

JARABE



FELIZ NAVIDAD
A Bordenño Soul Christmas

STUDY GUIDE



JARABE has captivated audiences across the United States through their magnetic performances that blend traditional and contemporary musical genres. Born in the American Southwest, the band draws inspiration from their Mexican roots as well as the Chicano rock, Tejano, and Brown-eyed Soul movements of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s. Well-known for their ability to connect with student audiences, their bilingual show “FELIZ NAVIDAD: A Bordenño Soul Christmas” features personal stories and classic holiday songs made famous by Bing Crosby, Brenda Lee, Elvis, José Alfredo Jiménez, Tony Camargo, and many more!

This study guide provides an overview of their educational outreach programs, a review of their holiday song selections, descriptions of the band’s instrumentation and the geographical regions they represent, as well as the educational standards being met by their programming.



EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH PROGRAMS



ALL-SCHOOL CONCERT ASSEMBLIES

JARABE's 45 to 60-min interactive concert for K-12 schools is formatted to introduce students to the global artists they honor through music, dance, singalong, anecdote, Q&A, and eurythmic participation.

- Once students are seated, music will begin with musical selections reflecting various aspects of JARABE's global musical influences.
- Band members will describe each of the instruments and encourage student participation.
- A short Q&A will be included at the end of the presentation.

COLLABORATIVE OPPORTUNITIES

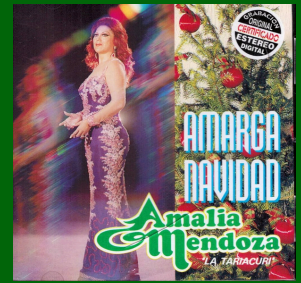
- JARABE offers programs that can be adapted to include beginning, intermediate, advanced, or community Ballet Folklórico groups with a focus on Son Jarocho and Norteño regional folk styles, especially apt for Cinco de Mayo and Hispanic Heritage Month.
- Musical collaborations with intermediate and advanced student ensembles that include workshops on performance technique and professional development as well as vocal and percussion masterclasses.
- A full collaborative concert program designed for university, community, or professional orchestras which features symphonic arrangements of genres that JARABE performs such as Huapango, Cumbia, Bolero, and Ranchera.

FEATURED HOLIDAY SONGS

“AMARGA NAVIDAD”



Written by the renowned Mexican singer-songwriter José Alfredo Jiménez, the tragic “Amarga Navidad” (Bitter Christmas) was recorded in 1958 by Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán and singer/actor Amalia Mendoza. Known for her passionate voice, the song helped consecrate Mendoza as Mexico’s ‘Lady of Emotion.’ With a musical introduction that includes a snippet of “Jingle Bells,” the ballad’s melancholy lyrics describe a jilted lover’s demand that her partner leave by December so as not to begin the New Year with sorrow.



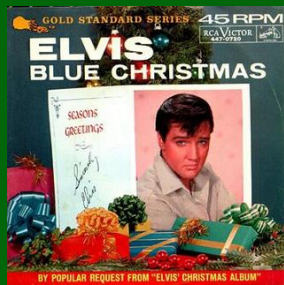
“AVE MARIA”



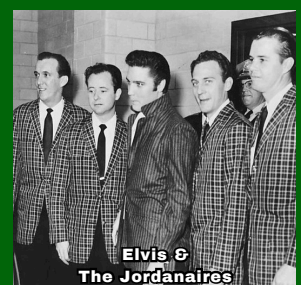
Based on a German translation of the poem “The Lady of the Lake” (1810) by Scottish novelist Sir Walter Scott and composed by the Austrian Franz Schubert in 1825, this piece was inspired by a plea to the Virgin Mary. The German text was later replaced with the Roman Catholic prayer in Latin and is now popular at weddings and funerals. Jarabe’s rendition is a Spanish translation made by lead singer Tavo Alcoser, Jr. in dedication of Our Lady of Guadalupe’s feast day (Dec 12), which begins the holiday season in Mexico.



“BLUE CHRISTMAS”



“Blue Christmas” is a Country classic written by Billy Hayes and Jay W. Johnson and first recorded by Doye O’Dell in 1948. It was also recorded by the likes of Ernest Tubb, Hugo Winterhalter, Russ Morgan, and Billy Eckstine in subsequent years. But it was Rock & Roll legend Elvis Presley’s rendition that catapulted the ballad to become a staple of the American Christmas songbook. With lyrics about unrequited love, this rendition also stands out for the ‘blue notes’ provided by the backing vocal group called The Jordanares.



“CAMPANA SOBRE CAMPANA/LOS PECES EN EL RÍO”



“Bell Over Bell” and “The Fishes in the River” are quintessential folk Christmas carols in Latin America by way of Spain and of unknown authorship. With clear Arabic influence due to the Muslim legacy in the Iberian Peninsula, they were brought to Mexico during the colonial era and were included in the 1986 Pop album “Eterna Navidad” (Eternal Christmas). Performed by Mexican singer Yuri and the vocal trio Pandora to great acclaim, Jarabe’s arrangement is a mash-up of the two songs performed in a Norteño-style polka.



“CHRISTMAS (BABY, PLEASE COME HOME)”



The song “Christmas (Baby, Please Come Home)” was written by Jewish songwriters Jeff Barry, Ellie Greenwich, and Phil Spector and was recorded by R&B/Soul singer Darlene Love in 1963. While not an immediate commercial success, it went on to become a Christmas standard and has been covered by multiple artists, including Mariah Carey, U2, Michael Bublé, Jon Bon Jovi, and Cher. In recent years, Love’s rendition has resurfaced on the pop charts, reaching #15 on the Billboard Hot 100 in December of 2022.



FEATURED HOLIDAY SONGS

“CHRISTMAS WITHOUT YOU”



Marco Antonio Solís

Written by one of Mexico’s most celebrated singer-songwriters, Marco Antonio Solís, and made famous by his band called Los Bukis, “Navidad Sin Ti” (Christmas Without You) is one of the Pop group’s biggest hits from their 10th studio album titled “Me Volví A Acordar de Ti” (I Remembered You Again) released in 1986. Jarabe Mexicano’s rendition is an English translation written by lead singer Tavo Alcoser, Jr. and dedicated to all the loved ones we have lost along the way and who we miss even more during the holidays.



“EL AÑO VIEJO”



Crescencio Salcedo

“El Año Viejo” (The Old Year) is a Cumbia dance song popular throughout Latin America that was created by a Colombian farmer and songwriter named Crescencio Salcedo. It was recorded in 1953 by Mexican singer Tony Camargo and quickly became an international hit. Played at the stroke of midnight to welcome in the New Year, its playful lyrics give thanks for a past year full of blessings. It has gone on to become part of Colombia’s National Heritage and has been covered by numerous artists and ensembles.



“EL BURRITO SABANERO”



Hugo Blanco

“El Burrito Sabanero” (The Little Savannah Donkey) was written by Venezuelan artist Hugo Blanco in 1972. Three years later, it was recorded by a children’s choir named La Rondallita and gained immediate popularity across Latin America. The song recounts the journey made on a donkey to see baby Jesus as we play the guitar and are guided by the morning star. With it’s upbeat rhythm and call & response form, the song went on to become a standard at Christmas fiestas and has been recorded by countless Latin artists.



“FELIZ NAVIDAD”



Known as one of the most recognized and celebrated bilingual Christmas songs in the world, “Feliz Navidad” was written by renowned Puerto Rican singer-songwriter José Feliciano in 1970. Fueled by Feliciano’s loneliness while living in Los Angeles, he wrote the song in remembrance of his family and friends in New York City. While the song did not chart on Billboard right away, it went on to be inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 2010 and peaked at #6 on Billboard’s Hot 100 chart in December of 2020.



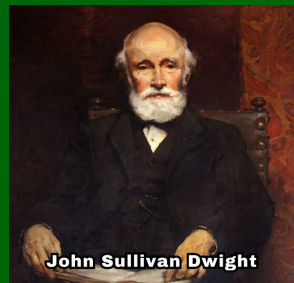
“YA ES NAVIDAD/O HOLY NIGHT”



Placide Cappeau

Adolphe Adam

This song is based on the sacred French poem “Cantique de Noël” (Christmas Hymn) written in 1843 by Placide Cappeau and set to music by composer Adolphe Adam. Interestingly, this version was shunned at times by religious institutions. “O Holy Night” is the English translation written in 1855 by the American minister John Sullivan Dwight. This rendition was hailed by abolitionists during the Civil War for its strong anti-slavery message. Jarabe’s bilingual arrangement includes Spanish lyrics by lead singer Tavo Alcoser, Jr.



John Sullivan Dwight

FEATURED HOLIDAY SONGS

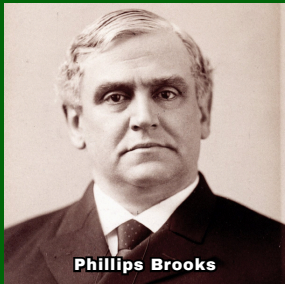
“PAZ Y AMOR/LITTLE DRUMMER BOY”



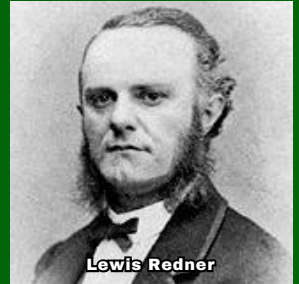
The song “Peace On Earth/Little Drummer Boy” was originally created by Ian Fraser, Larry Grossman, and Buz Kohan for Bing Crosby’s 1977 television special “Merrie Olde Christmas.” British singer-songwriter David Bowie had been invited to record a duet with Crosby but had disliked the song “Little Drummer Boy,” so the trio wrote a counterpoint melody which Bowie sang instead. Jarabe’s Spanish version of “Peace On Earth” called “Paz y Amor” (Peace & Love) has translated lyrics by lead singer Tavo Alcoser, Jr.



“PEQUEÑO PUEBLO DE BELÉN”



The American Christmas carol “O Little Town of Bethlehem” was written by the Episcopal clergyman and abolitionist Phillips Brooks and set to the song “St. Louis” by his longtime collaborator Lewis Redner in 1868. The text was inspired by Brooks’ visit to Bethlehem. Interestingly, the text is commonly set to the song “Forest Green” by composer Ralph Vaughan Williams in Canada, the United Kingdom, and Ireland. Jarabe’s rendition stays true to Redner’s music, but has Spanish lyrics by lead singer Tavo Alcoser, Jr.



“RITMO NAVIDEÑO”



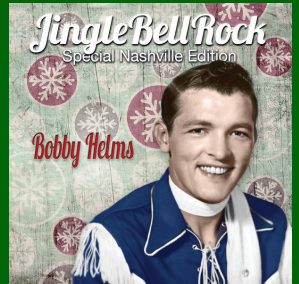
“Ritmo Navideño” (Christmas Rhythm) is a dance song released in 1997 and written by Mexican singer-songwriter and musician Mario Quintero Lara, leader of the Norteño band Los Tucanes de Tijuana. The lyrics invite people to enjoy the season and the festive rhythm. The bouncy rhythmic style is called ‘Baile de Caballito’ (little horse dance) or ‘Quebradita’ (breaking) due to its back-breaking dance steps. This dance style gained popularity throughout Mexico during the 1990's and continues to be a staple at Mexican fiestas.



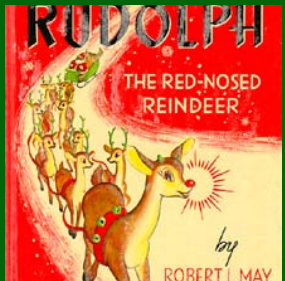
“ROCKIN’ AROUND THE CHRISTMAS TREE/JINGLE BELL ROCK”



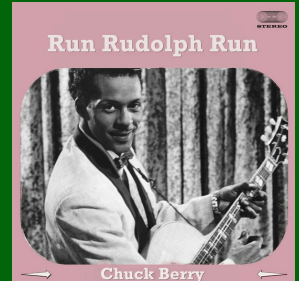
“Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree” was recorded by Brenda Lee in 1958 when she was only 13 years old. It took a few years to gain popularity, reaching #3 on Billboard’s Christmas Singles chart in 1965 and, in 2023, it finally reached #1 on Billboard’s Hot 100. “Jingle Bell Rock” was recorded and released by Bobby Helms in 1957. While the song is credited to J.C. Beal and J.R. Boothe, both Helms and guitarist Hank Garland claimed authorship of the song. Jarabe performs a mash-up of these two classic Rockabilly hits.



“RUN RUDOLPH, RUN”



The song “Run Rudolph, Run” was written and recorded in 1958 by Rock & Roll pioneer Chuck Berry. Interestingly, the character of Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer was created by American retailer Robert L. May in 1939 and his brother-in-law and songwriter Johnny Marks wrote the original song about Rudolph in 1949, registering a trademark for the furry character. Because of this, Berry was forced to share credit with Marks for his 12-bar blues hit even though he asserted that Marks had nothing to do with the creation of his song.



FEATURED HOLIDAY SONGS

“SILENT NIGHT/NOCHE DE PAZ”



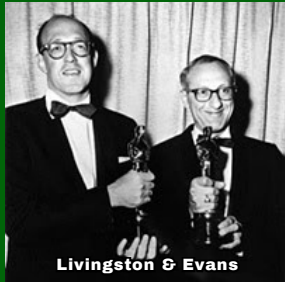
Fr. Joseph Mohr

With a lullaby melody that was at times attributed to Mozart and Beethoven, “Stille Nacht” (Silent Night) was written by the Austrian priest Joseph Mohr and set to music by composer Franz X. Gruber in 1818. Its melodic simplicity is due to the song originally being arranged for guitar since the church organ had been damaged by flooding. This now global Christmas carol has been translated into more than 300 languages with over 137,000 known recordings and was declared an Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO in 2011.



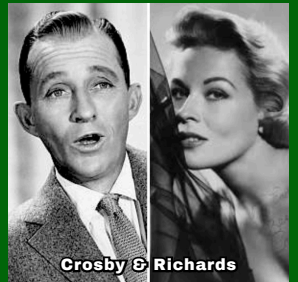
Franz X. Gruber

“SILVER BELLS/LAS CAMPANAS”



Livingston & Evans

Written by the Jewish songwriting duo Jay Livingston and Ray Evans, the song “Silver Bells” was recorded in 1950 by singer/actors Bing Crosby and Carol Richards. A year later, the song was featured in the film “The Lemon Drop Kid.” Livingston stated that he was inspired by the ringing bells used by Salvation Army Santa Clauses on NYC street corners. Evans stated he was inspired by a bell that sat on their office desk. Jarabe Mexicano’s bilingual rendition features Spanish lyrics by lead singer Tavo Alcóser, Jr.



Crosby & Richards

“SOÑANDO EN NAVIDAD”



I'll Be Home For Christmas

The wistful “I’ll Be Home For Christmas,” recorded by Bing Crosby, and the melancholic “Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas,” recorded by Judy Garland, were both written in 1943. These two classics became popular during WWII as American soldiers spent Christmas away from home. Jarabe performs a Spanish mash-up of these standards entitled “Dreaming of Christmas” arranged by lead singer Tavo Alcóser, Jr. and dedicated to all the immigrants who have left their homes behind to seek a better future for themselves.



ORIGINAL MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACK

“WHITE CHRISTMAS”

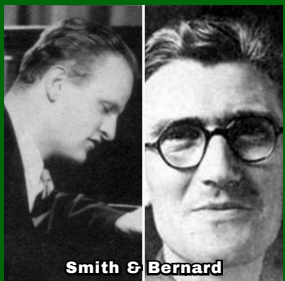


Irving Berlin

Credited as the song that made Christmas music commercially successful, “White Christmas” was written in 1940 by the revered Jewish songwriter Irving Berlin while he stayed in the American Southwest. It was featured in the 1942 musical film “Holiday Inn,” which earned it an Academy Award for Best Original Song. In 1954, it became the title track for the musical film “White Christmas” with an emotional opening scene that replicated Bing Crosby’s 1944 USO performance in France for 100,000 American G.I. soldiers.



“WINTER WONDERLAND”



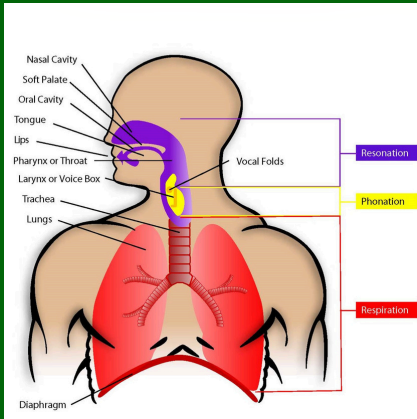
Smith & Bernard

“Winter Wonderland” was originally a poem written in 1934 by Richard B. Smith who was inspired by watching his hometown park fill with snow as he was being treated for tuberculosis. He later showed the poem to his friend and composer Felix Bernard who set it to music. It was first recorded by bandleader Richard Himber, but it was the version by Canadian-American bandleader Guy Lombardo that would go on to become one of the biggest hits of 1934. Sadly, Smith passed away the following year at the young age of 34.



Guy Lombardo

BAND INSTRUMENTATION



VOZ HUMANA (HUMAN VOICE)

Considered one of, if not, the earliest musical instrument, the human voice is both an aerophone (wind) and a chordophone (string) instrument. The wind elements include the trachea, the bronchi, the lungs, the diaphragm, the rib cage, and the intercostal muscles, which work in conjunction to move air in and out of the body. The string elements are the vocal folds (cords), where the actual sound is generated as the air passes through the glottis (the space between the folds). Depending on the amount of pressure exerted, this causes the folds to vibrate at different frequencies. Sound resonance and articulation are created by the facial cavities, the larynx, the soft palate, the tongue, the teeth, and the lips. The voice is also in charge of expressing the feelings of a song and conveying its story.



GITARRA CLÁSICA MODERNA (MODERN CLASSICAL GUITAR)

Classified as a chordophone (meaning sound is produced by vibrating strings), this acoustic instrument is usually made from wood with nylon strings and descends from the lute and the baroque guitar. It was introduced by the Spanish to the Americas and has become a core instrument in various genres of music such as Mariachi, Jazz, Country, and Rock & Roll.



GITARRÓN (BASS GUITAR)

Used as the bass in mariachi ensembles, this chordophone instrument was invented in Mexico to replace the harp for its portability. As such, instead of being strummed, the guitarrón is traditionally played by plucking two strings at a time which are an octave apart. Working in conjunction with the vihuela and the guitar, it provides the fundamental backbone of mariachi music.



VIHUELA MEXICANA (RHYTHM GUITAR)

This chordophone instrument was invented by Mexican mariachi ensembles in the 17th century and is used as part of the rhythm section alongside the guitarrón and the guitarra. Its high-pitched sound and the way it is strummed provides a percussive quality to the music. Like the guitarrón, the vihuela has a vaulted (convex) back that helps project its sound.

BAND INSTRUMENTATION



TAROLA (SNARE DRUM)

Also known as the “Caja” in Northern Mexico, this sensitive membranophone was developed in Europe throughout the 13th century and usually consists of two heads (membranes) made from Mylar plastic (which are held in place with tension rods and rims) and beaded rattles called ‘snare’ on the bottom membrane, which vibrate when the drum is played. Most modern Tarolas also have a lever called the ‘strainer’ that moves the snares toward, or away from, the head which changes the sound being produced.



MARACAS (SHAKERS)

The Maracas are idiophones originally made of dried gourds filled with pebbles, dried fruits, or similar objects. The most popular form of these instruments comes from the island of Cuba, although you can also find many Indigenous North American, South American, and African cultures that have something resembling them. These instruments were often used for healing rituals. Modern versions are also made of leather, wood, and/or plastic.



CENCERRO (COWBELL)

The cowbell is an idiophone made of thick metal that is now used as a percussion instrument. It originated in Europe to help protect livestock from predators. Eventually, they were brought to the Americas where they were modified and became an important element of Afro-Caribbean music. The cowbell is commonly played by striking it with a wooden stick.



CONTRATIEMPOS/PLATILLOS (HI-HAT & CRASH/RIDE CYMBALS)

These metal percussion instruments are also idiophones and variations of them were used by many ancient civilizations. The hi-hat cymbals are a combination of two medium-sized cymbals and a pedal that moves the top cymbal down when it is pressed. The hi-hat can also be played by striking the top cymbal with wooden sticks. The crash and ride cymbals are mounted on stands and are also commonly played by striking them with wooden sticks.

GEOGRAPHICAL REGIONS

Downtown, San Diego



San Ysidro Port of Entry



Zona Río, Tijuana



Playas de Tijuana



SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA, USA—TIJUANA, BAJA CALIFORNIA NORTE, MX

The Kumeyaay tribe has called this region home for the last 10,000 years. In the early 1500s, Portuguese explorers working for Spain arrived in this area and, in 1769, the first California mission was created in San Diego, making it known as the “birthplace of California.” In the early 1800s, a parcel of land named Rancho Tía Juana was established three miles south of San Diego’s bay, but the Mexican-American War (1846-48) placed the border just north of the ranch. Tijuana was formally founded on this parcel in 1889 and began to develop due to tourism from San Diego and beyond during the Prohibition Era of the 1920s.

This transborder region is now made up of more than 5.5 million people and is the largest binational metro area between the U.S. and Mexico. Each year, more than 68 million people cross the border between these cities, making it the busiest land-border crossing in the Western Hemisphere. And Tijuana is now the 2nd most-populated municipality in Mexico, only after the capital, Mexico City.

The population of the region includes many cultures and ethnic groups from all over the world due to migration/immigration. Tourism plays a large role in the economies on both sides of the border. San Diego is home to the largest naval fleet in the world and Tijuana has been hailed as the “cradle of Mexican Rock music.” Both sister cities are known for their vibrant arts scenes and renowned cuisine.

THE BORDER REGIONS

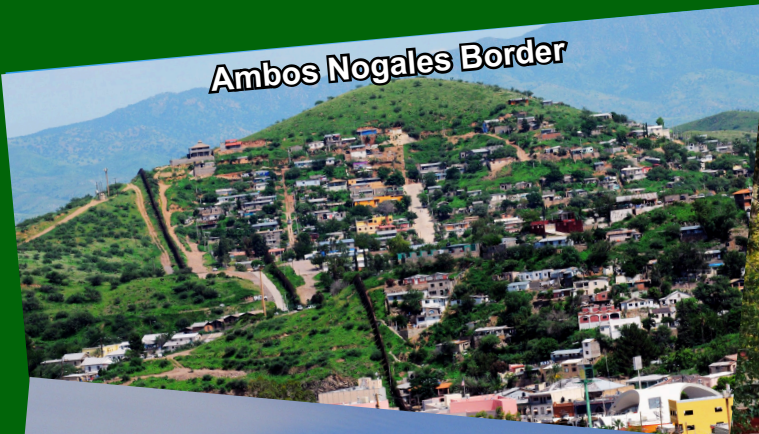
NOGALES, ARIZONA, USA—NOGALES, SONORA, MX (AMBOS NOGALES)

Many Native tribes have inhabited this region for thousands of years including the Anasazi, and later the Hohokam, the Apache, and the Yaqui. Nogales (walnut) is the Spanish word used to describe the walnut groves that used to cover the region. In the late 1600s, Jesuit priests arrived and established the Mission Los Santos Ángeles de Guevavi. After the Mexican-American War (1846-48), the United States purchased part of the region from Mexico. And when the first railroad connecting the two countries was opened in Nogales in 1882, many more Anglo-Americans began to migrate and settle there. A border wall was first built by Mexico during the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Later, tensions between both countries erupted into a firefight now known as the Battle of Ambos Nogales (1918).

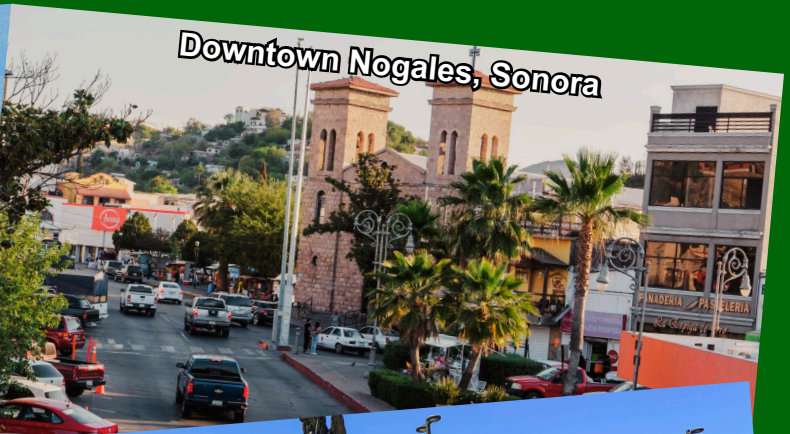
These sister cities now have a combined population of approximately 320,000 people, with the majority living in the much larger Nogales south of the border. Currently, 95 percent of the population of Nogales, Arizona is considered Hispanic and its economy centers largely around agriculture while Nogales, Sonora's economy depends mostly on manufacturing and trade with the United States.

The region offers many tourist attractions including the Tumacácori National Monument and the Tubac Presidio north of the border as well as the Benito Juárez Plaza and the Nogales Mall south of the border.

Ambos Nogales Border



Downtown Nogales, Sonora



Tumacácori National Monument



Benito Juárez Plaza



EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

This study guide references the various musical, historical, and cultural aspects you'll find in a Jarabe Mexicano performance as reflected in the Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools (pertinent details are listed below). For a full version of this resource, please visit the California Department of Education online at www.cde.ca.gov.

3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

Understanding the Historical Contributions and Cultural Dimensions of Music

Students analyze the role of music in past and present cultures throughout the world, noting cultural diversity as it relates to music, musicians, and composers.

Role of Music

3.1: Analyze how the roles of musicians and composers have changed or remain the same throughout history.

3.3: Compare and contrast the social function of a variety of music forms in various cultures and time periods.

Diversity of Music

3.4: Perform music from a variety of cultures and historical periods.

3.5: Compare and contrast instruments from a variety of cultures and historical periods.

3.6: Compare and contrast musical styles within various popular genres in North and South America.

3.7: Analyze the stylistic features of a given musical work that define its aesthetic traditions and its historical or cultural context.

3.8: Compare and contrast musical genres or styles that show the influences of two or more cultural traditions.

4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

Responding to, Analyzing, and Making Judgements About Works of Music

Students critically assess and derive meaning from works of music and the performance of musicians in a cultural context according to the elements of music, aesthetic qualities, and human responses.

Analyze and Critically Assess

4.1: Compare and contrast how a composer's intentions result in a work of music and how the music is used.

Derive Meaning

4.2: Analyze and explain how and why people in a particular culture use and respond to specific musical works from their own culture.

4.3: Compare and contrast the musical means used to create images or evoke feelings and emotions in works of music from various cultures.

