

GLOSSARY OF MARIACHI TERMS

Abanico: Fan, hanging from the neck with a black ribbon; right hand fanning of the strings used by the armonia.

Acorde: Chord

Adorno: A musical embellishment played by the violins and trumpets.

Al bajón: Literally, on the down beat

Aletón: Literally, large wings; refers to the large flap that can be sewn on the side of the pant legs on the traje de charro; it can remain plain or have agreca sewn on to it.

A livito: Slower and freely; ad libitum

Apagón: A manico of the right hand across the strings of the guitar or vihuela in such a way that no distinct pitches are heard; used primarily in the huapangos and borrowed from joropo; also called tapón and tope.

Apoyadura: (appoggiatura) this denotes a lower neighbor grace note; the apoyadura is more commonly used in the sones than any other music form and sometimes it may be accented.

Armonia: Rhythm section of the mariachi ensemble including guitar, vihuela, harp and guitarrón

Arqueos: Bowings

Arracadas: Earrings, pendant gold-filigrine metal.

Arrastrar el arco: (arco arrastrado) literally, drag the bow; back phrasing of the bow.

Bajo(s): In the singular, generally means the guitarrón or a bass instrument; the plural refers to the bass notes.

Barra: The bar in the measure.

Bemol: Flatted note such as Ab (La bemol).

Blanca: A half note.

Bola: Literally, the ball. Musically, the coda sign.

Bolero: A musical form in 4/4, usually in a major key or ending in a major key. The ostinato pattern in the bajos of this form falls usually on the 1st, 3rd and 4th beats while the guitar and vihuela play a repeated even eighth-note downstrum pattern.

Botín(es): Charro boots with low-cut uppers; also called botas de charro.

Botonadura: Literally, set of buttons; the silver or chrome plated buttons are worn along the outside of the pant legs; a set of botonadura also includes the broche and special button for the sleeves also called plata.

Caballito: Little horse, a manico technique used in sones Jaliscienses that is a repetition of three strums, two down and one up, with an accent on the second strum giving it a “galloping effect”

Cabeza: Literally, head. In written music, as in recording sessions, refers to the "top" of the music.

Cachirulo: A large haircomb placed towards the back of the head.

Cadenas: Chains, gold metal and long, worn around the collar.

Calderón: Fermata

Calzado: Shoe, white leather.

Canto: Literally, song. Includes all the sung verses of the song.

Cerrucho: Literally a saw, legato notes employing the bow for each note

Cinto pitiado: Braided belt worn with the charro suit (this belt is handmade and very expensive)

Compás: Full measure

Con puntillo: Literally, with a point, the dotted note (example: a negra con puntillo is a dotted quarter note).

Contratiempo: Literally, against time; counter rhythms; that is distinct characteristic sound in the sones, but also in most tradition forms in Mexican music.

Corchea: Eighth note

Coro: Chorus

Corrida: Literally, running too fast.

Corrido: A musical form similar to a ballad, where there is no refrain in the lyrics. In Mexican music, the majority of corridos are in 3/4 time, but there are many in 4/4.

Crescendo: Increasing loudness

Cuerda(s): The melodic parts (1a, 2a, 3a) the strings on an instrument.

Danzón: Similar to a fast bolero as the ostinato bass pitches and the meter are the same. The difference is essentially in the armonía, which accents the 1, 4, and 7 of the eight strokes of the mánico in the danzón.

Deaccelerando: Decreasing in loudness.

De cajón: Literally, ordinary: the standard embellishments and endings for music form.

Débil: Literally, weak. Pianissimo.

del Principio: Literally, from the beginning.

Disminuido: Diminished.

Do: the key or the note "C".

Doble Barra: the double bar.

Doble Corchea: the sixteenth-note. Also called semicorchea.

Ebilla: Belt buckle

Entrada: Literally, entrance. The beginning instrumental section of a song.

Escala: A scale, scale-run

Estribillo: Refrain.

Fa: Key of "F" or the note "F"

Falsete: Falsetto; a vocal technique.

Folklórico: Related to music and dance of Mexico.

Fuerte: Forte, indicated by f.

Fusa: Thirty second note

Golpes: Literally, blows or strikes; staccato at the frog of the bow, usually all-down-bow; then crisp strum pattern on the guitar instruments used in the sones.

Greca: A type of design sewn on the aletón or on the side of the pant legs; made of suede; it can be worn with or without botonadura.

Huapango: A son Huasteco. A 6/8 borrowed form. See son huasteco.

Intermedio: The instrumental music played between cantos, usually the same variation of the entrada; literally intermission.

Introducción: Introduction.

Jalón: Literally, pull; the right hand pulling technique of playing the guitarrón.

Jarabe: Literally, syrup. A traditional dance from that is like a popurri (medley) of instrumental sections of different regional sones, each section usually is in different meter than the preceding section.

Joropo: A borrowed form from Venezuela which has become very popular in the mariachi repertory. Fast 3/4 or 6/8 meter using apogones or tapones.

La: Key of “A” or the note “A”

Ligado, ligadura: Slurred.

Liso: Plain, as in “plain black uniform,” traje liso negro.

Mánicos: The different strum patterns on the vihuela or guitar.

Mayor: The major key; a major or whole step.

Menor: The minor key; a minor or half step.

Mi: Key of “E” or the note “E.”

Moño: Literally, topknot the “tie” used around the shirt collar with the charro suit.

Motas: Ready-to-wear collar ties; not made of the same material as the moño, and usually has three balls hanging from the knot; also called motitas and gargantillas.

Música: Music, written music; the intermedio music.

Natural: Natural

Negra: Literally, black. The quarter note.

Obertura: Overture.

Octava: Octave

Pajero: Literally, even mánico used in sones Jaliscienses that simply up and down strums with no accents.

Pa’rriba, pa’bajo: Literally, up and down; another name for the manico pajero; it is understood amongst the vihuela players that variation of this strum is to start up on the strong beat, and this stroke is called “pa’rriba” (up).

Pasodoble: A musical form. Fanfare music that is usually loud and traditionally played at the bullfights. There is almost always a trumpet solo section, and the pasodoble is in duple meter.

Pauta: The five line staff. Also called pentagrama.

Peinado: The hairdo. Consists of two braids intertwined with ribbons, the same color as the rebozo; they cross at the nape and are tied at the crown with the leftover ribbon. Single and engaged women place a small bouquet of flowers on the left side of their head and married women wear flowers on the right side; a large haircomb called a cachirulo is placed towards the back of the head.

Picado: Staccato bowing at the frog of the bow, usually all down-bow; the staccato tonguing technique for the trumpets, which is very characteristic of the mariachi trumpet style.

Popurri: Medley.

Primera: Literally, first; in music theory the first melodic line in the instruments or the voice.

Primera Casilla: The first ending.

Primera posición: First position; in order to get a loud sound from violins, most sones are played in the first position as much as possible.

Quedado, quedadito: A rubato technique that avoids melodic accents on the beat, or the off beat.

Ranchera: a musical style in 2/4, 3/4, or 4/4. Usually in a major key. The ranchera is also a feeling. The types of rancheras are: the Ranchera Corrido or Polka in 2/4; the Ranchera Valseada in 3/4; and,

the Ranchera Romántica in 4/4. There is always an entrada, canto, intermedio, canto, and depending on the type of ranchera, a de cajón ending.

Re: Key of “D” or the note “D.”

Redoble: A manico technique used in sones; the armonia plays two down strums and one up strum twice within the same measure.

Redonda: Whole note.

Remate: Literally, to top or to end; also called remache or adorno de cajón; that occurs at the end of the phrase, to connect the phrases, and at the end of the entrada.

Ritmo: Rhythm; also ritmo is a tempo.

Saltear el arco: Ricochet bowing

Segunda: Literally, second; in music theory, the second melodic line is in harmonization with the primera; the segunda line, traditionally is in parallel motion to the primera when there is also a tercera and can move contrary to the primera when there are only two parts.

Segunda Casilla: Second ending.

Segunda posición: Second position.

Sencilla: Literally, simple or simply. It means that the music in the song will be played without repeats.

Si: Key of “B” or the note “B.”

Sobón: Slur or portamento; this technique is used minimally in the sones, and regularly in the ranchera lenta (romantica), ranchera valsada and bolero.

Sol: Key of “G” or the note “G.”

Solfeggio: Solfeggio

Sombrero: Hat. White hat woven of fine palm, with a thin black cotton trim on the crown; and four ties.

Son: A generic from identifying a regional sound music. The sound is usually a very traditional instrumental, vocal or danced piece.

Son Abajeño: A son from "abajo", or below, generally referring to the Tierra Caliente region just below Jalisco. The meter and form are similar to that of the son Jalisciense.

Son Huasteco: A 6/8 with sesquialtera (hemiola) rhythmic pattern; traditionally, the son huasteco came from the Huasteca region just north of Veracruz and further along the Gulf of Mexico; a distinct characteristic of the son huasteco or Huapangos, is the falsetto jumps in the vocal technique.

Son Jalisciense: A 12/8 rhythmical pattern with sesquialtera (hemiola) and contratiempos in the melody and manicos; the son jalisciense is from the State of Jalisco, making it very much a part of the traditional repertory of the mariachi; there is usually an entrada, verso, coro (either responsorial or separated refrain) a third section of music with new verses and a shortened version of the entrada to finish; there are also sones Jaliscienses that do not fit the 12/8 pattern, that technically and musically are very difficult to play; these are some of the oldest sones in the repertory.

Son Jarocho: From the State of Veracruz, jarocho means “brisk” which describes the music and dance of this tradition the vocal timbre is the high but does not use the falsetto technique of the Huapango; although, since the two areas are close in proximity, they are known to borrow or exchange repertory.

Soplar: Literally, the verb “to blow”; in mariachi terminology, to prompt someone with the lyrics of a song.

Sostenido: Sharpened note, such as F# (Fa sostenido).

Teoría: Theory

Tercera: Literally, third. In music theory, the melodic line that is in harmonization with the primera and segunda. The tercera part can become the segunda when there are only two parts being played.

Tercera posición: Third position.

Tono: The key (of a song).

Traje: Suit.

Traje de Campero: A suit that uses bone buttons on the sleeves and chest.

Traje de Charro: Charro suit, or mariachi suit.

Traje Chinaco: A suit with wide bell-bottom pant legs, cut from the shin down where a piece of bright colored cloth is sewn in.

Triple Corchea: Thirty-second note.

Vals: Waltz; also one of the 3/4 forms of the ranchera.

Verso: Verse.

Voz fingida: Literally, faked voice, head tone.