

Mariachi

Exploring the music
from the past
to the present



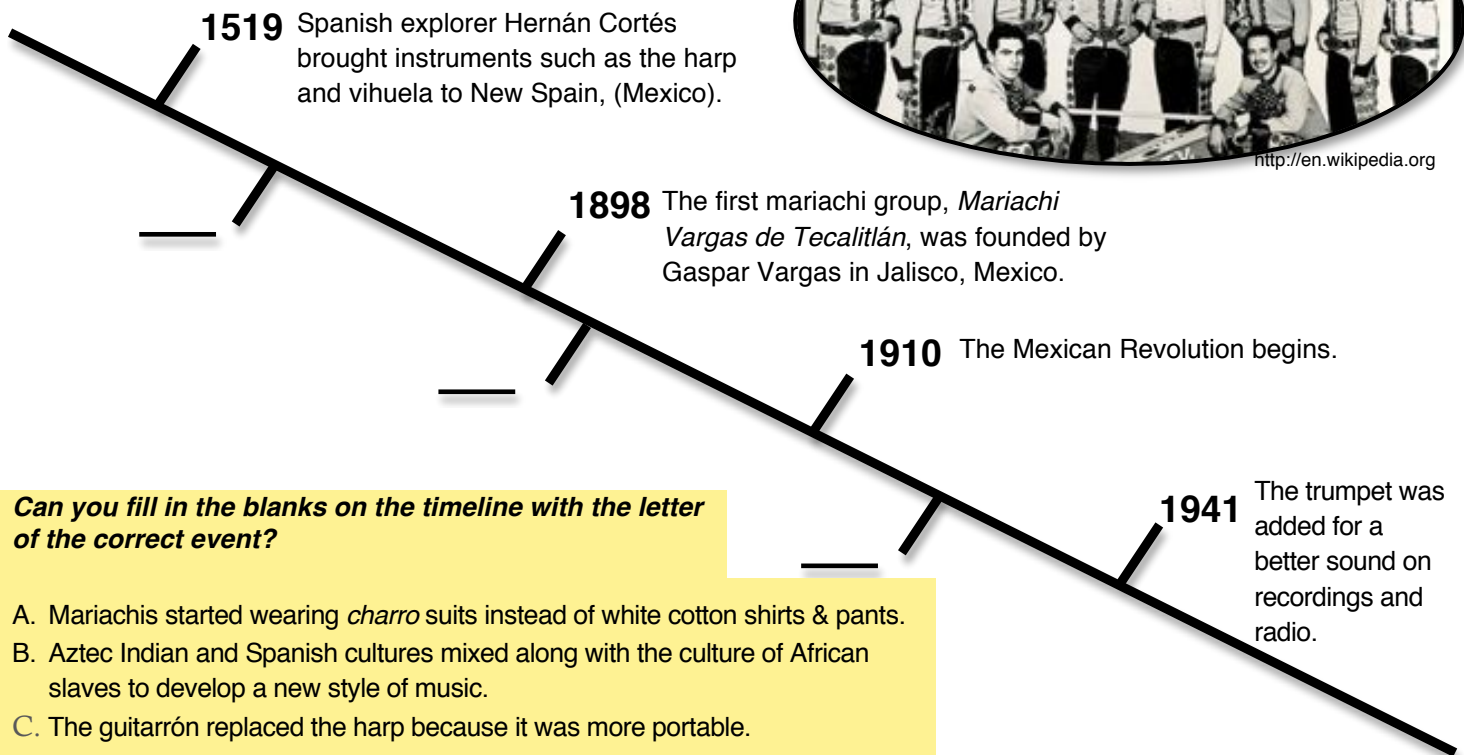
What is mariachi?

The word *mariachi* refers to the musicians who play a style of music that originated in the state of Jalisco in western Mexico. Mexican peasants first performed it. Listening to mariachi perform was a thrill for the Mexican country people who rarely had the opportunity to experience what was happening in the city. Mariachi music became a part of their rural culture and eventually spread to the cities. Before long, mariachi was considered a musical tradition of Mexico. Today mariachi music is performed all around the world.



Mariachi captures the essence of Mexico and its people. Mariachi speaks about strength, love, betrayal, death, and politics. It is common for mariachi bands to perform at baptisms, *quinceañeras*, weddings, holidays, and funerals.

A Timeline of Mariachi History



The Music of Mariachi

<http://www.mariachi-plaza.com>

Instruments

- violin
- trumpet
- classical guitar
- vihuela – a high-pitched, round-backed guitar with five strings that maintains the rhythm of mariachi ensembles
- guitarrón – a large acoustic guitar with six strings that serves as the bass for the ensemble
- harp – a wooden instrument with 36 strings which was frequently played in mariachi ensembles until around 1900 when it was replaced by the guitarrón.



<http://en.wikipedia.org>

Types of songs

- Sones – regional style of *mestizo* (mixed) music
- Rancheras – have a solo singer with simple accompaniment
- Polkas – mostly instrumental, “boom-chick-chick” style of German polkas
- Boleros – a slow dance in duple meter; romantic style of singing with a soft voice

Think about it...

If you have heard a mariachi band play before, describe it in your own words.

Do you like mariachi music? Explain why or why not.

Why do you think mariachi music has lasted for so long?

Mariachi Costumes

Mariachi musicians originally dressed like peasants with white cotton trousers, white shirts, woven sandals, and big woven hats with pointed crowns. Many years ago, fine fabrics, dyes, and buttons were reserved only for the wealthy Spanish landowners. As mariachis gained popularity, they began to dress like *charros* (cowboys) by wearing jackets with silver buttons, embroidered shirts, and flat-brimmed hats. Today, mariachi costumes can be a combination of the old and new styles.

Mariachi Song Lyrics

A well-known mariachi song is called “El Rey.” Some of the lyrics to the song are:

*I know very well that I'm out of your life,
But the day I die, I know you'll have to cry...*

*With or without money, I always do what I want,
My words are the law.
I don't have a throne nor a queen,
nor anyone that understands me,
But I keep being the king.*

What are the character traits of the person singing this song? What words in the song give you that impression?

What is the message of this song? Do you agree with the message?

Resources

- <http://www.mexconnect.com/articles/1875-what-is-the-mariachi>
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mariachi>
- <http://web.nmsu.edu/~lleeper/pages/Voice/marrujo/history.htm>
- <http://www.mariachi.org/history.html>
- <http://www.mariachi-plaza.com/mariachi-history.htm>