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Mariachi Vargas thrills S.A. fans

By **Melissa Rentería** - Express-News

Audience members began cheering for Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán even before its members played a single note.

The applause and *gritos* of approval became louder and more frequent as the 12-member Mariachi Vargas played to a near-capacity crowd Saturday at Municipal Auditorium.

The group known as the best mariachi in the world played classics such as “Si Te Perdiera” and “Por Amor,” backed by the 70-piece UTSA Symphony Orchestra.

The concert officially ended the 14th Annual Mariachi Vargas Extravaganza, which includes music workshops and student competitions.

Winners in the student group categories and of the “Best Mariachi Vocalist in the U.S.” title opened for Mariachi Vargas at the Saturday evening concert.

Selina Elizondo, winner of the overall best vocalist title, also placed first in the college/university category of the student vocalist competition Saturday morning at Municipal Auditorium.

Elizondo, a 20-year-old San Antonio College student, has competed for the annual festival's title of best overall vocalist since 1999.

Mariachi Nueva Generacion “A,” the mariachi group from Texas State University in San Marcos, won the college/university group competition.

Mariachi groups from two local schools — International Academy of Music and Arts and the University of Texas at San Antonio — placed second and third, respectively.

Other San Antonio students placing among the top three finishers in the various competitions were: Andrea Neira, of Jefferson High School, in second place in the high school vocalist category; Casandra Marquez, of Our Lady of the Lake University, in second place in the college/university vocalist category; and Mariachi Los Gavilancillos, of Whittier Middle School, in third place in the elementary/middle school group category.

More than 30 vocalists and more than 20 groups competed in the Mariachi Vargas Extravaganza student competitions.

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