



**Texas Bandmasters Association
Convention/Clinic July 22-24, 2021**

**Mariachi Trumpet Pedagogy and
Stylistic Interpretation**

**CLINICIAN:
Hector Bermea**

SPONSOR: TAME



HENRY B. GONZALEZ CONVENTION CENTER - SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

HECTOR BERMEA

Mariachi Trumpet Pedagogy and Stylistic Interpretation

i Trumpet playing within the mariachi genre requires the same fundamental abilities taught in classical trumpet pedagogy. Additionally, it shares many stylistic traits with jazz, salsa, and other forms of popular music. However, mariachi trumpet interpretation requires some unique forms of articulation, vibrato, phrasing, and accentuation to use the full spectrum of expression made available to us by pioneers of the estilo mariachero.

Where? Why?

i Where does the basis for mariachi trumpet style and interpretation originate? Why does it matter how we interpret mariachi music?

- Miguel Martinez Dominguez
- Cipriano Silva
- Crescencio Hernandez

These pioneers of the mariachi trumpet style and interpretation left behind an incredible volume of recordings, spanning more than seven decades, multiple generations, and established the role of the trumpet section within the mariachi ensemble as it evolved into the modern instrumentation we know now.

- One Trumpet – Free to interpret and improvise within the ensemble. Used more as a soloist in the *floreo* style of interpretation.
- Duet – Required the establishment of set fills. Less freedom of improvisation. Required a solidification of stylistic traits within the section.
- Three or more – Less freedom of improvisation; however, established soloists could play in contrast to a section sound. Thicker textured sections four trumpets occasionally used for features.

Recordings

i The best way to learn and establish an innate sense of mariachi interpretation is listening, listening, listening...

[Estilazo Playlist on Spotify \(Click Here\)](#)

- Great albums to listen to as stylistic/interpretive references:
 - Jose Alfredo Jimenez – El Cantinero
 - Jose Alfredo Jimenez – Gracias
 - Francisco “Charro” Avitia – Charro Avitia Canta Música de Acá de Este Lado
 - Amalia Mendoza – Las Canciones Que Siempre Quise Grabar
 - Lucha Villa – Puro Norte Vol. I & II
 - Mariachi Vargas – Sones de Jalisco
 - Mariachi Vargas – El Mejor Mariachi del Mundo Vol I, II, & III

FUNDAMENTALS

i *Everything you learned in classical pedagogy still applies. However, it's necessary to identify and model some key concepts. Let's break it down a bit.*

The following approach to teaching fundamentals, from a beginner level through advanced, aims at finding the most precise and efficient way of identifying the necessary skills to play with a clear, centered tone that provides a beautiful palette of sound for interpretation.

Some Tools

i *Here are a list of applications and tools I use on a regular basis to aid students with the concepts being imparted:*

- Yamaha Harmony Director
- Metronome
- Tonal Energy Tuner (TE Tuner)
- Amazing Slow Downer (ASD)

Beginner Pedagogy

i *Trumpet playing is easier than you think. It does not take much effort to make a sound. Let's learn to make the best sounds, with the least amount of effort. Efficiency is the name of the game.*

- Normal Face
- Poo in your hand (It's not what you think...)
- Poo on the mouthpiece (Really, it's not what you think)
- Poo on the trumpet (Come on, be serious for a second)
- First sounds

Centering

i *Playing with a centered tone quality aligns the harmonics within the sound of the trumpet and provides an open tone throughout the different ranges.*

- Find the clearest sound possible using the least amount of energy
- Things that affect how we center:
 - Size/Shape of the aperture should be round and shiny
 - Angle of the air column vs. Angle of the trumpet
 - Back of the tongue down should be down and relaxed
 - Remove tension in the lips/face
- Establish the sound and feel for playing centered
- Tonal Energy Tuner as a tool

Centering vs. Intonation

i Finding center and playing in-tune are two different concepts; however, it is important to be both centered and in-tune. Teaching students the difference will make our lives easier in the long run and allows them to develop mature sounds sooner.

- You can play in the center of the sound without playing in-tune.
- You can play in-tune without playing anywhere near the center of the sound.
- **Find the center first, and then adjust your intonation accordingly.**
- Tonal Energy Tuner

Articulation Anatomy

i Everyone is built differently, so it is important to realize what kind of anatomical structure your students play through. Identifying what the inside a mouth is shaped like helps you anticipate any problems your student may encounter in the future and mitigates the development of bad habits from the start. Let's find the precise placement for articulation within the mouth.

- Stick your tongue out. What's it shaped like?
 - Pointy
 - Round
- Tonguing should occur with very tip of the tongue.
- What shape is your hard palate?
 - Hill/Slope
 - Ridge
- Exactly where should the tongue articulate within the mouth?
 - Where the gums and teeth meet
 - Middle of the teeth
 - Bottom of the teeth
- Movement of the tongue during articulation
 - Back of the tongue is down and relaxed
 - Tip of the tongue should move up and down
 - *Jara-Jara Tongue/Sneaky Snake*
 - Hamburger Tongue (Sounds weird but you'll get it)

Types of Articulation

i Let's go through the variety of articulations we may encounter within the mariachi genre.
Side note: When explaining articulation with the trumpet players, it is important to model proper articulation for them, especially when verbally modeling.

- Normal Articulation
- Slurred
- Legato
- Lifted Notes
- Staccato (Classical) vs. Staccato (Mariachi)
- Accented Staccato
- Long Accents
- Dadeado ("Th" Tonguing)
- Double Tonguing

Teaching Vibrato

i *Vibrato is perhaps the most unique identifier of the mariachi sound. It gives life to our phrases and adds a third dimension to our form of interpretation. Unsurprisingly, vibrato is one of the least explained concepts necessary for mariachi music. Let's learn how to teach it systematically so that our students know how to apply it.*

Beginner Vibrato Pedagogy

- Poo in your hand again (Really? Again?)
- Vibrato happens with the front of the mouth
 - Lips/Aperture
 - Jaw
 - Airstream should pulsate into your hand
 - Back of the tongue stays down and relaxed
 - Support from the diaphragm is constant, not pulsated
- Vibrato should occur above center/intonation
 - Start with a centered note and fluctuate it upward
- Vibrato should be symmetrical
 - Practice slowly with metronome and drone
 - Eighth Notes
 - Triplets
 - Sixteenth Notes
 - TE Tuner

Practicing Vibrato and Articulation

- Accent with vibrato and decrescendo
- Scales with vibrato and accent
- Staccato with vibrato at the end
- Accent with straight tone into vibrato

PHRASING AND ACCENTUATION WITHIN INTERPRETATION

i *Phrasing (as I see it) within the mariachi genre incorporates the variation of articulation, vibrato, accentuation, and dynamics. Let's see how they vary from rancheras, to different son styles, to boleros, and so on...*

Rancheras

- Use of vibrato may vary depending on tempo, style, or choice of interpretation.
- Use of note bending notes to pull a certain phrase.
- Grace Notes
- The trumpet section sound: One, two, three trumpets
- Use of floreo or segunda in the trumpet to accompany vocalist
- Dadeado Articulation

Son Jalisciense

- Subdivision and width of vibrato may vary depending on tempo, style, or choice of interpretation.
- Grace Notes/Accents
 - Appoggiatura
 - Mordents
- Accents
- Anticipations/Barridas
- Caballito
- Repeated sections may vary in articulation/phrasing to give contrasting interpretation
- Dadeado Articulation

Other Styles and General Rules of Thumb

- Son Jarocho is fairly straight with minimal vibrato. Articulation is short and light.
- Huapango may have a straight articulation and sound yet may contrast with moments of expressive articulation and vibrato.
- Boleros tend to use connected articulation; however, occasional staccato may be used to introduce rhythmic motion. Vibrato is open
- Octaves, parallel 4th/5ths, and corno sections are straight.
- Within the blend of the trumpet section, the first trumpet should encompass most of the sound with the second and third trumpets fitting inside the parameters dictated by the first trumpet. First trumpet dictates the direction for the section sound.

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, CONCERNS

Hector Bermea, Mariachi Director
Los Fresnos High School
Bermea.Hector@gmail.com
(830)776-9343