

# Cue Sheet

Guides for  
Teachers

## Mariachi Christmas

Thursday, December 18, 2025  
10:15am & 12:15pm

### Questions to ask students **BEFORE** the performance

- What holiday traditions do you know of or celebrate? What do you do during those celebrations?
- Have you heard mariachi music played before? What are some characteristics of it?

### Questions to ask students **AFTER** the performance

- What holiday traditions did you observe in the performance?
- What musical instruments did you see the band playing onstage?
- How was the mariachi music like or unlike other music you've heard?



## About the Performance

Mariachi is more than just a style of music. It emerged out of a cultural revolution in Mexico and has come to represent the essence of Mexican heritage. Mariachi music is composed of sharply contrasting sounds; the sweet sounds of the violins stand out against the brilliance of the trumpets, and the deep strum of the guitarrón. The mariachis in this performance are accompanied by ballet folklórico dancers, who move to the music and rhythms played.

During the Schooltime Series' Mariachi Christmas performance, students are invited to sing along, clap, and have fun with the musicians and dancers onstage. However, during solos, we ask that the audience wait to join in until the rest of the performers begin singing again.

We recognize that not all students celebrate Christmas. We see the show as a cultural showcase of the traditions of Mexico during the Christmas season. We encourage discussions about the diversity of family traditions from home to home and culture to culture, particularly during this festive season.

POPEJOY  
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# Vocabulary

**Aztlán (æts-lan)** - the Aztec peoples' ancestral homeland

**bolero (boh-LEH-ro)** - moderate dance/popular song type in 4/4 time

**corrido (coh-REE-doh)** - a ballad that usually includes facts about historical events

**ensemble (ON-sahm-bel)** - a small musical group of voices or instruments

**guitarron (ghee-tah-ROHN)** - large, portable acoustic bass instrument and member of the guitar family, with a V-shaped back, short neck, and six strings

**juvenil (who-vuh-nil)** - the Spanish word for "a young person" or "youth"

**polka (POH-kuh)** - a lively dance originally from Eastern Europe

**ranchera (rahn-CHEH-rah)** - a popular song type, with texts dealing with emotions such as love, or nostalgia for the land or people

**son (sohn)** - a lively instrumental/vocal/dance piece, characterized by the alteration of fast and slow rhythms

**sone (SOH-nay)** - the Spanish word for "sound"

**vihuela (vee-HWAY-la)** - a small member of the guitar family, with five strings, a V-shaped back, and short neck. The vihuela produces a high sound.

**waltz (wa-ls)** - a slow or moderate dance originally from Western Europe

# Beyond the Show

These short activities can be used before or after the performance to extend themes and concepts of the production to the classroom.

## Musical Instruments

Play an excerpt of mariachi music for your class. Ask students if they can identify the instruments being played in the excerpt. Introduce the instruments played by mariachi musicians and explain that violins carry the melody, trumpets add energy, and the guitarrón and vihuela keep the rhythm.

## Music of the Season

Christmas in Mexico is often celebrated with music, from villancicos (carols) to lively mariachi tunes that tell stories of family, faith, and togetherness. Select and play a short festive mariachi song and instruct students to close their eyes when listening to it. What emotions, sights, or other senses does the music invoke?

## The Meaning of Poinsettias

Tell students that the poinsettia plant, known as La Flor de Noche Buena, originates from Mexico. The flower is tied to the legend of a poor child who had no gift to bring to church and gathered green weeds instead, which turned into beautiful red flowers.

**Click here!**

Visit the show's page on our Schooltime Series website for more educational resources.

# Facts about Popejoy Hall

- Popejoy Hall officially opened on October 1, 1966.
- The hall can seat up to 1985 people.
- Most walls inside the hall are not parallel or perpendicular to the stage. Curves, angles, and soft or textured surfaces scatter the sound throughout the hall so that audiences can hear performances better.
- Popejoy Hall has an orchestra pit which raises and lowers. It is the largest elevator in the building.
- The ceiling over the stage is three times the height of the curtain opening. Sets can be lowered into place by pulleys and raised high enough to be stored completely out of sight when not in use.

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