

Son Jarocho

Mexican music from Southern Mexico

Lindajoy Fenley

Los Utrera, one of four groups participating in the current Arts Midwest World Fest, is a musical ensemble from Mexico. The group performs the music and dance of southern Veracruz known as **son jarocho**, one of the many types of **son** in Mexico. The group plays instruments such as *jarana*, *requinto*, harp, *marimbol*, *pandero* and *quijada*. They also dance and the sound of their shoes on a wooden platform is also considered part of the music. The dance is one form of **zapateado**, a sort of tap dance with roots in Andalucía, Spain.

For more information about Arts Midwest World Fest, consult the **Arts Midwest** web site:

<http://www.artsmidwestworldfest.org/>

Los Utrera's Midwest Fest schedule / Fall 2007

Nelsonville, OHIO	October 7-13
Jasper, INDIANA	October 14-20
Elgin, ILLINOIS	October 21-27
Traverse City, MICHIGAN	October 28-November 3
Grand Rapids, MICHIGAN	November 4-7
Muskegon, MICHIGAN	November 8-10

Lindajoy Fenley is the company manager for **Los Utrera's** 2007-2008 **Arts Midwest World Fest** tour. She is a former journalist who lived in Mexico for 18 years where she founded a non-profit organization to promote traditional music and cultural exchange. She has a certificate in ethnomusicology from Mexico's National School of History and Anthropology. She has worked with **Arts Midwest** since 2003, serving as the company manager for three other ensembles: Esta and Darma, both of Israel, and Anita Singleton's Gullah Kinfolk of South Carolina

What they say about Los Utrera:

Described as one of the best Mexican Son Jarocho groups in today's traditional music scene, Los Utrera are a family of musicians and dancers who take their inspiration from the fiestas of Mexico. Led by 83-year-old Don Esteban Utrera, they have toured throughout Mexico, the Caribbean and South America, offering a vibrant update on the music of several generations, including an uplifting West African influence. Performing with a zapateado dancer, each performance promises to be a visual as well as musical feast. – *Festival of World Cultures, 2006*

Direct from Veracruz, this renowned family plays *jarocho* music, a regional style from the Gulf Coast whose sound is characterized by the use of folk harp and a variety of guitars. Los Utrera come from a long line of respected masters who know the blend of Afro-Mex influences and those vibrant 6/8 rhythms and *zapateado* heel dances. Expect classic songs like "La Bamba," "El Pajaro Carpintero," and many others. – *La Peña Cultural Center, Berkeley, California*

Los Utrera's CDs: Urtex, Digital Classics

			
1996	2000	2004	

Ensemble members / instruments

Tacho Utrera / requinto

José Farías / Jarana tercera

Wendy Cao Romero / Jarana segunda and percussion (quijada, pandero, zapateado)

Mario Cruz / Jarana segunda

Violeta Romero / jarana primera and percussion (concha de tortuga, zapateado)

Alvaro Avitia / requinto punteador

Alec Dempster / leona

Miguel Utrera / zapateado, cajón, quijada

Jarocho music

Son Jarocho is one of Mexico's many traditional musical style. It comes from the Sotovento region that is made up of a large part of Southern Veracruz state plus small adjoining parts of Oaxaca and Tabasco.

After gaining national fame during the presidency of Miguel Aleman (1946-1952), live jarocho music could be heard in many of the capital's restaurants. A commercially-viable version based on the style of Lino Chavez and Andrés Huesca emerged at that time.

A few years later, a Mexican-American named Ricardo Valenzuela, turned a well-known *jarocho son* into a rock 'n' roll song. He gained fame as Richie Valens and his version of that popular jarocho son – *La Bamba* – topped the US charts shortly before his accidental death the next year. But that was rock, not *son*.

Son Jarocho remained alive and well in Mexico – both in the restaurants of Mexico City and the Port of Veracruz as well as the rural ranches and villages of the Sotovento. In the 1970s, young people from that region who were living in Mexico City began performing and teaching this style. Their enthusiastic activity caught on and became known as the *jaranero movement*. The jarocho revival of the 1970s continues growing to this day and *Los Utrera*, a group well rooted in that tradition, is known as one of the finest in terms of quality and authenticity.

Son jarocho, like many other traditions, includes instrumental performance, dance and poetry. The style's literary tradition allows for improvisation but many verses have also been handed down, generation to generation. The poetry of *son jarocho* music is varied. In addition to the verses sung with the music, it also includes 10-line *decimas* which are sometimes declared during a break in the music.

Roots

• Europe	• America	• Africa
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - music can be traced back to the Baroque & Renaissance periods. -The dance style (zapateado), as well as some rhythmic aspects of the music, are similar to that of Andalucía, Spain, even today. -The literary tradition of décimas (or 10-line poems) is part of the jarocho tradition. This tradition is strong in the Canary Islands and many Latin American countries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Indigenous influence can be seen in the use of animals with human characteristics glorified in verse. - Some of the singing & rhythmic aspects of the music. - Some groups choose to create fusion music by combining <i>son jarocho</i> with genres such as jazz or rock. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The wooden dance platform is seen by some as a substitute for drums captured slaves left behind when they were kidnapped in Africa. -Some verses have a call and response aspect that is seen as African.

Jarocho instruments

- **Jarana**

A guitar-like instrument called the *jarana jarocho* is the most common instrument in Southern Veracruz. This rhythm instrument has 8 strings (three double sets plus two single strings) comes in various sizes. The primera (first) would be considered the smallest if it weren't for the even smaller "mosquito". The segunda (second) is larger and the tercera (third) is the largest. Strumming patterns vary according to the tunes.

- **Requinto**

The requinto is the main melody instrument. It has four strings that are plucked with a long plectrum made from a cow horn.

- **Quijada**

This percussive instrument is nothing more than a dried jawbone from a donkey or horse. When the musician strikes it, the loose teeth rattle, thus creating two sounds at once (the thump of the strike and the rattling of the teeth).

- **Pandero**

This is a tambourine.

- **Leona**

This is a large guitar that has a bass sound.

- **Harp**

The jarocho harp is a small, folk harp. While it has come to be a key instrument for the more commercial jarocho groups that play in Mexico City restaurants, it is not the most important instrument in the traditional groups in the countryside. It is, nevertheless, a traditional jarocho instrument.

- **Marimbol**

The marimbol, a large mbira, or thumb piano, with metal strips that are plucked by hand, is included in some ensembles. Musicians can either sit on it or put it on a stand. They also occasionally slap it as if it were a drum.

- **Violin**

A few jarocho groups include violin but it is not considered a jarocho instrument.

Musical Menu

The following list gives an idea of Mexico's diverse musical culture. It is not a definitive or perfect list. Perhaps one reason each region developed its own style is that the mountainous terrain made communication difficult for many years. Some styles such as the mariachi have become common throughout the country. However, even mariachi music was originally associated with one area of the country (basically the state of Jalisco). It is also important to realize that most cultural regions in Mexico do not follow political boundaries; they cross state lines.

The Midwest World Fest features the son (in 6/8 time) from Southern Veracruz state. It is known as "*son jarocho*".

Son

Jarocho (Southern Veracruz)

Son montuno (Veracruz)

Huasteco (Veracruz, Hidalgo, Tamaulipas, San Luis Potosí, Querétaro, Puebla)

Calentano (Guerrero, Michoacán, Estado de México)

Arribeño (Guanajuato, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí)

Abajeño (Michoacán)

Tixtleco (Guerrero)

Jaliscience (Jalisco)

Ismeño (Oaxaca)

Other regional styles

Marimba (Chiapas)

Canción cardenche (Coahuila)

Valonas (Michoacán)

Chilenas (Guerrero)

Bambuco (Yucatán)

Corridos (north/south)

Folk-pop

Ranchera

Norteña

Mariachi

Banda

New Song

Latin

Bolera

Salsa

Tropical

Cumbia

Banda

Cha cha cha

Indigenous

Flute and drum

Conchero (Nahuatl from Central Mexico)

Pirecuas (Purepechas from Michoacán)

Bands and orchestras (Oaxaca and many other states)

Violín (eg. Huichol from Nayarít,

Tarahumara (from Chihuahua)

Web sites

This is a listing of websites associated with music which may be helpful to you.

Los Utrera, the Mexican ensemble, has a blog: www.losutrera.blogspot.com

Arts Midwest has created a web site with information about cultures featured in its Arts Midwest World Fest: www.artsmidwestworldfest.org.

Rafael Figueroa's site about Afro-Latino music is based in Veracruz and published in Spanish but very informative: www.comosuena.com

David Rojas of Southern California has a lot of information about music, dance and culture: www.folklorico.com

The Smithsonian has an inviting world music site: <http://www.smithsonianglobalsound.org> It offers free music downloads.

The Mexican government's cultural web site (in Spanish) is updated frequently. www.cnca.gob.mx

The University of Washington's Ethnomusicology Department provides an amazing page of links. www.lib.washington.edu/music/world.html

Other university ethnomusicology sites: echarry.web.wesleyan.edu/ethno.html
www.ualberta.ca/~slis/guides/music/mandj.htm

Extensive list of links of traditional world music sites.
www.ancient-future.com/links/worldmus.html

Information on Native American traditional music from all over America can be found through the many links at Oyate ta Olowan (Songs of the People), the companion site to a great series of radio documentaries featuring Native American musicians and singers who are keeping alive the traditional music of many different regions and tribes. www.oyate.com

The African Music Encyclopedia is an excellent source for lots of information, and it has a phenomenal links page. 205.243.144.7/~africanm/index.html

World Music Institute (New York City) provides many links to world music sites.
www.heartheworld.org/links/index.html

The Rough Guide to World Music is a great resource, and parts of it are online.
<http://www.roughguides.com/music/world.html>

Rootsworld magazine www.rootsworld.com/rw

Folk Roots Magazine www.frootsmag.com

Musical Traditions has tons of information on world music. www.mustrad.org.uk

Rhythm Magazine focuses on world music of all sorts.
www.gorhythm.com/home.htm

Afropop Worldwide is a weekly radio show with African and African-influenced music from around the world. It is broadcast on many public radio stations. www.afropop.org

The African Music webring has great links.
www.webring.org/cgi-bin/webring?ring=africanmusic;list

A bibliography of books and other sources about percussion and world music.
www.cse.ogi.edu/Drum/bib.html

The Djembe FAQ has possibly the most extensive collection anywhere of links to information about African drumming, drumming in general, African music, music in general, and more.
www.drums.org/djembefaq/section1.htm

The American Gamelan Institute provides information on Indonesian gamelan music, a directory of gamelan groups in the U.S., and related links. www.gamelan.org

Putumayo is a music label that releases compilations of music from around the world for children and adults. www.putumayo.com

Virtual and audio tours of three types of world music: Central American Salsa, Javanese and Balinese Gamelan, and the music of Native American Pow-wows.
www.si.umich.edu/CHICO/MHN/vtour.html

The United Nations' Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Window to World Culture www.unesco.org/culture/links

Gateway to the World includes many links to world culture and geography.
www.snowhawk.com/cultures.html

The Internet Public Library's Kidspace site on the world and its peoples.
ipl.si.umich.edu/kidspace/browse/owd0000

KidsWorld world culture links now2000.com/kids/cities.shtml