Mariachi Vargas brings century of tradition to Valley fans

By David L. Tubina
Monitor Staff Writer
dtubina@themonitor.com

Not many groups have the staying power and tradition of El Mejor Mariachi Del Mundo, Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán. The group is now in its 106th year, performing with a fifth generation of musicians who continue to bring huapango, romancers and rancheras to audiences worldwide.

Currently, the group is comprised of six violinists, two trumpeters and one player each for the accordion, harp, guitar and guitarrón. It has been under the direction of Maestro Rubén Fuentes for 60 years and Jose "Pepe" Martinez, the group's musical director and arranger, since 1975.

"The tradition that Mariachi Vargas has is playing true.

See VARGAS page 12F
The Tejano ROOTS Hall of Fame in Alice is preparing for its biggest night of the year. On tap is the organization's sixth annual induction ceremony and kick-off dance.

Both events start at 6 p.m. and will be held at the VFW Hall, located at 2500 N. Texas Blvd. in Alice.

The festivities begin on Nov. 11 with a show and dance featuring performances by Carlos Guzman, Freddie Martinez, Sunny Cusna, Carlos Miranda, Agustin Ramirez and more.

At the induction ceremony, 27 new members will be recognized, including locals Juanita Garcia, Eddie Perez, Robert De la Cruz, Los Demones and Ernesto Guerra. One of the highlights is sure to be a reunion presentation by Los Fabulosos Cuatro, past and present.

Laura Canales won't be in the works.

"We will have more details in the next couple of weeks," he said. "We know that there is a demand for traditional music. We ask our listeners to be patient."

Montes said the new station is expected to be a high-wattage station with the ability to reach a larger audience than before.

"The station will have respect for the public without bad words," he said. "It will be a station that the whole family can listen to any hour of the day."

**READER QUESTION:**

Ramon Ayala wasn't nominated for a Latin Grammy this year. What happened? His album 'El Deseo Que Se Vuelva No' (Wish) is really good. - Debra M., Hidalgo

This is a question that has been asked by many readers. To set the record straight, Ayala was nominated for a Latin Grammy in the category of Best Pop Vocal Album for his album 'El Deseo Que Se Vuelva No.' The album 'El Deseo Que Se Vuelva No' was released in 2004, and Ayala was indeed a nominee for the Latin Grammy Awards that year for his work on the album.

**VARGAS**

continued from 1A

recording songs based on Mexican folklore, such as its recent adaptation of Italian opera tenor Andrea Bocelli's "Por Ti Volare" ("I'll fly for You").

That song and others it has adapted from Spain and interpreted into mariachi styles have enabled it to continue to be world renowned, Martinez said.

Mariachi Vargas has a cross-generational appeal. At the group's concerts it's normal to see a great-grandmother, grandmother, mother and child seated together, he said.

It hasn't hurt that the group recently accompanied Luis Miguel on his latest CD, "Mexico en la Piel."

Aside from the enduring influence of Fuentes, who became a member of the group in his 20s, what helps it maintain the mariachi tradition and allows it to still appeal to younger audiences is the wide age range of its members.

Frederico Torres, the group's trumpet player and coordinator is 67, and Martinez is 65. The youngest members of the group are violinists Steven Sandoval and Alberto Alvarado, both 30, Martinez said.

The group has been busy recently; it has toured Mexico extensively and performed in concerts with the symphonies of the cities which it visited.

Lopez and Vanessa del Rio are finalists from the national television competition "Nuevas Voces de América." The University of Texas Pan-American Mariachi Femenil, Roma High School's Mariachi Nuevo Sanederland, Zapata High School's Mariachi Falcon, Edinburg High School's Primer Orgullo Mariachi, La Jolla High School's Mariachi Los Coyotes and the Dancentre of Edinburg are also scheduled to perform.

David L. Tobar, the monitor, will be in charge of the general assignments for the Monitor. You can reach him at (956) 682-4434.