

Archuleta, Michael. *Mariachi method for guitar, beginning level/ Metodo Para Aprender A Tocar Guitarra Con Mariachi*. Long Beach, CA: Mixta Publishing, 2003. 2nd edition. Paper, 80pps. \$24.95. English version ISBN: 0-9675051-1-8; Spanish version ISBN: 0-9675951-2-6. Audience: middle school and higher; school, public, college and academic libraries.

In most of the larger cities of the Southwest, one can usually find a music store that specializes in Mexican music. If one is lucky, one will also be able to find in these stores any number of songbooks or *cancioneros* featuring the music of some of Mexico's best-loved ranchera singers, people like Jose Alfredo Jimenez, Jorge Negrete and Lola Beltran. These *cancioneros*, part of a series called "*Guitarra Facil*" (or sometimes "*Album de Oro*"), contain the lyrics and chords to these artists best known songs, and also include instructions for how to play the guitar, with diagrams and fingering charts showing how to strum and how to play basic chords. While these songbooks have been available for many years, they have over time become increasingly difficult to find. Recently, however, a website called Fiesta de Mariachi (www.fiestaweb.com) has begun to make these available through it's online store, but, given the generally poor quality of the paper and binding of these booklets, at less than reasonable prices.

Years ago, as an aspiring teenage guitarist and singer, I had many times attempted to learn from these songbooks how to strum while singing a huapango or a corrido. Each time, however, I'd get frustrated as I did not know at the time how to read Spanish all that well, nor did I understand the shorthand used to describe the diagrams and chords. For me, learning how to play guitar *a la Mexicana* from a *cancionero* was not at all an easy thing to do.

Things sure have changed since I was a teenager. Today one finds more and more people taking an active interest in mariachis and *la musica ranchera*. Mariachi festivals and conferences abound throughout the Southwest, and there are now scores of mariachi instructional programs in schools all over the country. In Tucson alone, one can find a mariachi program at all grade levels-from grammar school to the University. As a life-long fan of mariachi music, I am thrilled that so many of our youth are finding their niche in this beautiful art form.

With this resurgence of interest in all things mariachi, there have appeared over the past several years a number of publications and videos that attempt to instruct the individual in the art of playing the mariachi guitar (*Mariachi Strumming for Vihuela and Guitar* by Carlos E Martinez), the vihuela (i.e: *Introduction to the Vihuela*, video produced by the International Folk Culture Center) and the guitarron (i.e.: *Introduction to the Guitarron*, video, also produced by the International Folk Culture Center).

Most of these works can easily be found on the Internet via websites like The Mariachi Connection (www.mariachiconnection.com), Puro Mariachi (www.mariachi.org) or the already mentioned Fiesta del Mariachi (www.fiestaweb.com.) In my attempts at building a core collection of mariachi materials for the University of Arizona's mariachi program,

I have purchased most of these materials for the UA Music Library. Sadly, the production quality of some of these items leaves much to be desired, although overall they are still useful learning tools.

One recently published item that stands out as a well written, well-produced and easy to follow source is Michael Archuleta's *Mariachi Method for Guitar, Beginning Level*. Now in its second edition, and available both in Spanish and English, this easy-to-follow book is the best instruction manual for the mariachi guitar that I have yet to encounter. The book features mariachi rhythm patterns, major and minor chord progressions, user-friendly chord diagrams and pictures, words and chords to several songs including Cielito Lindo and De Colores, plus a 2-cd teaching sound track featuring play along exercises. These play along cd's are a real bonus, as they allow the student *hear* the proper way to strum and play chords without a teacher present.

Archuleta, a music educator from Southern California, promises to write additional instructional manuals for the vihuela and guitarron. Let's hope that these forthcoming volumes are as good as his first work, which I highly recommended for all libraries where there is an interest in mariachi music.

Reviewed by: Bob Diaz, Music and Dance Librarian, The University of Arizona.