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SONES DE MÉXICO ENSEMBLE, CHICAGO'S PREMIERE MEXICAN FOLK MUSIC ORGANIZATION, ANNOUNCES PERSONELL CHANGES

Ensemble renews itself with both youth and experience in its 23rd year.

CHICAGO —Sones de México Ensemble, the Mexican folk music organization founded in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood in 1994, recently bid goodbye to one of its members while simultaneously welcoming back one of its co-founders. Additionally, a young and fresh talent has joined the band and transitions the group forward into its 23rd year as Chicago's most prominent performer of traditional Mexican son, the music that forms the base of all Mexican music.

"This is an interesting time in the history of the group," says musician, ethnomusicologist and Sones de México co-founder **Juan Díes**, who also serves as Executive Director of the organization. "Change can be difficult to navigate, but ultimately we've assembled a multi-generational performing ensemble that is reflective of our mission of passing down these valuable traditions from one generation to the next."

Dancer **Lorena Iñiguez** came to Sones de México Ensemble in 2003 after being a member of the Mexican Folkloric Dance Company of Chicago. A master of the percussive zapateado style of dance used in several types of traditional Mexican music, Lorena quickly became an audience favorite and remained one over the next 13 years. In addition to dancing, Lorena learned several traditional string instruments, percussion and flute during her time with the band. After a trip to Mexico earlier this year to further explore folkloric sources of her art, she announced that she was leaving the group in order to return to Mexico and continue her studies.

René Cardoza has been recruited to take Lorena's place in the ensemble. He is a founding member of Sones de México Ensemble, part of the original quartet formed with Juan Díes, Gonzalo Córdova and Víctor Pichardo. Cardoza, a native of Mexico City, was a member of the

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famed Ballet Folklórico de México de Amalia Hernández before moving to Chicago. He is an acknowledged master of Native American dance forms.

Cardoza joins founding members Días and singer/guitarist **Gonzalo Córdova**, who rejoined the group in time for their 20th Anniversary in 2014, bringing a total of three founders in the six person ensemble.

Earlier this year, violinist **Erendira Izguerra**, a recent graduate of the University of Illinois Chicago with a degree in music, joined Sones de México Ensemble full time after several guest appearances in 2016. She recently won a Master-Apprentice award from the Illinois Arts Council Agency to study Mexican son with Juan Días.

Izguerra joins drummer and percussionist **Eric Hines**, a member since 2015 who holds a doctorate in percussion performance from the University of Arizona; and composer/multi-instrumentalist **Zacbé Pichardo**, a Columbia College graduate and the son of co-founder Victor Pichardo, who joined in 2006. These six musicians made their official debut as an ensemble in May 2017.

“Someone as talented as Lorena Iñiguez is very hard to replace,” comments Juan Días, “but having René back is an incredible blessing, and the new blood in the organization gives us a lot of energy. We have a lot to look forward to.”

About Sones de México Ensemble: The group is Chicago’s premier folk music organization specializing in Mexican ‘son,’ a genre encompassing the roots of mariachi music and other regional styles, including *huapango*, *gustos*, *chilenas*, *son jarocho*, and more. The ensemble was formed in 1994 and soon incorporated as a non-profit organization to keep the tradition of Mexican ‘son’ alive in its many regional forms. As a performer and recording artist, they have developed and popularized many original arrangements of Mexican traditional tunes. Its original work has experimented cross-culturally with symphonic, Irish, folk, blues, C&W, jazz and rock, though never abandoning its roots in Mexican son.

The group has released six CDs: *¡Que Florezca! (Let it Bloom)*; *Fandango on 18th Street*; the GRAMMY® nominated *Esta Tierra Es Tuya (This Land is Your Land)*; *Fiesta Mexicana* (a children’s album); *¡Viva la Revolución!*; and *13 B’ak’tun*.

The organization is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization with a commitment to teaching. 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.

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