



PROGRAM GUIDE

This information is intended to prepare teachers and students for a Young Audiences performance.

GRUPO CONDOR

Somos la Musica

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

Grupo Condor performs traditional music from Mexico and South America. Particular attention is given to the music of the Andes Mountains, exploring the Incan, Spanish and African influences. With their mixture of lively Afro-Latin percussion, the festive *charango* and the haunting five-foot panpipes, Condor's musicians perform a wide variety of rhythms on numerous instruments. Their music represents all areas of Spanish-speaking America, breaking down cultural barriers and celebrating a rich musical heritage.

Students will learn about the three dominant instruments used in Andean music- stringed, wind and percussion:

Stringed Instruments

The Spanish guitar has six strings and is made from wood. The *charango* is a tiny ten-stringed guitar made of an armadillo shell. In some *charangos* the coarse hairs covering the shell continue to grow long after the instrument is made. It is believed that playing music keeps the soul of the animal alive. The *charango* has a tiny cousin called a *waylacho* (why-law-cho) which produces a very high pitch. The *ronroco* and *rocongo*, on the other hand, are both large and produce lower sounds. All of these are crafted in the same manner as the *charango* but with the recent decline of the armadillo population, wooden models of the *charango* family have become common.

The *tiple*, from Columbia, has four sets of triple steel strings and produces a dreamlike, magical sound. The *cuatro venezolano*, a small four-stringed instrument, resembles the Hawaiian ukulele, but with a deeper sound.

Wind Instruments

The *tarka*, an ancient flute dating back to before the Spanish invasion, makes an eerie sound and is used for religious ceremonies and dances.

The *zampoña*, also known as the "pan pipe," is a series of bamboo reeds tied together, each tuned to a specific note. *Zampoñas* are played in pairs and come in a family of sizes ranging from five inches to five feet in length. The smallest are known as *chillis* or *icas* and the largest are called *toyos*. It takes strong lungs to play the *zampoña*. The musician blows across and down the hollow reeds, much as one would play a soda bottle. The larger the bamboo, the more powerful the musician's lungs must be.

The *quena*, an Andean version of the flute, has a wide range of sounds, both joyful and sad. Originally built of animal bones or bamboo shoots, today the *quena* is usually made of wood. Like the *zampoña*, the *quena* varies in size and pitch, from the smallest, the *quenilla*, to the largest, the *quenacho*.

Percussion Instruments

Possibly the oldest percussion instrument used by human beings, the *bambo leg ero* resembles a drum and is traditionally made of a hollowed tree trunk covered with cured animal skins. It sets the tempo and pulse of the music.

The *chac-chas* or *chullus* are rattles made of dozens of goat hooves tied to a strip of cloth and held or worn around the wrists.

The *quijada* is made of a horse's jawbone. A thin wooden stick is used to scrape the teeth for specific rhythmic counts. The entire jaw is then hit to produce a deep rattling sound. Most common in Peru, it is used in many Afro-Latin rhythms.

The *cajón* (meaning "box") is found on the coast of Peru. It is box-shaped, with a single hole in it. The musician sits on top of the *cajón* and slaps the front side in specific rhythms. Developed from African origins, the *cajón* is heard mainly in songs with Afro-Latin rhythms.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

The faces in **Grupo Condor** are familiar to audiences in the Pacific Northwest. The musicians include group leader **Gerardo Calderon** (from Mexico) on strings and vocals; **Samuel Beccera** (from Mexico City) playing percussion, flutes and vocals and **Jamie Johnson** (from Lima) playing percussion.

THE ORIGIN OF THE ART FORM

The Andes mountain range stretches 4,000 miles along the western coast of South America through Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Columbia and parts of Venezuela, Bolivia and Argentina. Some mountain peaks in the range reach over 20,000 feet in elevation. More people live in the Andes than in any other highland region in the world. The majority of the Andean population found in the central Andes are either indigenous or *mestizo* (mixed; with local Indian and Spanish heritage). Few people in the region speak Spanish; the native language is **Quechua**, originally the language of the Incas.

Early Andean music was often improvised, following certain patterns and scales, and played almost exclusively on wind instruments. Music and dance were used for worship and ceremony, but there were also love songs, epics of military exploits, songs to cure disease, harvest songs and funeral chants. The sixteenth-century Spanish invasion of the Americas introduced the Spanish guitar. The arrival of African slaves to work in the gold and silver mines added African percussion instruments to the musical mixture, creating the musical style popular in the Andes today.