

MEXICO'S PIONEER MARIACHIS, VOL. 2

MARIACHI TAPATÍO de JOSÉ MARMOLEJO

"El Auténtico"

ARHOOIE
POLYRYLIC
CD 7012

1. LA NEGRA (*son abajeño*)
2. DE MAÑANA EN ADELANTE
(*canción tapatía*)
3. GUADALAJARA (*son*)
4. EL PAJARO CARDENAL (*son*)
5. ANDO TOMANDO (*canción*)
6. EL MARIACHI (*canción/son*)
7. LAS COPETONAS (*son*)
8. EL RANCHERO (*son*)
9. EL PASAJERO (*son*)
10. MIS PULGAS (*canción*)
11. EL BORRACHO (*son*)
12. EL ZOPILOTE MOJADO
(*pasodoble*)
13. LA ROSITA (*huapango*)
14. ME VOY PARA EL NORTE
(*corrido*)
15. EL TIRADOR (*son jalisciense*)
16. LA PRIMAVERA
(*canción ranchera*)
17. EL DISTINGUIDO
(*son abajeño*)

18. LA CARRERA (*canción*)
19. LA MODESTA (*corrido*)
20. EL CARRETERO (*son*)
21. EL JABALI (*son*)
22. LA MARIQUITA
(*son abajeño*)
23. MI TIERRA (*son abajeño*)
24. EL CAPULINERO (*son*)

Total time: 75:57

José Marmolejo – leader & vihuela; Jesús Salazar – trumpet; rest of personnel varies from session to session but on selections #2, 3, 4, & 5, Amador Santiago – violin; Braulio García; Juan Alvarado; M. Beltrán; S. Castillo; and S. Ramirez.

Cover photo: Foreground, left to right: Casimiro Contreras, don Cristóbal (last name unknown); second row: Eliseo Camarena; third row, left to right: Jesús Salazar, José Marmolejo, Amador Santiago; top row, left to right: Jesús Casillas, Juan Toledo. From the collection of Emilia Marmolejo (sister of José Marmolejo) and courtesy José Santos Marmolejo and Jonathan Clark. Photo taken at Salón Tenampa, Mexico City, 1930s.

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MARIACHI TAPATIO

de José Marmolejo



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A young José Marmolejo with blind flutist, "Juanito," at the time both played with Cirilo Marmolejo. México City, circa late 1920s.

Mariachi Tapatío de José Marmolejo

They called him "*El hombre de la eterna sonrisa*" ("The man of the perpetual smile"). Extremely well-liked, José Marmolejo was in many ways the ideal group leader. Under his direction, Mariachi Tapatío became Mexico's premiere mariachi from the mid-1930s to the mid-1940s, and one of the most important groups in the history of mariachi music.

José Marmolejo Ramírez was born in Tecolotlán, Jalisco, in 1908, son of Cosme Marmolejo and María del Carmen Ramírez. José's father played trombone and other brass instruments; his uncle, Cirilo, played *vihuela* and *guitarrón*. Both brothers had studied music with a man named Valentín Covarrubias in their native town of Teocaltiche.

When José's father died, around 1918, a local priest gave the boy work at his church to help support the family. José's uncle, Cirilo Marmolejo, had already been making trips to

Mexico City with his mariachi, and by 1920, the group had taken up residence there. In 1922, José journeyed from Tecolotlán to the nation's capital in search of his uncle, who took him under his wing. It was in the capital city that Cirilo taught his nephew to play the *vihuela*, and where young José became a member of his uncle's Mariachi Coculense, which would be the first mariachi to make "electric" recordings (heard on Arhoolie CD/C 7011).

In 1933, Mariachi Coculense de Cirilo Marmolejo performed at the World's Fair in Chicago, Illinois. Upon returning to Mexico City, José left Cirilo and organized some of the best mariachi musicians of the day to form his own Mariachi Tapatío. *Tapatío* means "from Guadalajara," Jalisco's capital, or "from the state of Jalisco." The group's early recordings also bear the slogan "El Auténtico."

In the 1920s and '30s, few mariachis

could make a living in Mexico's capital without some type of subsidy. Cirilo Marmolejo had his patron, Dr. Luis Rodríguez. Silvestre Vargas' mariachi was employed by the Mexico City Police Department. Mariachi Pulido belonged to a government agency called Acción Cívica. José Marmolejo's benefactor throughout his career was Eusebio Acosta Velazco, wealthy owner of the Autobuses de Occidente bus line.

Former Mariachi Tapatío member Gabriel Arias recalls traveling with the group to señor Acosta's home town of Molango, Hidalgo:

As we'd approach the village, bells would toll and skyrockets would explode in midair. "Here comes señor Acosta!" the people would cry. He *owned* that town. Whenever he'd visit they'd have a magnificent *fiesta* in his honor. There would be parades, dances, indigenous music . . . it was as if a deity had arrived in that village. Sometimes we'd stay an entire week. Señor Acosta would never ask how

much he owed us—he'd just hand us a huge roll of bills.

Some still remember José Marmolejo's single-story tenement at 39 Manuel Doblado Street, about 10 blocks east of Mexico City's Plaza Garibaldi, where Mariachi Tapatío rehearsed daily during the 1930s and '40s, and where the greatest *ranchera* singers of the day could be seen. Lucha Reyes, Ray y Laurita, Matilde Sánchez ("La Torcacita"), Tito Guízar, Martín y Malena, Jorge Negrete, and Pedro Infante are just a few of the stars Mariachi Tapatío accompanied during that era.

Legendary mariachi director, arranger, and violinist Jesús Rodríguez de Híjar lived around the corner from José Marmolejo in the mid-1930s and attended Mariachi Tapatío's rehearsals daily. He observes:

Musically speaking, the group was ahead of its time. In those days it was hard to find a mariachi musician who read music. Not only did several members of Mariachi

Tapatío read, but two of them, don Daniel [Soltero] and don Hilario [Castañeda], were accomplished *maestros* who knew music theory. There were other good groups at the time, but none had anyone who could put the musical elements into order like Tapatío.

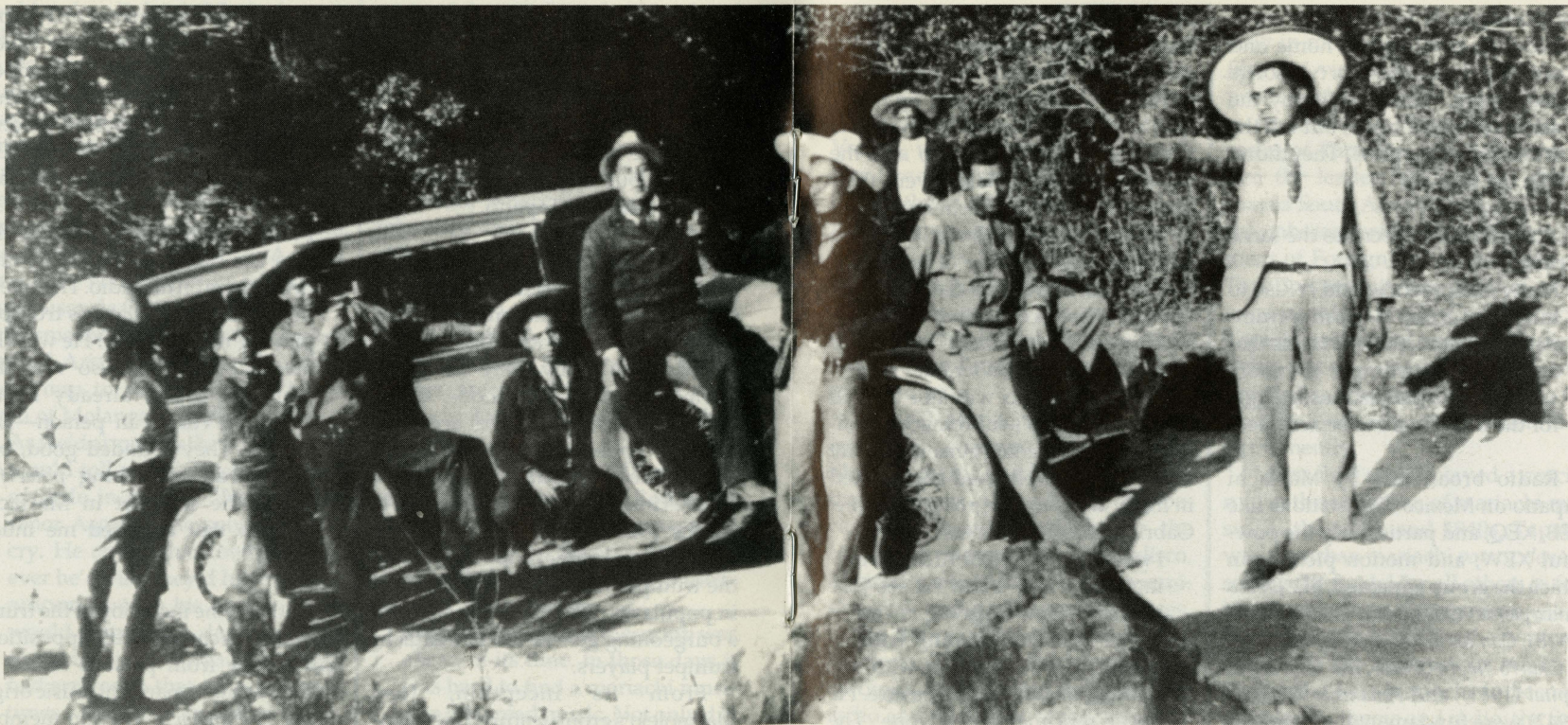
Although early mariachis were primarily string ensembles, wind instruments were sometimes found in these groups. Some of the instruments added sporadically were the flute, clarinet, soprano saxophone, trombone, and cornet. The most accepted of these appears to have been the cornet. The earliest documentation of a cornet in a mariachi dates from 1911; by the 1920s, a handful of groups used that instrument. By the 1930s, the trumpet had replaced the cornet in popularity, and there was already a burgeoning generation of mariachi trumpet players.

From its inception, José Marmolejo's group featured the trumpet of Jesús Salazar. Salazar was the

greatest of the early mariachi trumpet players and can rightfully be called the "father" of the mariachi trumpet. Miguel Martínez, who would take that instrument to even greater heights with Mariachi Vargas (Arhoolie CD/C 7015), recalls Salazar in the late 1930s:

I'd seen Mariachi Tapatío in the film *Las cuatro milpas* [1937] and heard them on the radio. They were my idols. Jesús Salazar's trumpet playing was fantastic! He was the absolute best, and so was the mariachi. I had already heard Mariachi Vargas in person—just violins. They sounded good, but there was something *powerful* about the trumpet in Mariachi Tapatío that attracted me much more.

Initially, the inclusion of the trumpet met with considerable opposition, particularly from persons native to the areas where mariachi music originated. Ex-Mariachi Tapatío member Mateo Servín recalls a typical scene in



Mariachi Tapatío in Molango, Hidalgo. The car was a gift to the group from their patron, Eusebio Acosta. José Marmolejo is fourth from the left, kneeling on the running board.

the group's early years:

We'd go to a private home and after we'd played one or two songs they'd say, "Look, we'll pay the sum we agreed upon, but tell the trumpeter not to play!" They didn't like the trumpet...

Miguel Martínez describes the same period:

Many customers would refuse to hire your group if it had a trumpet. In general, the mariachis that *didn't* have a trumpet got more work. It was a tremendous struggle for the instrument to be accepted.

Radio broadcasts by Mariachi Tapatío on Mexico City stations like XEB, XEQ, and particularly the powerful XEW; and motion pictures in which the group appeared, like *Jalisco nunca pierde* (1937), *La tierra del mariachi* (1938), *Con los dorados de Villa* (1939), *El Charro Negro* (1940), *Del rancho a la capital* (1941), and *Amanecer ranchero* (1942) were fundamental not only in popularizing mariachi music, but in

popularizing the mariachi trumpet as well. (The phonograph was still a medium of limited influence.) For millions throughout the Spanish-speaking world, films and broadcasts featuring Mariachi Tapatío and the trumpet of Jesús Salazar were their first exposure to mariachi music.

By the late 1930s, Mariachi Tapatío had eclipsed the fame of any other mariachi, and was in a class by itself. On radio, on records, in the cinema, and in person—Mariachi Tapatío was unquestionably number one.

José Marmolejo was not able to sustain his group's supremacy indefinitely. The easy-going personality that made him so well-liked contributed in many ways to the group's decline. Gabriel Arias remembers:

I would go on an 8 or 10 day drinking binge, and when I'd see José he'd say, "How's it going, *muchacho* alegre? Are you coming back to work?" But he'd say it with *joy*, without a trace of displeasure. He never reprimanded anyone. The only thing he'd say was, "Do you

want to keep on drinking? All right! When you're through, come on back."

Rival group leader Silvestre Vargas, with his penchant for military-like discipline, was in many ways the antithesis of José and would never have won a popularity contest among his musicians. Yet Vargas' strictness was a key factor in his group's success and longevity. By the mid-1940s, Mariachi Vargas had become a serious rival and Tapatío's popularity had begun to fade.

In 1950, Mariachi Tapatío helped inaugurate commercial television in Mexico, taking part in the earliest transmissions. Around 1955, they became the house mariachi for the Mexico City restaurant *Aquí es Jalisco*. Their specialty had now become semi-classical and instrumental pieces, rather than the traditional *sones* and *rancheras*. They no longer made recordings, but still did frequent live radio and television broadcasts, and made personal appearances. Mariachi

Tapatío continued to appear regularly in motion pictures, but only to film the visual part to soundtracks pre-recorded by other mariachis.

In 1958 José Marmolejo died. A series of Tapatío's members continued the leadership, and the group toured South America twice as musical ambassadors for Mexico's Department of Foreign Relations. Mariachi Tapatío spent its last years of existence at Mexico City's *Amanecer* Tapatío restaurant, often accompanying a young singer named Vicente Fernández who sang at the tables for tips. In 1968, the group disbanded permanently.

Mariachi Tapatío played a crucial role in the evolution of mariachi music. In the 1930s and 1940s, Tapatío was the urban mariachi *por excelencia*, setting the model for all others to follow. It was the one group responsible, more than any other, for the popularization of the trumpet in mariachi music; the first mariachi to become popular in cinema and radio; the first "stellar" mariachi in its own right.

These early performances represent an essential link in the evolution of mariachi music. Their musicality speaks for itself. Now that these rare recordings are available again, the

mariachi that was once Mexico's most famous should gain renewed recognition.

Jonathan Clark – 1993

Thanks to Roque Alcalá, Gabriel Arias, Emilia Marmolejo, José Santos Marmolejo, Miguel Martínez, Hermes Rafael, Jesús Rodríguez de Híjar, and Mateo Servín for historical information.

Re-issue produced by Chris Strachwitz
Edited by Jonathan Clark &

Chris Strachwitz
Cover by Wayne Pope

#3 & 6: composed by José (Pepe) Guízar. (#3 is from the film *Jalisco nunca pierde* (1937).

#10: by Juan S. Garrido.

#13: from the film *Bajo el cielo de México* (1937).

#14: by Emanuel Esquivel.

#18: by Pedro Galindo from the film *La tierra del mariachi* (1938).

#19: also known as "El corrido de Modesta Ayala" (was reissued on Bb 3507A).

Discography:

1. V 75271-B; 2: 75238-B; 3: 75238-A; 4: 75242-A; 5: 75242-B; 6: 75266-A; 7: 75266-B; 8: 75289-A; 9: 75289-B; 10: 75451-A; 11: 75451-B; 12: 75517-A (94855); 13: 75658-B (015093); 14: 75699-A (015141); 15: 75699-B (015142); 16: 75727-A (015094); 17: 75727-B (015095); (#1 -17 all probably recorded in 1937); 18: 75795-B (015326) (1938); 19: 76703-A, Bb3507-A (MBS 067175) (1941); 20: P 2218 (3260) (1944); 21: P 2034 (2516) (1943); 22: P 2034 (2518) (1943); 23: P 2084 (2718) (1944); 24: P 2218 (3262) (1944).

Original recordings from the collection of Chris Strachwitz. Sound restoration by George Morrow of Echo Productions using the NoNoise System.

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*José Marmolejo
with his sisters*

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