

MARIACHI: School programs raise quality

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I'm unusual for it because I'm a light-haired Anglo."

It's a different story for Hispanics. It's a part of the culture.

"I think almost everyone of Mexican heritage knows about mariachi music," she said. "A lot of people of South America and Caribbean heritage know about it, too, because mariachi music is pretty widespread throughout the Spanish-speaking world.

It's music to be taken seriously.

"Mariachi is really growing as an extracurricular thing in the schools. Because of that, families, no matter of (what) ethnic background, the kids are starting to play mariachi," she said. "The kids are largely of Mexican American background — but not all."

More than 2,000 U.S. schools have mariachi in their curriculums. The music is slowly gaining respect.

"One of the problems with it is that people haven't taken it seriously because a lot of Americans think that mariachi music is all the same," Greathouse said. "If they know anything about it at all, they may picture some potbellied amateur musician that plays mariachi music."

But, she says, music programs are raising standards and levels of musicianship.

With her book, Greathouse set out to explain what mariachi is — a complicated task, she said.

"It developed as a folk idiom in the western states of Mexico, mostly," she said. "Modern mariachi is an outgrowth of that traditional music and the enter-

15TH ANNUAL MARIACHI VARGAS EXTRAVAGANZA

■ **Today:** Noche de Cultura, 7 p.m., Instituto Cultural de México at HemisFair Park. Free.

■ **Thursday:** Serenata en el Rio, 5:30 p.m., Rivercenter Lagoon. Free.

■ **Friday:** Mariachi group competition, 9 a.m., Municipal Auditorium. Admission \$7 (also good for vocal competition).

■ **Saturday:** Mariachi vocal competition, 9 a.m., Municipal Auditorium. Admission \$7.

■ Mariachi book reading, 1 p.m., Memorial Branch Library, 3222 Culebra Road. Free

■ Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán, plus Nydia Rojas, Ricardo Castillon and competition winners, 7:30 p.m., Municipal Auditorium. Tickets \$20-\$200 through Ticketmaster.

■ **Sunday:** Almuerzo con Mariachi featuring Mariachi Mexico de Noche, 1-3 p.m., Estela's Mexican Restaurant, 2200 W. Martin.

tainment industry.

"Because of that, mariachi has been treated as somewhat of an embarrassing stepchild by music anthropologists. They're

interested in studying traditional mariachi because they are uneducated people playing it. (Modern mariachi) is considered contrived ... as if it's a cor-

rupt form."

Greathouse, obviously, disagrees.

"There are so many positive things happening in school mariachi," she said. "For Mexican American kids, it's a chance to see themselves in a positive light."

She especially hailed the increased participation in mariachi by young women.

"They can compete with the men," she said. "But they don't get as much work. They have the talent, the professionalism, and they really work hard and take it seriously."

The reason recipes are included is because the project began as two books, Greathouse explained.

"It got rolled into one book (by the publisher)," she said. "People have responded positively. I think it's really weird, actually. There's really no such thing as mariachi food."

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