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Son Jarocho Music Workshop

Interested in practicing the jarana, a guitarlike instrument from Veracruz, Mexico? How about the marimbol, a wooden box with tuned metal tongues that provide the bass line?

If so, consider the Mexican Son Jarocho Workshop presented by the Department of Music at UC Santa Barbara. The brainchild of Ruth Hellier-Tinoco, creative and performing arts professor, the weekly workshop features master musician Jorge Mijangos. Continuing through May 20, it is free and open to the public.

“I have introduced into the music department an undergraduate course, ‘The Politics and Poetics of Music and Dance in Mexico,’ because I believe that the richness and diversity of music from Mexico should have a place in the music curriculum at UCSB,” said Hellier-Tinoco. “The workshop is part of that course and then continues beyond the class time and is open to everyone in the community.”

The workshop consists of playing the jarana and learning chords and strumming patterns, playing the marimbol and learning zapateado — rhythmic footwork that is part of the music.

Hellier-Tinoco, who plays P’urhépecha music from the Mexican state of Michoacán, said she wanted to introduce son jarocho because “it is all about convivencia — being together — and it enables students to accomplish live music-making in a short session.” Also, she added, it allows them to consider and be part of discussions about racial politics in music.

“This music brings together three crucial elements of Mexico: the African slave trade, the indigenous presence and the Spanish ‘invasion,’” Hellier-Tinoco said. “And in the United States, son jarocho is used as political music by many groups of young musicians.”

This year marks the second Mexican Son Jarocho Workshop at UCSB, and the second time Mijangos has brought to campus his expertise in this particular music tradition. “Jorge is extremely generous with his time and instruments,” noted Hellier-Tinoco. “He brings 16 of his own instruments for use by the students and workshop participants.”

The 40-minute workshop is held Wednesdays at 11:50 a.m. in the music department’s Geiringer Hall, 1250 Music Building. It will culminate in a free concert at noon on May 20 in the campus’s Music Bowl.

The Mexican Son Jarocho Workshop is supported by the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor and the Office of the Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity and Academic Policy.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.