

Mariachi Nueva Generacion wins Mariachi Vargas Extravaganza for second consecutive year

By Philip Hadley
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Mariachi Nueva Generacion from Texas State University-San Marcos placed first for the second consecutive time at the annual Mariachi Vargas Extravaganza in San Antonio at San Antonio's Municipal Auditorium on Nov. 30.

"For the last five years we have had a steady improvement," said John Lopez Director of Multicultural Ensembles. "Our students worked really hard and we should all be excited and proud of this accomplishment."

The ensemble's improvement is marked by its stellar track record. The group won third place at the competition in 2003, second place in 2004 and 2005, and first place in 2006 and 2007.

This year Texas State beat Harvard University, which placed third and Our Lady of the Lake University, which placed second. Lopez said this competition is well known and attracts attention.

"The contest is held every year and has become the competition that really sets the bar for mariachi ensembles nationally," Lopez said. "Several universities and schools compete annually."

Lopez said this year was special for several reasons. First, the majority of the ensemble was composed of a very young group, mostly freshman.

"When we started off the semester in September, I remember looking at the group and thinking wow this is going to be hard because this group is so young," Lopez said.

Aroldo Villarreal, music education junior and trumpet player, said that while the beginners struggled at first he was confident they would be able to deliver on competition day.

"You don't know what to expect at competition," said Villarreal, a Cuero native and third year ensemble member. "We were competing with many new people and scheduled to be the first to perform. We ended up really setting the bar."

Lopez said the music performed was another thing that made the performance exceptional. The ensemble performed a *Potpourri* composed by Juan Zaizar and ended their performance with *Simplemente*, a song that is special for Lopez.

"*Simplemente* was first written and recorded by my father's group, Mariachi Chapultepec, in the 60s," Lopez said. "Their group was the very first mariachi in San Antonio. This was a tribute and tipping of the hat to an exceptional group, and to my father who has since passed."

Aroldo Villarreal says what he enjoys most about being a Mariachi is being a part of an award-winning ensemble.

"There's nothing better than winning first," Villarreal said with a chuckle. "There is a lot of satisfaction knowing that with



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