

SONES DE MEXICO

ENSEMBLE CHICAGO

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS 2016



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Illinois
ARTS
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Illinois Arts Council

**For more information call
(773) 728-1164**

MISSION

The mission of Sones de México Ensemble is to promote greater appreciation of Mexican folk and traditional music and culture through innovative performance, education, and dissemination.

VISION

We aspire to be the preeminent Mexican folk and traditional music organization in the U.S. through our reliance on the following core values.

CORE VALUES

In all of our operations, we are committed to

1. Maintaining the highest levels of excellence and professionalism in everything we do.
2. Remaining true to and knowledgeable about the traditions we represent.
3. Educating people about the wealth and depth of Mexican folk music culture.
4. Creating engaging experiences for the public and delivering extraordinary entertainment and learning value.
5. Being innovative with our music and sound.
6. Inspiring others to explore their cultural heritage.
7. Being accessible to and encouraging of anyone who wants to learn more about Mexican folk music and culture.
8. Being supportive of other musicians who share our values and engaging in mutually beneficial collaborations.
9. Establishing Mexican son as a component of the American music vocabulary.
10. Being a sustainable and fiscally responsible operation.



Education Programs Description

PRESENTATION

A GRAMMY® and Latin GRAMMY® Award Nominee, Sones de Mexico Ensemble is a Chicago-based music and dance performance arts group and a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to artistic excellence and quality education since 1994.

Sones de Mexico Ensemble was recently featured on NPR’s “Morning Edition,” PRI’s “The World”, and APM’s “A Prairie Home Companion” with Garrison Keillor. The *Chicago Tribune* says “Forget Cuba, birthplace of the son. The best son happening right now is Mexican, and the group that’s taking it up a notch is Sones de México, based in—of all places—Chicago.”

Chicago’s premier Mexican folk music group, Sones de México Ensemble, specializes in *son*, a rich and lively Mexican music and dance tradition. The group’s cross-cultural approach links *son* to the diverse ethnic roots of Mexico’s *mestizo* culture: Native American, Spanish, and the often-overlooked influence of Black music in México.

The members of the group may teach as a group or individually. All programs educate and entertain, may be integrated with a school’s curriculum, and may be conducted in English, Spanish, or both for any age group. Students acquire music and dance skills and learn important lessons about Mexico’s diverse culture.

GROUP BIO

Sones de México Ensemble is a 501(c)3 non-profit arts organization founded in Chicago in 1994 by a group of accomplished Mexican musicians and educators. The group specializes in *son*, a rich and lively Mexican music tradition and its many regional styles. The *Chicago Tribune* says “[They] move seamlessly between styles and instruments playing with rock’n’roll energy without sacrificing cultural authenticity.”

Sones de México Ensemble has performed and offered programs touching the lives of children and adults in twenty U.S. states Their children’s program includes audience participation, a masked dance, important lessons about Aztec cosmology, the ecosystem, musical concepts of tempo and polyrhythms and the most famous Mexican *son* “La Bamba”.

MISSION

The mission of Sones de México Ensemble is to educate, research, preserve, arrange, present, perform, and disseminate Mexican folk and traditional music and dance to children and adults of all nationalities, physical abilities, and cultural and ethnic backgrounds.



PROGRAMS FOR THE SCHOOLS

Sones de México Ensemble teaches and performs for children, unfolding a world of experience for students of all backgrounds in the context of Mexican traditional music and dance. They have toured hundreds of schools since 1994 with English, Spanish and bilingual programs designed especially for kids and mindful of the State of Illinois Education Goals for Music and Dance which seek to empower students to:

- I- Understand the principal sensory, formal, technical, and expressive qualities of music and dance.
- II- Identify processes and tools required to produce music and dance.
- III- Demonstrate basic skills necessary to participate in the creation and/or performance of music and/or dance.
- IV- Identify significant works in the arts from major historical periods and how they reflect societies, cultures, civilizations, past and present.
- V- Describe the unique characteristics of music and dance.

Sones de México Ensemble also combines the expertise of its members to offer a wide menu of units that draw general lessons in Math, Science, Social Studies, Humanities, Physical Education, and the Arts from the wealth of the Mexican folk music and dance experience.

The next section is a menu of sample units that integrate Mexican music and dance with important lessons in other academic subjects. In the coming years, new units may become available and old units may be retired according to the success they have in the classroom. Teachers are encouraged to call Sones de México to get an updated menu of available units.

Units may be available in a variety of formats: performance, workshop, lecture/demonstration, residency, professional development or in-service for parents and teachers, student performance, and student ensemble. These formats and their specific features are discussed further ahead.



Sones de México Ensemble Educational Programs 2016

Fiesta Mexicana



Fiesta Mexicana is a 45-minute interactive concert for kids and their parents. It involves all the musicians of Sones de Mexico Ensemble. The program includes seven or eight songs and a fair amount of storytelling and interactive games between the songs that can be delivered in English or in Spanish.

The group embarks on a journey through Mexican music and the magic world that surrounds it. Children begin by learning about the four sacred elements of nature for the Aztecs: Earth, Wind, Fire, and Water. Then they learn songs about different animals that inhabit the Mexican ecosystem, including the *acamaya* (a crawfish), the crocodile, the legendary mermaid, a mouse, a buzzard, a duck, and even a cat! Kids will clap Mexican rhythms and learn the difference between a slow and a fast tempo with the help of Doña Sabina, a 100-year-old special guest. First and foremost, everyone in the audience will learn how fun it is to play and dance Mexican music.

Beyond the Music: A Musical Geography of Mexico

Beyond the Music is a lecture/demo that involves all the members of Sones de Mexico Ensemble with many of their musical instruments. The program was designed as a 25-minute, pre-concert introduction to the different regional styles of music that Sones de Mexico Ensemble plays. But this "musical geography of Mexico" program can also be presented as a 45-60 minute stand-alone lecture for a library or a cultural center. Audiences learn about what to listen for in the major regional styles. The band gives live demonstrations and takes questions from the audience.



*This program is sponsored in part
by the National Endowment for the Arts.*



La Danza del Sol (The Dance of the Sun)



This hands-on, Aztec dance workshop is led by Ensemble member Lorena Iñiguez. It can be taught in a large open space (like a school gym or a yard) for groups of 10 to 75 children or adults or both mixed together. An Aztec drum is placed in the center representing the sun, and the dancers form a circle around the drum. This ritual, circle dance has been performed by the Aztecs in Mexico since pre-Columbian times. It represents their view of the cosmos. The cumulative "theme and variation" form of this dance allows students to quickly learn this dance while they are challenged both physically

and mentally. Students will learn the names of the four sacred elements of nature for the Aztecs: earth, wind, fire and water, and some names in the Nahuatl language.

Master Music Class: School Bands



This master class is for any ensemble, orchestra, band, choir or group of musicians that is interested in learning both repertoire and style in any of several Mexican music traditions.

Sones de México Ensemble has played and recorded several orchestral arrangements of Mexican folk music. Members of the ensemble have worked with music ensembles in schools for over 20 years, including mariachi bands at all levels. They have also coached school bands and orchestras and adult string, wind or vocal ensembles at universities, music schools and folk festivals.

This master class works best when planned in advance. The school's band director chooses from several available options material that is appropriate for the instrumentation and the level of his/her students. Then the school receives written scores and recordings ahead of the class for the students to prepare. On the day (or days) of the class a member (or members) of Sones de Mexico Ensemble works with the players on polishing the style and the technique that will allow them to interpret the works an authentic rhythmic and phrasing style.

Master Dance Class: Mexican Folclórico and Fandango style

This master class is aimed at existing dance groups or dance schools who are looking to develop specialized skills in Mexican dance: developing new choreographies, brushing up on foot tapping techniques, improvisation, or preparing an upcoming presentation.

This class is taught by Lorena Iñiguez with recorded music or with the assistance of a couple of musicians from the Ensemble as live accompanists (dance is always best when done to live music). Depending on the time available, Lorena may focus on a specific skill or a set of skills and choreography to reach an objective by the end of the class.



Drumming & Percussion Workshop



Drumming and percussion are some of the most accessible forms of engaging in musical expression. This hands-on workshop can be from 30 min to 2 hrs. for groups of 5 to 25 students, children or adults, who are interested in an engaging musical experience. The workshop introduces players to the basics of percussion: rhythmic patterns, dynamics, tempo, texture, and ensemble work within the context of Mexican folk music. One or two members of the Ensemble may teach this class. The instructor can provide some Mexican percussion instruments, but students are encouraged to provide some of their own scrapers, shakers, tom-toms, snares, hand drums, marimbas, etc.

Corridos: Mexican tragic ballads songwriting class

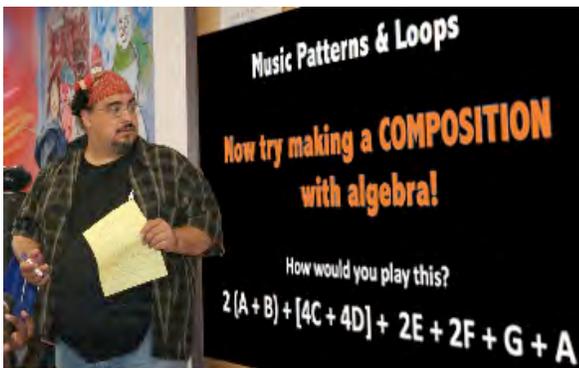
This class meets curricular goals in music, culture and literacy. A *corrido* is a Mexican epic ballad that tells a tragic story, based on a true event. *Corridos* emerged in the mid 1800s and flourished during the 1910 Mexican Revolution as a 'chronicle of the people'. Students learn that subscribing to form is a key element of good storytelling, and that the *corrido* provides a narrative formula for telling tragic stories. These songs are a respectful homage (though not always devoid of humor) a person's tragedy.



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Folklorist/ethnomusicologist, Juan Díes teaches this class as a two-hour workshop, where a group of students writes *corrido* based on a local tragedy with the instructor's help. In a longer residency, each student can write an original *corrido*. Topics may range from the loss of lunch money to the loss of a relative. *Corridos* for this class may be written in Spanish or in English. Students are encouraged to research all the facts of the story. They learn about rhyme, meter, and following a story outline. Students may also learn to illustrate their *corridos* with woodcuts, linotypes or pencil drawings in the tradition of Mexican broadsides. Students may also get a chance to record their *corridos* on CD and/or perform them in public as a culminating event.

Mexican Songs and Algebra



This class meets curricular goals in music, culture and math and truly integrates the practical use of algebra as a problem-solving tool. It is a 60-minute lesson appropriate for 9 to 19 year old students, whether or not they have had algebra before. It introduces the concepts of variables and formulas as they apply to music form and music composition. The class is taught by Juan Díes using a Powerpoint™ presentation and a guitar. It can also be taught with recorded music and with members of the Ensemble performing live music samples.

A big part of Music composition is the ability to build aesthetically pleasing structures of rhythmic and melodic patterns. Algebra and patterns go well together. Algebra lends itself well as a shorthand expression of patterns. For example: **(a) basic exercise:** if the chorus of a song is repeated twice, we can express it as $2x$, where x =the chorus, **(b) midlevel exercise:** if a drum pattern is repeated eight times and is followed by a different pattern that is repeated four times, we can express it as $8a + 4b$, where a =the first drum pattern and b = the second, and **(c) advanced level exercise:** How many $[X=?]$ 4-bar phrases $[P=4]$ in a jingle of 60 seconds in length $[L=60]$ played at a tempo of 120 beats per minute $[T=120]$ with six beats to a bar $[B=6]$? The answer is $X=L/[(60/T)(B\cdot P)]=\text{five}$. Students will be challenged and rewarded to find a real-world application of algebra in music.

Los Enanos



"Los Enanos" (The Little Ones) is a traditional song from the *huasteca* region of Mexico. This class is aimed at a small group of young pre-school or kindergarten students. Because the exercise may be completed in just 20 minutes, larger groups of kids can be divided into smaller groups of 20 students or less, and three groups can be serviced in only one hour. This is a good class for parents or teachers to participate in with their kids.

Children have to learn a simple choreography that consists of four different steps while they follow the music. Kids need to follow directions, memorize the steps, clap to the beat, and take cues from the music to execute them properly. The class is taught by two or more members of the ensemble.

Mask-making and dance with "La Danza de los Viejitos: El Trenecito"

The Mexican state of Michoacán is one of the richest when it comes folk traditions in music, dance and crafts. Some very popular traditions that have been preserved by the P'urhépecha Indians are *Danzas de Viejitos* (Dances of old men). These light hearted and humorous masked dances mimic the movements of old men.

Students can learn about the history and traditions of this state by becoming involved in making their own costume out of simple materials like paper plates, crayons, hay, a dowel rod, colored ribbons, an elastic string, white butcher paper, and other art supplies, and then learning a dance. The dance "El Trenecito" (The Little Train) teaches an important musical lesson about how changes in "tempo" can affect a song, as the train full of "old men (and women)" speeds up or slows down to the beat of the music while trying to keep itself together.



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Groups of up to twenty elementary school students may take part in this class.

Art teachers can become involved in the preparations. *Sones de México* can provide specs on the masks ahead of schedule, and students can prepare their costume before the Ensemble arrives to the school. In limited time situations, the Ensemble can focus on the music and dance part of the exercise, but the students can still get the full experience.

