

## Dr. Lorenzo Trujillo

### Taking Mariachi Music to New Heights



Lorenzo Trujillo loved music from an early age, inspired by his Aunt Eva Nuñez, celebrated Denver Songstress. "She always sang to us, she would recite *refranes y dichos* – she sang to us as she cooked. At her home, when her group 'Magic Echoing Strings' would arrive to rehearse, her front room would often be converted into a practice hall, allowing open space in the center for us to listen and enjoy."

Lorenzo recalls his family's journey from Denver to Arroyo Seco, New Mexico where familia always gathered to play with la familia Archuleta, with Señor Damian Archuleta...heralded violinist. Equally significant were the musical *caravanas* brought into Denver in the mid 60's and 70's, he remembered the mariachi musicians and dancers who performed in spectacular fashion at Casa Bonita in Denver. In his early teens, Lorenzo would team with local musicians who formed a local band called 'Los Charritos.' The music he had learned from his Aunt Eva and music he listened to on the radio became the foundation for his musical repertoire.

After high school, Lorenzo traveled to Mexico City and enrolled at La Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. While in Mexico, he fell deeply in love with mariachi guitar and violin music. The experience led him to many opportunities to play with *músicos* in Mexico City and to play in church. This was the period of the start of the mariachi mass from Cuernavaca. "I joined fellow *mariacheros* on gigs playing for *pesos* at many events and in many venues." Lorenzo later graduated from the University of Colorado in Boulder, and began a career in the arts in both music and folklórico, including southwest music with his Aunt Eva, father Filbert and sons Lorenzo Jr. and Javier. He also joined the 'Mariachi Alegre' at Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe and St. Cajetan churches where they played the Misa Folklórica de Cuernavaca in church. The 'Mariachi Alegre' performed at many community events for baptisms, weddings, fiestas and funerals. At the same time Lorenzo was also highly involved in folklórico dance instruction and performance which he learned from in-residence and visiting instructors from Mexico.

As an artist-in-residence with the National Endowment for the Arts, Lorenzo directed a National Folklórico Conference, (Asociación Nacional de Grupos Folklóricos), in Pueblo, Colorado where he first met folklórico and mariachi instructors, Susan Cashion and Mark Fogelquist. He would meet them again later in California, in addition to Jonathan Clark (musician, historian). Shortly after, he attended a Mariachi Conference in San Antonio, Texas where he met Don Silvestre Vargas and his world-renowned Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán. He reconnected with Susan, Mark and Jonathan as a member of Los Lupeños while completing a doctorate at the University of San Francisco.

All this time, Lorenzo was influenced by violinist Lorenzo Martínez and his father Roberto Martínez of 'Los Reyes de Albuquerque.'

Having completed careers as a public school administrator, school attorney and Assistant Dean of Students at the School of Law at CU – Boulder, Lorenzo now directs 'Mariachi Los Correcaminos' at Metropolitan State University Denver. Now in his third year, he has developed a Mariachi program in the University's music department offerings that provides a high quality experience for students who wish to gain academic preparation as music teachers and performers. The program which functioned as a school club prior to Lorenzo's arrival is setting the foundation for future certification with an area of concentration in mariachi music and aspiration of minor and major areas of mariachi music studies and performance.



Pre-performance Rehearsal

This program has been hosting leaders in the genre's field of studies like Rebecca Gonzales, José and Jesús Hernández, Mark Fogelquist and Jeff Nevin. The intent is to take the program offerings to new heights. It also offers students with the enriching opportunities to receive instruction with master musicians such as Denver based 'Mariachi Sol de Mi Tierra' under the direction of Maestro Juventino Romero. "Our excellent facilities on the Metro campus add to state of the art rehearsal and performance environments, that are second to none." Establishing high standards in musical experiences to the mariachi curriculum at MSU Denver, Lorenzo has incorporated annual statewide mariachi festivals featuring visiting artists series, and has accelerated this component to include plans for a week-long Mariachi Teacher's Institute and Mariachi Camp for students. For additional information contact Dr. Lorenzo Trujillo, [ltruji12@msudenver.edu](mailto:ltruji12@msudenver.edu)

Mariachi has evolved from its storied past (mid to late nineteenth century) where the music was founded as an oral tradition and passed on by rote (without musical notes). In the 1930's, Mexican orchestra music (annotated compositions) was developed for trumpeters for studio recordings, but not until 1974 did a new awareness surface in the United States when Mark Fogelquist published musical scores for mariachi ensembles in his graduate thesis at the University of California – Los Angeles. Today, musical arrangers and composers provide scored compositions to support present day instruction in K-12 education and university programs. In the United States, Jeff Nevin's 'Mariachi Mastery' serves as the premier source of Mariachi music instructional pedagogy for instruction.



Lorenzo adds, "you still need to include instruction by the masters; as directors of mariachi, we understand the importance that they provide because they address first hand *el estilo de mariachi*; adding lyrical emotion and stylistic depth. They interject proper musicality particularly to the *son* and *jarabe* when performing the music, especially for dance couples and groups."



Cinco de Mayo Performance

"I emphasize to students that they need to earn a university degree. Our schools are calling for licensed teachers. And, our families and students want mariachi in the schools. Teachers need to teach mariachi in the schools. Mariachis need the formal education to teach with the same credentials as do the band and choir teachers. This is how mariachi will gain the respect of the institutions and how teachers will be able to make a living doing what they love. In the time I've been working at MSU, I've seen students leave with preparation as mariachi instructors; one is working as a professional mariachi in Guadalajara, another is directing a new program of community mariachi, and one is a performing actress and mariachi in one of Denver's major theaters. Students need to learn to read the musical scores to be competitive in the world of music. There are several music educators who are writing compositions now."

Mariachi students comment; Camilla Ruiz, a Freshman from Denver, is studying music, guitar and legal studies. "We need everyone's energy to participate...to be one group. I wish to thank my mother Margarita Ruiz for her encouragement that I follow my dream." Benjamin Kellogg, Senior with a Music Education major from Washington, D.C. who began when the group was a club, plays trumpet. He states, "the music drew me in, it was very enriching – the sounds, rhythms"...He enjoys his Teaching Practicum in the schools of Metro Denver. Freshman, Jazz Performance and Piano major, Gardina Martínez, a graduate of East High School in Denver, plays violin; she says that Mariachi Los Correcaminos, "has the feeling of family – teaching, giving and bonding."



Mariachi Los Correcaminos  
Metropolitan State University of Denver

Trujillo states: "I see three types of *mariacheros*; 1) those who are constantly playing while they learn new repertoire, 2) those who are studying music, and incorporating mariachi, and 3) those whose passion for the music lead them to strive for excellence in their learning and performance. In this program, I teach 15 musical selections per semester. We meet eleven times during the semester. I work to create an atmosphere of joy and high adrenaline infusing students with passion – *El Espíritu Mexicano*. This experience allows students a window of opportunity, where they are rediscovering music they listened to as children with their families. I see these students on the path, gaining some background and becoming accomplished in their music. I see some students enrolling in Spanish classes to add to their music skills in mariachi." In addition, fulfilling his aspiration to build on his mariachi music experience, Lorenzo began studying with Paul Primus, principal second violinist with the Colorado Symphony, and Carla Sciaki, violinist and recording artist, who have helped further ferment his musical prowess and instructional facility.

The mariachi students' experiences go beyond the classroom to include downtown theatres, television performances, newspaper interviews and articles, Fiestas Pátrias, Cinco de Mayo and numerous other community engagements. Add to that a growing number of Mariachi Conference experiences, both locally and out-of-state; all while developing academically and learning mariachi music as undergraduate students at Metropolitan State University of Denver.

*Mariachi compositions have elevated mariachi into an exquisite 'arte musical.'*

...Dr. Lorenzo Trujillo, 2018

