



Handout - Joropo Teacher's Guide

Region of origin: Venezuela/Colombia

Background: *Joropo Llanero* is a cultural expression of the western plains of Venezuela that is shared with Colombia. The rhythm, melody and poetry of its lyrics, as well as the dance and its costumes, are influenced by three cultures: Indigenous, African and Spanish.

In Venezuela, enslaved Indigenous and African peoples would watch their European owners while they danced waltzes inside their mansions and, as a joke, they created their own dancing and movements to make fun of them by exaggerating their movements. Joropo music originated from the Spanish *Fandango* of Moorish origin and combined with the melodies of European waltzes, thus serving as an act of resistance against the oppression of enslavers. This oral folk tradition then merged with European stringed instruments such as the guitar, the *bandurria* and the Arabic instrument *laúd*.

Joropo lyrics, chord shapes and themes take inspiration from the natural world and are an integral part in understanding the culture of the people of the Venezuelan High Plains.

Musical Characteristics: As Joropo developed over time, it incorporated new instruments and costumes. The guitar arrived in the new world as the Spanish instrument of choice but was quickly supplanted by the *cuatro*, an instrument built by and adapted in size for the Indigenous Peoples of Venezuela who were shorter, with smaller arms and fingers. By end of the 18th century, Joropo Llanero (Joropo of the High Plains) was played on the *cuatro*, the *bandola llanera* (a pear-shaped instrument with four strings, two nylon and two of wound metal), the *maracas* (an Indigenous instrument made from a gourd and seeds) and the harp (an instrument with about 30 strings). All instruments are made from local trees such as cedar, mahogany, and pine.

Musical Activity: There are two types of styles within the Joropo Llanero genre: Joropo Derecho performed in 6/8, and Joropo Corrió in 3/4. For the class we will learn the bass rhythm and vocal part of Joropo Corrió. They will also learn to clap along to the rhythm (clapping is not traditionally part of a Joropo performance, but will be used so students can internalize the rhythm).

Joropo Corrio Rhythm:

The musical notation for Joropo Corrio Rhythm is presented in three staves, all in 3/4 time. The Rhythm staff shows a sequence of quarter notes with accents: $\acute{b}a\acute{n}$ Un $\acute{g}a$ $\acute{b}a\acute{n}$ un $\acute{g}a$ $\acute{b}a\acute{n}$ un $\acute{g}a$ $\acute{b}a\acute{n}$ un $\acute{g}a$. The Hand Clap staff shows a sequence of quarter notes with accents: $\acute{b}a\acute{n}$ $\acute{g}a$ $\acute{b}a\acute{n}$ $\acute{g}a$ $\acute{b}a\acute{n}$ $\acute{g}a$ $\acute{b}a\acute{n}$ $\acute{g}a$. The Vocal staff shows a sequence of quarter notes with accents: $\acute{b}a\acute{n}$ $\acute{g}a$ $\acute{b}a\acute{n}$ $\acute{g}a$ $\acute{b}a\acute{n}$ $\acute{g}a$ $\acute{b}a\acute{n}$ $\acute{g}a$.



Joropo Dance:

Paso básico (basic step):

- Students will follow the video to practice steps individually.
- Students will then dance in pairs by picking a partner and facing them with arms held out wide.

Zapateo:

- This is the moment in the music when students can improvise by following variations in the bandola playing. Feel free to do this in pairs or individually.
- Ask students to listen to improvisation in Maria's rhythm. How does she change it? This is a moment for free dancing.

Joropo Song:

Joropo Corrió contain two parts: *el tañio* and two phrases of *el verso*.

El tañio: The tañio is a call in Joropo and essential to the structure of a Joropo song. It is usually sung using the "a" and "I" sounds to vocalize a semi-improvised melody. It is always the beginning of each part of the Joropo song often following instrumental interludes.

El verso (the verse): The verse follows the tañio. Students will learn just the beginning of the verse: "Ay gabán! Ay gabancito!" In English this means, "Oh gabán! Oh little gabán!" A gabán is a bird of the high plains of Venezuela.

Example:

Everyone sings:

"Ay gabán! Ay gabancito!"

Mafer sings:

*Un saludo a mis amigos
me les vengo a presentar
me les vengo presentar
me nombran como el gabán
en mi terruño natal
Yo vivo por todo el llano en su gran inmensidad
donde se canta el joropo a orillas de un
platanal
las gallinas mis amigas, el toro y la vaca igual
Me saludan los caballos por allá en el Morichal.
Aquí yo vivo feliz con orgullo nacional.*

Greetings to my friends
I came to introduce myself
I came to introduce myself
they name me after the gabán
in my homeland
I live throughout the high plains in its great
immensity
where the joropo is sung on the banks of a
banana plantation
the hens are my friends, the bull and the cow are
the same
The horses greet me over there in the Morichal
Here I live happily with national pride