

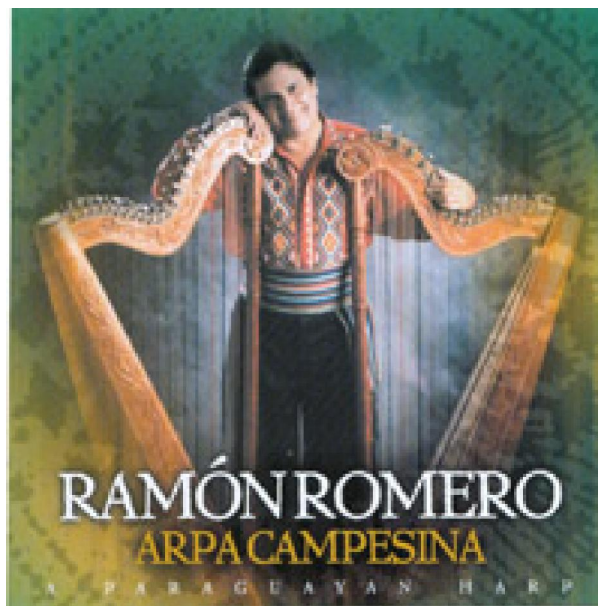


MONTALVO
ARTS CENTER

Wells Fargo Performing Arts Series for Students

Strings of Fire – Cuerdas de Fuego

with Montalvo artist-in-residence
Ramón Romero



Carriage House Theatre
Thursday, January 31, 2008
9:30am & 11:30am

Dear Teachers,

We are pleased to be able to present Ramón Romero and the Cuerdas de Fuego ensemble. We are captivated by the exceptional music and virtuoso playing they will introduce to our audiences.

The countries of Central and South America and the island of Cuba have so many varied musical traditions and techniques, all affected by a multitude of influences. In the *Strings of Fire* (Cuerdas de Fuego) concert, students will hear masters of many of the instruments and styles of music that have developed in these countries over the years. Some selections combine elements of musicianship and artistry in new ways; some are presented just as they were passed down to the performers.

We focus particularly on Paraguay, the country where Ramón Romero grew up and the home of his unique instrument. We have the good fortune to welcome a guest guidebook writer, Dr. Helena Simonett, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Music History and Literature at the Blair School of Music at Vanderbilt University. She has provided a fascinating look into the history of Paraguay that distinctly relates to the region's musical development, as well as detailed information on the central instrument of the concert, the Paraguayan harp.

Part of the great gift and subsequent longevity of folk music is a quality of timelessness. While it sheds light on past eras and ways of living, it also connects with common human experience and applies to current day peoples. Each musician who plays folk music learns not only to honor the past, but to add his or her voice to an ongoing and communal communication of joy, sorrow, celebration, remembrance, curiosity, acceptance, outrage, determination, delight...

We know you and your students will enjoy this music, as alive today as when it was created.

TPAC Education

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This guidebook was prepared by TPAC Education with contributions by Dr. Helena Simonett, Ramón Romero and the Cuerdas de Fuego ensemble, Katherine Miller of Kamstar Artist Management, Kristin Horsley, Susan Sanders, and Lattie Brown.

Biographies

Ramón Romero

A harp virtuoso from Paraguay, Ramón Romero performs a variety of Latin American folk music styles. Playing the Paraguayan harp, hand carved from *algarrobo* wood by luthier Velois Rojas, Ramón performs the traditional music of his native country and its neighbors: the *guarania* and *polka* from Paraguay; the *zamba*, *chacarera*, *chamamé*, *gato* and *tango* from Argentina; the *cueca* from Chile; the *vals venezolano* and *zoropo* from Venezuela, and many more. Ramón's repertoire consists of over 700 pieces.

Ramón's passion for music began at early age. He began playing the harp professionally at age twelve and built his first harp at age thirteen from guitar strings and an old window frame discarded during the renovation of the Presidential Palace in Asunción, Paraguay.



Ramón's interest in music began at age three – when he began tuning his father's guitar on the sly. Though he plays five other instruments, the harp has always been his first love. Ramón studied harp with the masters, Rodolfo Ortiz, Pedro Gamarra, Fidelino Castro, and Severiano Gonzales. In France, Ramón studied classical harp with Madame Jacqueline Dumond Forestier and performed concerts with classical harpist, Véronique Ganté – Vogt. For nine years Ramón was the principal harpist for the France based ensemble, Les Guaranis, under the direction of Francisco Marin. For more than 30 years Ramón has performed for audiences throughout Europe, Africa, South America, and now in the United States.

Ramón Romero has recorded three-dozen records in South America and Europe and four in the United States: solo albums, *Rosas Para Ti* (Roses For You), *Arpa Campesina* (Sweet Little Country Harp), featuring the original compositions and the beloved music of Paraguayan composers, as well as *Strings of Fire* and the 2005 CD, *Live in San Francisco: Cuerdas de Fuego* with his ensemble musicians.

Ramón Romero now resides in California. He tours year-round in the U.S. and overseas, performing solo, with harp and vocal music, or in concert with his ensemble *Cuerdas de Fuego* (Strings of Fire). Ramón and *Cuerdas de Fuego* have been on the juried California Arts Council Touring Roster of Performing Artists. Ramón was the headliner at the 2002 Edinburgh International Harp Festival in Scotland and was recently awarded the Lucas Foundation Fellowship, for a three month residency at Villa Montalvo in California.

"You will never think of the harp the same again."

John Griswold, State Theater, Modesto

"His beautiful playing at times resembles a lush symphony. The harp seems to dance within his hands."

Maui Beat

"Mr. Romero's performance was 'electrifying.'" *Le Monde, Paris*

Cuerdas de Fuego Ensemble

Carlos Caro

Carlos Caro was born in Havana Cuba in 1967. From an early age he was drawn to percussion. From playing as a child at the World Youth Festival in Havana, to school bands as a student, he was strongly encouraged to pursue his musical aspirations. He is a graduate of the Alejandro Garcia Caturla Conservatory in Havana and the National School of Arts Instructors, after which he began his professional career with the group Clave, comprised of young, talented musicians who, like Carlos, had graduated from musical institutions and were experienced in the popular Cuban music scene.

In 1990, Carlos toured and recorded for two years with Paulo Fernandez Gallo, one of the most well recognized and respected artists in Cuban music. The band Paulo & Su Elite recorded the hugely successful album, *La Dama del Son*, nominated for the EGREM award given by the Music Recording and Editing Association of Cuba.

Carlos emigrated to Mexico City in 1993 where, while playing with various Cuban ensembles, he was commissioned to record and perform a work in the Danzón style with the Mexico City Philharmonic. In 1996, he moved to California and quickly become one of the most sought-after Latin percussionists in the San Francisco Bay area. In 2004, Carlos Caro released his first album with his own group Vission Latina.

Carlos plays congas in the styles of bolero, cha cha cha, pilón, songo, guaguanco, rumba, yambú, columbia, meringue. On bongos he plays the styles of bolero, son, son montuno, changüi, pacá. On timbales he plays danzón, danzonete, danza, cha cha cha, pilón, mozambique, songo, and conga. Also, Carlos plays Guira and Timbora and all of the minor percussion instruments including cascara, claves, maracas, guiro, and the cowbell. The African influence on Cuban music is very prominent in his music.

Santiago Maldonado

Santiago Maldonado performs an extensive repertoire of music from Mexico and South America on guitar, harp, and other string instruments, as well as voice. Santiago began his career as a musician playing mariachi music in Mexico City, when he was 18. In 1974, he performed on his first musical tour outside of Mexico, traveling to Venezuela with the well-known mariachi group, Los Mensajeros.

In 1983, Santiago joined Maricachi de America, performing in concert and on broadcast programs throughout Mexico. Two years later, he became a member of mariachi Arriba Juarez, touring the United States. Later that year, after the earthquake destroyed so much his homeland of Mexico, Santiago immigrated to the United States.

In the U.S., Santiago has been a member of the top mariachi groups, such as Maricahi Los Camperos of Nati Cano; with this ensemble, he toured and recorded with Linda Ronstadt. He has also toured and recorded with Uclatlan and Mariachi International of Mexico (which he managed). Santiago has toured to Japan and throughout the U.S. with the mariachi ensembles; he has also toured Europe as a soloist. He is very proud of his recording on Placido Domingo's CD, *De mi Alma Latina*, under the direction of Bebu Sivetti.

Paraguay

(Spanish: República del Paraguay
[Republic of Paraguay])

Prepared by Helena Simonett

(Sources: Irma Ruiz, *Grove Music*, Oxford University Press, 2006; Timothy D. Watkins, *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, vol. 2, 1998; John M. Schechter, *The Indispensable Harp*, Kent State University Press, 1992.)

Overview:

Paraguay is often called by its citizens the heart of South America, because of its landlocked position in the center of South America and national pride in its cultural riches. About 95 percent of the population is of mixed Spanish and *Guaraní* Indian descent. Though little else of *Guaraní* culture has survived, the *Guaraní* language has left a strong mark, and its use is a focus of national pride. Most of the population is bilingual.

Although Paraguay is almost the size of California (157,047 sq mi), most of the 6 million population lives in an area within 100 miles of the capital, Asunción, which is the biggest city in the country.

The local climate ranges from subtropical to temperate, with substantial rainfall in the eastern portions, though becoming semi-arid in the far west. Paraguay's largest economic activity is based on agriculture, agribusiness and cattle ranching.

Top flag color is red; bottom flag color is blue.





Paraguay borders Argentina to the south and southwest, Brazil to the east and northeast, and Bolivia to the northwest. “Paraguay” is derived from the *Guaraní* word “Pararaguay,” meaning, “From a Great River.” The “Great River” is the Paraná River, which produces the greatest amount of hydroelectric power in the world.

The Paraguay River divides the country into two geographically and culturally distinct areas, populated since ancient times by indigenous peoples. To the east is sub-tropical jungle, inhabited by horticulturalists belonging to the *Tupí-Guaraní* linguistic group. To the west is the northern *Chaco*, whose inhabitants are hunter-gatherers belonging to the *Maskoy*, *Mataco-Mak'á*, *Guaycurú* and *Zamuco* groups.

Europeans first arrived in the area in the early 16th century and the settlement of Asunción was founded in 1537. The city eventually became the center of a Spanish colonial province, as well as a primary site of the Jesuit missions and settlements in South America in the 18th century. Paraguay declared its independence by overthrowing the local Spanish authorities in 1811. Since then, Paraguay's history has been characterized by long periods of authoritarian governments, political instability and internal power struggles. Paraguay also fought devastating wars with its neighbors, Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay, and was eventually defeated in 1870 after five years of the bloodiest war in South America. Paraguay suffered extensive territorial losses to Brazil and Argentina.

Paraguay-the Jesuits' influence on musical life in colonial Paraguay:

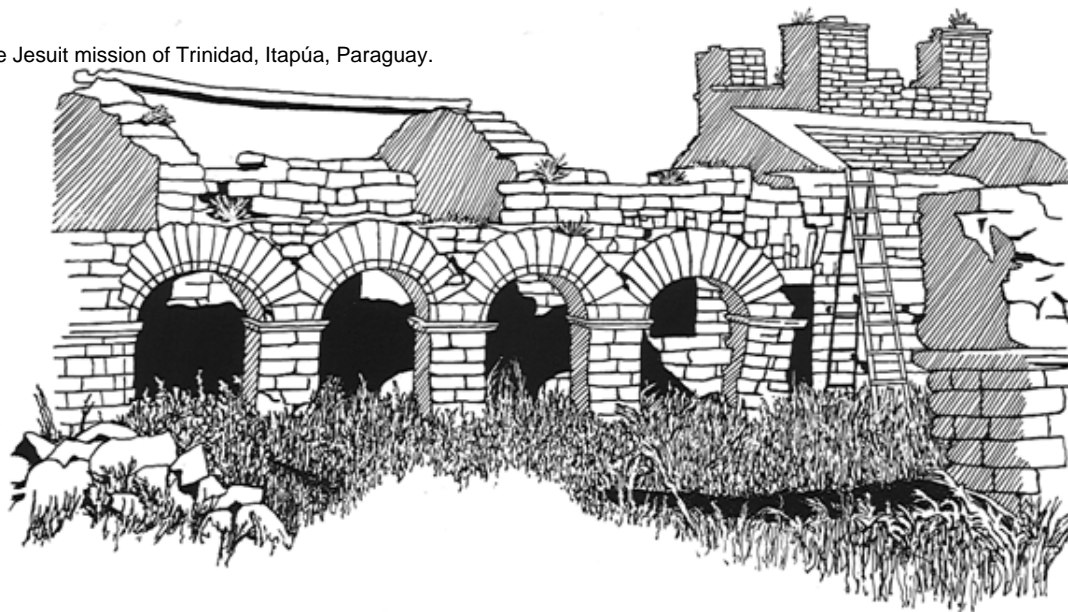
The Society of Jesus, whose members are known as Jesuits, is a Christian religious order of the Catholic Church in direct service to the Pope. During the colonial period, Jesuit missions in Latin America were very controversial in Spain and Portugal, where they were seen as interfering with the proper colonial enterprises of the royal governments. The Jesuits were often the only force standing between the indigenous people and slavery. Together throughout South America, but especially in present-day Brazil and Paraguay, they formed mission towns, called "reductions." It is partly because the Jesuits protected the indigenous peoples whom certain Spanish and Portuguese colonizers wanted to enslave that the Society of Jesus was suppressed and in 1768 was eventually expelled from South America.

The Jesuit Province of Paraguay was founded in 1609 and embraced a large territory including part of present-day Argentina and Uruguay. In Paraguay, the Jesuit order established separate townships (reductions) for the Guaraní Indians and several other indigenous peoples. Indian inhabitants were taught Christian doctrine and singing, as well as to read and to write music with ease. Soon, virtually every town of about 2000 members boasted its own orchestra, and several of the larger towns were set up as conservatories or as factory towns for making musical instruments. In fact, a great variety of European musical instruments, including string instruments (harps, guitars, violins) and organs, were manufactured in the missions. Jesuits would constantly ask their European colleagues to send the most recently composed music to the townships, and a musical trade route developed between Europe and the La Plata basin of Argentina whereby Jesuit musicians and artists as well as music scores could be channeled to the South American jungles.



Jesuits teaching Guaraní Indians

Ruins of the Jesuit mission of Trinidad, Itapúa, Paraguay.



The missions' goal was to instill European cultural beliefs by converting the native population to Christianity. Music played a substantial role in achieving this aim, since it embraced practically every aspect of everyday life, including fiestas and ceremonies.



Section of a frieze in the ruins of the Jesuit church of Trinidad, Itapúa, Paraguay.
Left to right: violin, harp, and guitar.

For various historical and cultural reasons, Art Music was a late development. During the colonial period, the antagonistic relationship between Paraguayans and Jesuits meant that no evidence of it could be found in the cities, despite a century and a half years of teaching and the successful practice of European music within the protected atmosphere of the Guaraní reductions. Moreover, the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1768 marked the beginning of the end of the musical practices imposed under their harsh regime. The political vicissitudes of the two ensuing centuries also resulted in the arrested development of Art Music. It is significant that academically trained composers of the last 50 years have their roots in popular folk music.

From the 19th century onwards, folksongs and dances based on the European heptatonic (seven note) scale from the colonial centers were re-created and given a distinctive local style. The guitar, harp and violin played, and continue to play, an important role. Indigenous music, unknown beyond native communities, exhibits features of inter-ethnic cross-culturalization, with little if any Western influence.



Ruins of the Jesuit mission of Trinidad, Itapúa, Paraguay.

A short history of the harp in Latin America:

“The Paraguayan harp has evolved as the trademark of the nation. The harp gives musical and emotional expression to its peoples’ love and pain, hope and misery, pride and sorrow. Its music describes the nation’s flowers, lakes and rivers, waterfalls and choo-choo trains with superb accuracy. The competitive zeal of harpists in search of ways to produce exactly the myriad sounds of Paraguayan days and nights is an amazing and thrilling phenomenon.”

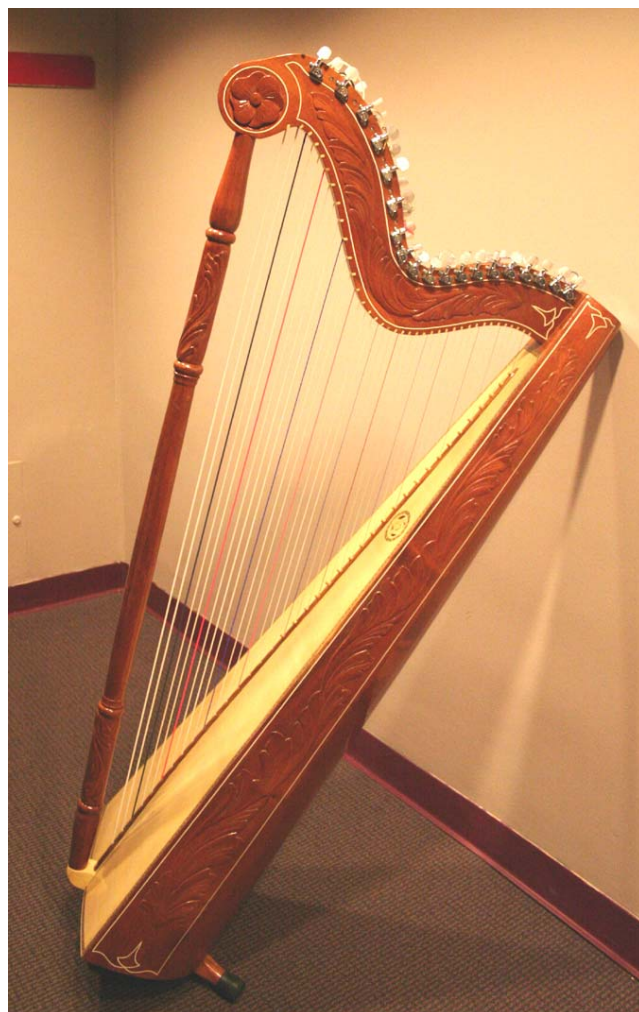
Roland Robinson, *The Folk Harp Journal* 1973

The *arpa* (harp), single-strung, diatonic and without pedals, was brought to the New World from Spain with the first conquistadors, and later with lay colonists and various missionary orders. The harp and violin played significant roles in Jesuit evangelistic activities in Paraguay and other Latin American countries. In the 19th century, following the 1768 expulsion of the Jesuits and the widespread replacement of the harp by the organ as a church instrument, the harp was mainly used in folk traditions and in the upper-class salons.

There is an enormous variety of harps and harp repertoires in present-day Latin America. The four most important regions in Latin America with vital harp traditions are: 1) Mexico, 2) Paraguay-Argentina, 3) Venezuela, and 4) Peru.

In each region exist harps with unique physical features and harps representing distinct musical repertoires, often representing different cultures, both indigenous and mestizo (mixed).

In the Mexican *son jarocho* (music of the southern coastal plain of Veracruz and east coast of Mexico), the use of the harp dates back at least to 1803. In the early 19th century, the harp, guitar, or violin was often used to accompany dance. Female harp virtuosos are described in various accounts of 16th-century Spain, and in Chile the tradition of women harpists is documented back to the 18th century. Along the Atlantic coast of Colombia and Venezuela, the harp was a favorite instrument in the early 19th century, played by either sex. There are numerous historical references to blind harpists, and still today this occupation is often selected by blind men of rural Latin America who are unable to earn a living by working the fields.



The Paraguayan harp
Parts of the harp:
sound box on the bottom diagonal, **neck** curving across the top, **fore pillar** straight up the left side, and the **strings**

Paraguay was the sphere of greatest Jesuit activity and, thus, is today the center of one of the most vital—and most influential—harp traditions of Latin America. The harp is the country's official national instrument and is the featured lead instrument in hundreds of ensembles (*conjuntos*). Paraguayan folk groups exist in most South American countries and the Paraguayan-style harp is also used in Chile, Ecuador, and Venezuela. The Paraguayan harp repertory includes the polka, as well as the *galopa* and the waltz-like *guaranía*, both in *sesquialtera rhythm* (alternating duple and triple meter in 6/8 time), the latter having frequent arpeggios and great melodic freedom. The distinctive sound and style of Paraguayan ensembles have developed during the highly “romantic” and “nationalistic” decades of the turn of the twentieth century.

The diatonic Paraguayan harp has its origins in the Renaissance Spanish harps and European minstrel harps, which had a straight round pillar. However its present design and construction date from the early to mid-20th century and is unique in Latin America: the neck is comprised of two facing halves of laminated cedar; the strings emerge from holes in the bottom side. This construction causes a centralization of pressure in the neck, which makes a high string tension that creates a bright sound.



Modern Paraguayan harps usually have 36 to 40 nylon strings (nylon wrapped strings for the bass notes, respectively), covering 5 octaves. Colored strings serve as visual orientation for the harpist: red strings are used for the F notes; blue strings for the C notes.

Tuning pegs were traditionally made of wood, though most harps now feature guitar-type mechanical pegs made of aluminum. These may offend traditionalists, but they allow stable and precise tuning.

The body of the harp is about 56 inches long and about 16 inches wide at its widest point. The sound resonates from the body through a single, large, round hole in the base of the sound box.

The neck pillar and body are held together by the tension of the strings. The sound box is built with thin wood for the back and top (1/8 inch); the sides may be thicker (1/4 inch) for rigidity and to increase sustain. The sound box is traditionally formed out of cedar and surfaced in pine. Modern Paraguayan harps however are made of various woods, each adding its own tone color to the sound of the harp.



Despite the frail construction and light weight (less than 10 pounds), the harps are strong and are easy to carry around using the pillar as a handle, unlike the more familiar concert harps seen in America which can weigh upwards of eighty pounds.

Because the neck and pillar of the Paraguayan Harp are not glued together it is possible to loosen the strings and pack the harp in a small box for shipping.

Traditionally, harpists made their own instruments—a practice that can still be observed in the interior of the country. However, a thriving harp-making industry now exists in and around Asunción, providing harps for professional harpists throughout the world. The popularity of the Paraguayan harp has spread widely since 1970.

Harp performance:

The Paraguayan technique is a combination of plucking the strings with the flesh part of the finger for strength and the nail passes the string at the same time to produce the strong bright sound. However many harpists use only the fingernails producing a softer sound. The slower songs are softer and more delicate but the polkas are very strong.

It is common to play the melody line using octaves or thirds and sixths, giving a characteristic brilliant sound. Tremolos are quite common, often played in harmony against a melodic or rhythmic bass line.

The close spacing of the strings allows very fast arpeggios, wide chord reaching (easily one-and-a-half octaves), fast scale like runs, and fluid tremolos.

An important aspect of harp performance technique in Paraguay is the lack of standardization. Harpists learn by experimentation and observation. This folk music is passed down by ear thus each harpist employs his own interpretation and develops the variety of techniques and special effects, *bordona* (muffling), tremolo, harmonics, *glissando*. Techniques of *muffling* and *glissando* are especially important in harp pieces such as *Pájaro campana* (Bell Bird), *Cascada* (Waterfall), and *El tren lechero* (The Milk Train), based largely on natural or human-made sounds.



Ramón Romero demonstrating a glissando

Glossary:

Arpa: (Spanish): a diatonic harp without pedals, found in many regions of Hispanic America.

Diatonic harp: a harp is tuned to one major diatonic scale. Unlike the modern pedal harp, the diatonic harp does not have the ability to change keys.

Sesquiáltera: in Hispanic American song and dance forms, a common type of alternation between duple and triple rhythmic groupings in a 6/8 rhythm. This rhythm is also called Polka Paraguaya in their folk terminology.

Arpeggio: a chord where the notes are played in succession rather than simultaneously. The word comes from the Italian for “in the manner of the harp.”



Tremolo: a rapid repetition of one note in music or a rapid alternation between two or more notes.

Glissando: a continuous sliding from one pitch to another. On a harp, the player slides his/her finger across the strings, quickly playing the separate notes.

Heptatonic scale: a musical scale made up of seven different tones. The major and minor scales of Western art music are the most commonly known heptatonic scales.

Additional Instruments in the concert

Cuatro

The Cuatro was "born" in the New World (Hispanoamérica), in the late 16th and early 17th century, from the original Spanish guitars (which then only had 4 strings) and the Quinto (5 strings), and was played with a strumming style, like its predecessors.

The first Cuatros were made in a very rustic style, using pieces of indigenous wood for the body and very coarse vegetable fibers for the strings (which were shaved with mollusk shells). Later on, the strings were made from animal intestines, which had been dissected and hardened in the sun, and this made the instrument sound more like the earlier string instruments from Spain.

Both the indigenous people and the slaves played the Cuatro, accompanied by wooden blocks, whistles, drums and maracas, helping them cope during the hard daily life they lived under the Conquistadors. The Cuatro became more important for the indigenous, afro-latino and mestizo people, and the instrument began to symbolize their nationalist sentiment. They played the Cuatro in a wide range of songs, expressing their happiness, joy, sadness and loneliness. In the 19th Century, some professional carpenters and artisans began to build Cuatros in their free time, out of their love of music, and would play their instruments to liven up parties and traditional dances. This became the musical style and cultural norm of the era.

The professional woodworkers began to barter their instruments for sweets, delicacies, food items and sundries, and these first trades were known as Permutas. From then on, in Venezuela as well as other parts of Hispanoamérica, the Cuatro took root and spread, with gradual changes in the style of the musical instrument itself (new nylon strings, different types and colors of wood, inlays/onlays) until it attained its current level of importance in musical artistry and folklore.



Cuatro aviolinado with maracas and guitar, Puerto Rico. 1941



The four strings are, from left to right: **A** (La), **D** (Re), **F#** (Fa sostenido) and **B** (Si).

The wood most commonly used for the Cuatro is cedar (back of fingerboard, and back and sides of body), ebony (front of fingerboard), rosewood (tuning pegs, head), white pine (front of body).

Guitar

Lute-type instruments such as the Arabic oud were introduced into the West through the Moorish conquest of Spain and the 12th century crusaders, who conveyed the stringed instruments throughout Europe. By the time of the Renaissance, musicians had altered and developed these various instruments into the lute.

The creation and development of instruments in this string family continued. Plucked instruments were made in a variety of sizes, usually very small, for ease of transportation. Many of the early guitars resembled present-day ukuleles. They were strung with four pairs (called courses) of strings. Over time, a number of definite features that led to the modern guitar began to emerge such as frets on the neck and the the familiar inward curve that forms the waist of the guitar.



Lute

The guitar became increasingly popular in European countries in the 16th and 17th centuries, challenging the status of the lute with louder volume and easier tuning. The bent-back angle of the head of the lute made tuning the instrument much more difficult than tuning the guitar with its straight line between neck and head. By the late 17th century, a fifth course of strings had been added to the guitar below the other four. In the mid-18th century, the guitar attained its modern form, when the double courses were made single and a sixth string was added above the lower five. Guitar makers in the 19th century broadened the body, increased the curve of the waist, thinned the belly, and changed the internal bracing. The old wooden tuning pegs were replaced by a modern machine head.

Maracas

All of the maracas that exist in the world originated either on the African continent or in Latin America, among the indigenous peoples who created maracas for ceremonial and ritual use. The African varieties of maracas are the ones we usually hear in the music of South America and the Caribbean -- Bolero, Cha-cha-cha, Salsa, Merengue, etc. -- and the indigenous (and later, creole) maracas are those heard in folk music, (usually accompanied by the Cuatro, Guitar and/or Harp.) Many varied musical rhythms and styles are played with these different maracas, playing an important percussive role in Latin American music.



Maracas are percussion instruments seen in various shapes and sizes, the original usually being made completely of natural material-- a pair of dried gourds, filled with beans, seeds, sand, etc., mounted on smooth wooden sticks that the musician holds in each hand in order to rapidly shake the instruments up and down, side to side and in circular motions. In Venezuela, the gourd used for making maracas is called a tapara (from the taparo tree). Maracas can also be made of dried, cured leather with tiny white beans inside (used mostly in Salsa rhythms), and, wood, plastic, or even aluminum, for mass-produced instruments usually used by children and students.

The style that the Cuerdas de Fuego ensemble uses is called Maracas Llaneras, using the maracas made from taparas, from the South (los Llanos, or Plains region) of Venezuela. This style is characterized primarily by three different hand/arm movements, alternated, which lend different rhythms to the song and add flourishes. Flourishes and alternation of the hand and arm make the movements look interesting and eye-catching while keeping the downbeats regular. The maracas also can make slow rolling sounds as well as fast blows and sharp strikes.

Bombo Argentino

In Argentina, as in many parts of America, the principal instruments prior to European colonization were flutes and drums. The bombo, however, now emblematic of Argentine folk music, was not one of the original drums. It derives instead from the old European military drums, and uses a similar arrangement of hoops and leather thongs and loops to tighten the drumheads, which are usually double. It is also called bombo legüero to differentiate it from similar large drums. *Legua* is a measurement term describing approximately 4 to 5 kilometers, so the name of the bombo called legüero is named such because it was played in el campo and could be heard for at least one *legua* (referring to the distance of the sound, and communication to distant areas). The body is made of a hollow log, with the inside scraped and chiseled. The drumheads are made of the skins of animals such as cows, sheep, or guanacos. Because the fur is left on the hide, the bombo's sound is deep and dark.



The bombo is played while hanging to the side of the drummer, who drapes one arm over the drum, to play it from above, while also striking it from the front. The player's hands hold a soft-headed mallet and a stick, which strike drumhead and wooden rim in alternation. The bombo serves as a combination of bass and percussion, not just maintaining the meter, but evoking an elemental, visceral response. The bombo is played in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, and Peru. Whether the drum is played in Argentina or in other Andean countries, the sound of the bombo is always like the sound of a large, strong heart, communicating through its vibrations with the pulse of the listener.

Conga Drums

The conga drum is a pitched percussion instrument that originates from Africa. The name conga is probably derived from the name of its homeland, the Congolaise of Africa. The conga is also called the Tumbadora.

Conga heads (the top of the drum that is struck to make sound) were originally made from rawhide. Rawhide is still the most popular material for heads, but today synthetic heads, made of plastics and other materials, are also available. The skin heads of the original congas were nailed to the wooden shell; before each performance the nailed heads were heated by a brazier to obtain the desired tension. Today, the skin is held in place by a set of rings and tuning lugs, which also serve to adjust the tension and regulate the pitch.

Three conga head sizes emerged from the conical African drum. The name of the head sizes describe the drum's pitch and use. Quinto, Conga, and Tumbadora or Tumba are the three sizes.

- The Quinto is the high-pitched, small head conga. The Quinto is the singer of the band, used to drum a melody; to accent; to sing, to sound as if it is laughing or crying
- The Conga, sometimes referred to as the Segundo, is the mid-range, medium head conga. It plays the middle parts of three-part rhythms. The Conga is the most versatile of the three sizes, playing not only the middle drum parts, but high drum and low drum parts as well.
- The Tumba, sometimes referred to as the Salidor, is the low-pitched, large head conga that plays the low drum rhythm parts. Its deepest sounds result
- from striking the drum directly in the center of the drumhead.



Three sizes of Congas from left: Segundo, Quinto, and Tumba.

When the conga first became popular, congeros (conga players) would play only one drum at a time. Hence the rhythm parts were strongly assigned and the players were experts in their parts. As players developed and mastered conga playing techniques, the music and rhythm arrangements increased in complexity, and congeros began playing two and three drums simultaneously.

Bongos

The history of bongo drumming can be traced to the Cuban music styles known as Changui and Son. These styles first developed in eastern Cuba (Oriente province) in the late 1800's around the time that slavery was abolished. Initially, the bongo had heads which were tacked and tuned with a heat source. By the 1940's metal tuning lugs were developed to facilitate easier tuning. Some of the first recordings of the bongo can be heard performed by the groups Sexteto Habanero, Sexteto Boloña and Septeto Nacional.



FIND OUT -questions for students

- What does it mean to tune an instrument? How do you tune a stringed instrument?
- Why does the amount of tension change the pitch? What does the word pitch mean?
- Conga drums can be tuned to a specific pitch? How are they tuned?
- Which instruments among those listed in this guidebook require tuning?

CD Selections and Activities

El Tren Lechero (The Milk Train) rapid polka Félix Perez Cardozo/ Paraguay

This was the first wood burning steam engine train in Latin America, and it still runs today. It would go from Asunción, Paraguay to San Lorenzo. The train would stop at every doorway along the route; passengers would get on and off, sell food, play music, and socialize. Every Sunday turned into a daylong fiesta. The route was only 13 kilometers but took 6 - 7 hours to complete. Note how the harp and percussion create the sounds of the train going over the tracks.

Activity: Ask students to create the sounds of a train. A third of the class creates a 1-2-3-4 beat (accenting the 1) to mimic the sounds of the train starting down the track. A third of the class creates the different train whistles. A third of the class creates the people sounds: the conductors and passengers speaking or shouting at random.

Build the train sounds one group at a time until all groups are making sounds together. Ask students to listen while they are making sounds and try to make their sounds relate to each other. Combining all their train sounds makes a kind of music. If students could choose any instruments, what instruments would replace each of the train sounds that they made? What instrument would they choose to play the train rhythm? Which to play the whistles? The different people's voices?

Pajaro Campana (Bell Bird) Paraguayan polka Félix Perez Cardozo/ Paraguay

This popular song most represents Paraguay and is the symbol of liberty. The Bell Bird is one of the rarest wild birds in the world. It lives in the virgin forests of South America. As the male bird begins to sing, the female answers and they end their song together. This bird is a small white bird that is known as having the loudest song of all birds. He gulps air in his throat, opens his beak and calls to his mate, and then they fly off together into the jungle.

Activity: Find the definition of *glissando* on page ten and read it aloud. Ask students to listen for the glissandos in this piece. How does this sound represent the Bell Bird? Ask students to listen for the ways the technique of *glissando* is used in other pieces.

Moliendo Café /Las Americas (Grinding Coffee/The Americas) José Manzo/Venezuela

A piece sung during the tedious night of grinding coffee at the coffee plantation. They sang during their work to pass the time and to forget their problems, the cold, heat, their suffering. The second part of this medley is based on a song that includes the names of the countries and regions in the Americas.

Activity: Even though it feels like a dance tune, the first part of this medley was originally a work song. What is the purpose of a work song? Ask students to research our country's work songs. Who used them? Do any survive today?

Cascada (Waterfall) polka Digno Garcia/Paraguay

This piece is named for the Iguazú Falls bordering Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil. The falls are a UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site. The horseshoe shaped landmark is a waterfall system with more than 270 cascades, the result of a volcanic eruption. These falls are taller and much wider than the Niagra Falls in the U.S. The name Iguazu comes from two words in the language of the Guarani Indians: *y* (water) and *guasu* (big). Listen for the sounds of the waterfalls in the music.



Activity: Ask students to think of a place in nature that impressed them (the ocean, the mountains, a forest, or even a garden) How could they express the feel of this place with music? What sounds or instruments would they use? Would they need a special melody or rhythm? Would it be loud or soft, fast or slow, wild or subdued? Ask students to describe or perform the music for their place.

HARPIST, KEEPER OF THE SOUL

Article from EI OBSERVADOR

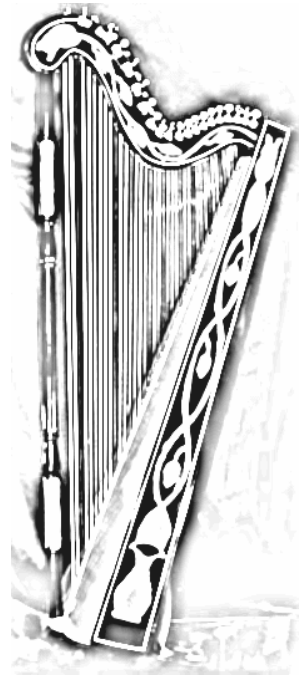
The Bilingual Weekly Serving San Jose and Silicone Valley—

BY JESSICA LLOYD-ROGERS February 21 – 27, 1997

At a recent concert in Pacific Grove, the audience stood and gave Ramón Romero a standing ovation in the middle of a song. Such a reaction is not unusual for Romero who has been playing the Paraguayan harp for more than 40 years. He has played throughout Europe and Russia including representing France at the Cannes Music Festival and a command performance for the Queen of Spain. Romero, who is originally from Paraguay, moved to California in 1988.

Bill Merwin, friend and presenter of an upcoming concert, says "I really hate the term 'genius', especially when it is applied to artists. It always sounds pretentious. But Ramón is a genius; he's unique and not like anyone else."

The harp is a haunting instrument and Ramon's specialty is variations on a theme. He plays all the rhythms of South America – guaranias, canciones, polkas and songs from Venezuela, Argentina, Perú, and all the rest. The right hand plays a melody usually in 6/8 count and the left hand plays the counter rhythm $\frac{3}{4}$ time. The folk melodies are all based on a European tonal system with the accents in a different place. The effect is emotional and takes you from a beautiful melancholy mood and brings you into passion. Ramón's manager says, "It almost becomes a contest to see how many variations can be developed around one theme."



Ramón was born in a small village in Paraguay. His first language was Guaraní (an Indian language of South America) and Spanish became his second. He went on to speak fluent French, a little Italian and some Portuguese. He is currently taking English classes at a local Junior College.

He began learning to play the harp around the age of nine although he had been fascinated by the sound from an early age. His family was poor and he didn't have the money to buy a harp, so he would always borrow a harp from someone in town. One night, when Ramón was 14 years old, there was a big party in town, which was to feature a harpist and a couple of guitarists. The harpist got too drunk to play, so his friend came and got Ramón.

"This is my friend Ramón," he told the crowd. "He's going to play the harp for you." The crowd laughed, "No, no, not Romerito! He doesn't know how to play!"

But when Ramón began to play the crowd went wild. He played so hard that night that he had blood under his fingernails. When he returned to his house with his pockets stuffed with money from people in his audience, he had to explain where he got it. "My mother thought I had been a bad boy," said Ramón.

Ramon finally got his own harp when a family member who worked at the Government Palace brought home a window frame that had been thrown away, Ramón carved it into a harp shape about 18"-20" tall with 23 strings. After everyone went to bed at night, Ramón would take it under the bed covers and play it in the dark.

Ramon's father played guitar and was very possessive of his instrument. Each day, before he left for work, he would loosen the strings to untune the guitar. When he returned each night, the guitar would be tuned. He was very confused because no one would admit to touching it. One day he left all the strings tuned except one and when he began to play, Ramón piped up and said "NO! NO! That string is wrong!" He was three years old with near perfect pitch.

His family loved music and Ramón was strongly influenced by the music of the famous composer and harpist, Felix Perez Cardozo heard on his mother's radio. One day in school, Ramón saw a movie with Cardozo playing. He began jumping up and down, shouting "There's my harp! There's my harp!"

Cardozo's indirect influence continued when, at 19, Ramón moved to Buenos Aires to play with an ensemble. The ensemble turned out to be the musicians who had played with the late Mr. Cardozo. "I was speechless when I realized who they were," said Ramón. The musicians coached him and toned down his aggressive playing and brought out the emotions and delicacy that Cardozo had made famous. Ramón then began developing his own particular style and interpretations.

Ramón says, "folk music is evolutionary music that is always changing. But the feelings and expressions involved in the music never change. And I'm sad because I don't know who will carry on and save it for the future."

LESSON

Folk Music

Objective: To explore the meaning of folk music

Warm Up and Discussion: Ask students to guess what the term “folk music” means. Share the following definition:

Folk music is the traditional and often anonymous music that is an expression of the life of people in a community. Music indigenous to a particular ethnic group or locale, it is usually preserved and transmitted orally. Folk music has served both as way of entertainment and a mode of communication and teaching. Every country has its own folk music.



Children Dancing at Festival
http://www.witn.psu.edu/articles/article.phtml?article_id=99&show_id=17

Name different folk music genres and the peoples who primarily created them. (Bluegrass, Appalachian folk music, Celtic fiddling, Native American music, cowboy music, protest music, work songs.) Some specific examples students might know are *Buffalo Gals*, *Erie Canal*, *I've Been Workin' on the Railroad*, and *Old Susannah*. Each of these kinds of music contain elements of the everyday lives and experiences of the people who wrote them. The *Strings of Fire* concert will include a song about a train and about a bird, and one about a coffee factory. Why were the musicians inspired by these subjects?

Main Activity:

- Ask students to work in groups of three to four and answer the following questions: What would students include in folk music for themselves and their peers? What things do they see and hear and deal with every day? How do they feel about these things?
- Ask students to pick one subject for their own folk music and ask them to write three detailed sentences about it that explain the following: what it does in their life, how they feel about their subject, and what they want people to learn about it.
- Ask students to create a clap that suits their topic. It can be slow and lazy or fast and frantic- as complex or simple as they wish. Ask them to divide their group and practice a combination, with half the students clapping and the other half reading their sentences with the clap.
- Ask them to re-evaluate their combination and add to or change the rhythm if they wish (they do not have to stay with clapping, but may use other objects in the classroom to make a sound - pencils, desks, feet on the floor or softer sounds like snapping or tapping on their leg.) In addition, it they may want to add a few vocal sounds for emphasis or to make a noise associated with their topic to add interest.
- Ask them to share their compositions with the rest of the class.
- Play the ***Moliendo Café/Las Americas*** (*Grinding Coffee/The Americas*) and ***Cascada*** (*Waterfall*) without telling them the titles. Ask them to listen to the rhythms and the melody.

Reflection:

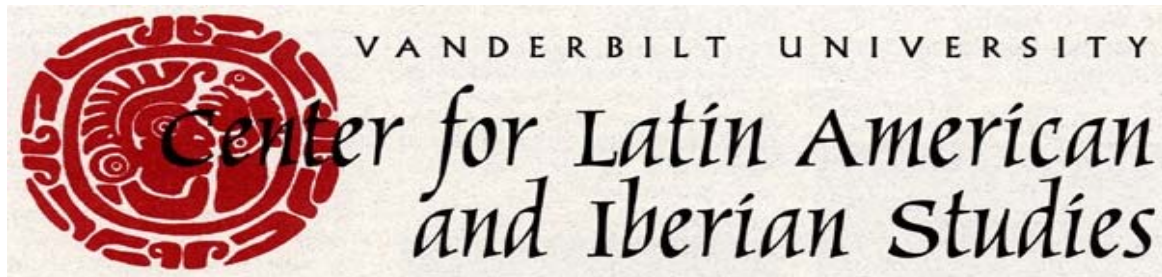
What kinds of rhythms did students hear? How did melody add to the music?

- Play each selection once more. This time tell students the titles and read them the short description of the piece on page fourteen. Ask students to create pictures in their heads when they listen. What did students imagine? What kind of people did they see?

Additional Activity:

Folk music is shared between and passed down through generations. What music do students share with their parents or grandparents? Ask them make a kind of trade with an older family member. Students will to learn about their music and find one thing to like about it; the family member will do the same for music the student likes. Ask students to report on the outcome of their trade. What did they learn? Was it hard for them and their family member to find something to appreciate about each others music?

Teacher Resource



As part of its newly expanded commitment to Outreach, the Center for Latin American and Iberian Studies at Vanderbilt University seeks to increase knowledge and understanding of Latin America in K – 12 classrooms throughout the mid-south region. Recently designated a National Resource Center by the Department of Education, CLAIS endeavors to help teachers incorporate Latin American content into their curricula. At our Professional Development Workshops, K -12 educators gather valuable information from experts on Latin American topics to share with their students, as well as receive free curriculum materials and professional development points for their participation. Teachers may also take advantage of CLAIS's Lending Library, which offers resources in the form of books, CDs, DVDs, lesson plans, and other materials free of charge for classroom use. In addition, as part of our Speakers Bureau, renowned Vanderbilt faculty and graduate students share their expertise in visits to schools and classrooms.

For more information on these and other programs, visit the Center for Latin American and Iberian Studies' website at <http://sitemason.vanderbilt.edu/site/fMFIJi/outreach>, or contact Outreach Coordinator Sarah Birdwell at (615) 343-1837 or via email at sarah.b.birdwell@vanderbilt.edu.