 1933 into a family of mariachi musicians of Ahuisculco, Jalisco, a small, rural town much like the many other west Mexican communities that gave life to mariachi tradition. His career took him first to nearby Guadalajara, Mexico's second-largest city, and then farther away to Los Angeles, one of the most populous and influential cities of “greater Mexico.” In Los Angeles, he and the group he founded and directed nearly 45 years ago, Los Camperos, emerged as a major driving force of the mariachi music tradition in the United States and, to a certain extent, in Mexico as well.

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**About the Artists**

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About the Artists

2501 Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles. I was a student at UCLA, where I had joined the student mariachi ensemble, a ‘world music’ performance class of the Institute of Ethnomusicology. For me and my fellow student mariachi enthusiasts, a trip to La Fonda was akin to visiting a sacred temple of mariachi music, and Nati Cano was its Saint Peter. The repertoire Los Camperos played during the early years of La Fonda was a mix of older rhythms of the son jalisciense, songs from the 1950s and earlier, and contemporary pieces marked by the more complex harmonies of American and Mexican commercial popular music. For us young ethnomusicologists, the enduring, hard-driving sones and the emotion-packed canciones and rancheras (country songs) held the greatest attraction. The pieces in the popular music vein seemed like an encroachment of commercial interests on the older repertoire that made mariachi music special. Little did we know that this blending of old and new mariachi sounds was part of Nati Cano’s musical and social agenda. His life goal has been to bring greater acceptance, understanding, and respect to the mariachi tradition as a whole, and to reach the widest possible audience with his music. His uncompromising position has been to preserve the essential ‘mariachi sound,’ in his words, as the baseline of the tradition. I know that many would agree that in this, he has succeeded.”

Daniel Sheehy