



LA BAMBA: LATIN AMERICAN JOURNEY

Art Form: Music

Style: Traditional

Culture: Central American

Technical Needs

- ❑ two chairs, without arms
- ❑ one long table

Meet the Artist

A native of Los Andes, Chile, Nelson Sosa has been singing and performing in America since the early 1970s. He has worked extensively with Chicago's bilingual and Spanish speaking communities to provide textbooks and study aids, as well as performing *La Bamba: Latin American Journey*. He keeps strong ties with Latin America by regularly receiving educational aids, learning new folklore, songs, rhythms and guitar techniques. With a deep love and respect for his native land, Nelson performs with vigor and understanding to preserve and communicate in his native language and music. He has performed at cultural institutions across Chile, at the schools and cultural exchanges in Chicago, and has won honors at numerous competitions, such as the Festival de Vina del Mar in Chile.

About the Performance

Through his guitar and percussion instruments, Nelson captivatingly leads his audience on a passage through the sounds and rhythms of Latin America. An experienced performer, Nelson tailors his presentation to the interests and age levels of the audience as he leads students through the map of Latin America. With each country visited, the students are introduced to the cultures and

practices of these foreign lands. With the help of maps, flags, and native percussion instruments, students achieve a greater understanding of Latin American countries. Students participate by playing basic rhythms on percussion instruments, clapping, dancing, and repeating the terminology and names of the Latin American countries. The performance opens and closes with a rendition of the popular song, "La Bamba."

Contextual Information

The Latin American countries stretch from just south of the United States to Chile and Argentina at the tip of South America, plus the islands of the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico. Although Latin American nations share many common threads, all have greatly varied cultures and folklores. For example, the culture of Brazil has been influenced by settlers from Portugal and Spain, Africans who were brought across the Atlantic as slaves, Native American populations and German and Central Europeans who migrated after World War II. Other Latin American nations have similar types of cultural mixtures. It is this cultural mix that adds to the vibrant and expressive ways of life in Latin American countries.

Music plays a large role in much of Latin American life. Different types of songs and rhythms dominate the different countries, but nearly every country is known for its love of contemporary music and native folk songs. The rhythms of Latin America, the ways of expressing emotion and telling stories through music, and the pieces created for dance or worship are all deeply seated parts of Latin American life.

Folk music is the music that has been played for centuries by a relatively stable, settled group of people in one region. The folk music of Latin America has the flavor of Spain and Portugal, just like their language, and uses of many of the same instruments, including the six-string guitar. But Latin American music is also influenced by Native American styles and by the use of African rhythms brought across the Atlantic by slaves. The story of Latin American music mixes history, politics, culture and geography into a network that connects all the people in that region.

Nelson takes students on an imaginary journey to several countries in Latin America and discusses their rhythmic styles and the melodic types. His examples illustrate not only the musical differences from country to country, but also the similarities among the Latin American countries that make their music unique.

Vocabulary

Aztec, Maya, Inca, Toltec, Dolmec: Ancient civilizations of Central America, these people first built Mexico City thousands of years ago. One famous Aztec, Montezuma, was conquered by the Spanish explorer Cortez at the beginning of the European domination of Central America.

Carnival: The celebration in Latin America held the day before Ash Wednesday, in which everyone feasts before they fast for lent. Many carnival style songs and rhythms are used in this celebration.

Continent: A huge landmass that rises above the sea level. The continents float on plates that make up the earth's crust.

Folklore: The ways of a particular set of people, their traditions, customs, and beliefs. Songs and stories are part of a culture's folklore. These stories are usually passed down orally from generation to generation.

Folk music: Music associated with the different communities and sets of people. These are often handed down orally from generation to generation.

Gaicho: A word that means cowboy in Argentina.

Llama: A camel-like pack animal, about six feet tall, that lives in the Andes of South America.

Macchu Piccu: The lost city of the Incan people. A huge ruin in south central Peru, it was discovered in 1911 on a huge rock between two mountain peaks in the Andes.

Pampas: A type of grass that grows across most of the plains of South America.