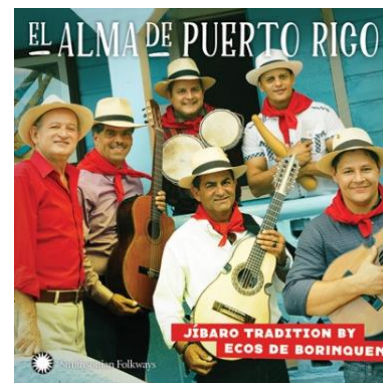


# Fiesta Aquí, Fiesta Allá: Exploring Music and Dance in Puerto Rico, its Diaspora, and the Caribbean

A Smithsonian Folkways Music Pathway for  
students in Grades 3–5



## Teacher's Guide

Lesson Hub 2:

*Música Jíbara, Seis, and Concurso*

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### Lesson Overview

*Música jíbara* (“HEE-bah-rah”) is a genre of Puerto Rican music and a term that roughly translates to “country music.” Although the genre contains European influences from Spanish musical and literary forms, *música jíbara* is practiced in various contexts among Puerto Ricans of different cultural backgrounds.

This lesson explores **jíbaro** culture in Puerto Rico and beyond. As students learn about jíbaro identity, experience the sounds of **seis** music, and watch **concursos** (competitions), they will gain a deeper understanding *música jíbara*, which is considered one of the most prominent Puerto Rican music genres. Path 1 examines what term “jíbaro” has meant in Puerto Rico from a historical perspective and introduces the distinct sounds of *música jíbara*. In Path 2, students will discover the most important musical characteristics of seis music. In Path 3, students will find out how seis musicians use a poetic form called **décima** to out-do each other in staged competitions called concursos. After learning about the structure of *décimas*, they will have a chance to write their own!

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## Lesson Paths and Student Objectives\*



### 1. What is Música Jíbara? (20+ minutes)

- Describe broadly what música jíbara is, and the various cultural influences from which it developed.
- Identify meanings of the word “jíbaro”.
- Discuss how migration affects music.



### 2. Seis Jíbaro (20+ minutes)







- Explain how seis music relates to música jíbara.
- Identify important musical characteristics of seis music.
- Identify instruments that belong to the seis ensemble.



### 3. Concurso! Décima Festivals (30+ minutes)

- Define concurso and explain their social function.
- Identify the criteria for a successful concurso performance.
- Write a décima, utilizing the typical features of its structure.

\*Note: The learning icons used above signify the type of learning used in each Path. Keep in mind that these Paths are not intended to be sequential; rather, teachers or students may choose which Paths they'd like to use from each Lesson. The time estimate given for each path indicates "in class" time. The + indicates there are optional extension activities and/or a suggested homework assignment.

While all learning types ( History and Culture,  Music Listening,  Music Making and Creation, and  Creative Connections) fulfill 2014 National Music Standards, non-music teachers will be able to use  History and Culture and  Creative Connections Paths without specific musical knowledge.

## Teaching Plan

### 1. Path One: What is Música Jíbara?



#### **To prepare:**

- Read through the path.
- Preview the **Lesson 2 Slideshow** (slides 1–16).
  - Open the “Launch Slideshow” link on the righthand menu of the Lesson landing page. *(If you are able to use a different screen than the students, have them open the “Student Slideshow” link, which will not show the notes.)*

#### **Slides 1–3: Information for the Teacher**

#### **Slide 4: Path 1 Introduction Slide: What is Música Jíbara?**

#### **Slide 5: “El Alma de Puerto Rico”**

##### Watch Video and Discuss:

- Play the first two minutes (1:55) of the video "[El Alma de Puerto Rico](#)" by Ecos de Borinquen.
  - Ask students to consider whether they think this urban or rural music (and why).
  - After the video, solicit student responses and lead a short discussion before moving on. **(Students might notice that the “live” part of the performance takes place at some type of fiesta in a small mountain town ... a rural setting.)**
    - Note: If you completed Path 1 in Lesson 1 (Exploring Puerto Rican Music and Dance), students have already watched this video - this opening activity serves as a good review.

#### **Slide 6: Música Jíbara**

##### Share Information:

- Tell students that the video they just watched featured a Puerto Rican genre called *musica jíbara* (“MOO-see-cah HEE-bah-rah”). **Música jíbara is a broad term for folk songs generally associated with the mountain regions and rural areas of Puerto Rico.**
  - Additional contextual information for the teacher: Música jíbara is an oral tradition that is, in some ways, a product of social and cultural exchange among the native Puerto Rican Taíno (indigenous peoples), European settlers (predominantly from Spain), and people of African origin. This music is most often associated with the mountain regions of Puerto Rico, influenced by literary and musical forms brought to the island by early Spanish settlers during the

colonial period. The use of poetry and instruments, such as the guitar, signal its Spanish heritage.

### Slide 7: Let's listen ...

#### Attentive Listening:

- Listen to an excerpt from another embedded example of música jíbara: “Y amo la libertad (And I Love Freedom),” also by Ecos de Borinquen.
  - Note: This brief listening activity is meant to provide another "taste" of música jíbara, before moving on. Learn much more about the musical characteristics in Path 2. You may wish to tell students that some people refer to música jíbara as Puerto Rico’s “country music”.
  - Additional contextual information about the musicians (from the album liner notes): For the past 35 years, Ecos de Borinquen has captured the soul of jíbaro music in its performances by crafting a delicate balance between tradition and innovation. In 2004, their record *Jíbaro Hasta el Hueso* was nominated for a Grammy in the Best World Music album category and a Latin Grammy in the Best Folk Music Album category, making it one of the most successful jíbaro recordings in history.
- Optional: Engaged Listening: Especially if you are teaching this Path in a music classroom, prompt students to engage with the recording as they listen (clap, pat, step, dance, etc.).

### Slide 8: About the term *jíbaro* ...

#### Share Information:

- The word *jíbaro* is a Taíno (Indigenous people of the island) word meaning “people of the forest.” **Over time, this word has become a symbol of Puerto Rican history, cultural identity, and pride.** Advance to the next slide to learn more about the term and associated idea/lifestyle.
  - Remind students that the Taino are Indigenous peoples who thrived on the island before the arrival of the Spanish. Learn more about this history in Lesson 1.

### Slide 9: Who are the jíbaros?

#### Share Information:

- Traditionally, the term jíbaro referred to Puerto Rican rural farmers of mixed-race ancestry, who accounted for the majority of the population until the 1930s. Nowadays it applies to Puerto Ricans of all ethnic and social backgrounds.
- In contemporary society, the jíbaro is a symbol Puerto Rican cultural pride, associated with core values (hard work, patriotism, and hospitality) and traditions.
- Additional contextual information for the teacher:

- It is important to remember that "jíbaro identity" is in many ways a construction based both in historical fact but also in myth told to uphold dominant culture.
- Famous literary works have presented romanticized ideas about peasant life and characterized jíbaros as rebellious and anti-establishment.
  - Miguel Cabrera, an educated Puerto Rican creole\* wrote the first documented mention of "jíbaro" character in *Coplas del Jíbaro (The Jibaro's Verses, 1820)*, a set of poems that criticized and mocked Spanish rule, Puerto Rican elites (e.g., Spaniards and creoles), and clerical authorities (i.e., Catholic Church).
    - \*The term creole historically referred to a Spaniard born in Puerto Rico to Spanish parents. Today, creole refers to all Puerto Rican natives of mixed heritage.
  - *The Jíbaro's Verses* were meant to give a symbolic voice to vulnerable social groups (e.g., enslaved Africans and peasant communities); ironically, the poems were written by a creole, with no ties to jíbaro culture beyond the romanticized ideas about peasant life. Cabrera's depiction of jíbaro identity glorifies what creole liberalists perceived to be the anti-establishment attitude of a peasant, but his poems are only a small sample of many literary works about the jíbaro identity.
  - Manuel Alonso wrote *El Gibaro* (1849) using peasant idioms and linguistics. In it, he also describes different styles of jíbaro dances, including the seis (which will be covered later in this lesson). *El Gibaro* is considered Puerto Rico's first literary work, the book was essential in creating jibaro traditions and music as icons of Puerto Rican national identity.

### **Slide 10: A Little Bit of History ...**

#### Share Information:

- It is said that jíbaro communities were formed in approximately the late 1500s by settlers who desired to distance themselves from the constraints of Spanish governmental, racial, religious, and economic practices.
- Though they were independent, self-sufficient, and anti-establishment, dominant culture and dominant narratives characterized jíbaro culture and people as "uneducated," "lazy," and "irrelevant."
- Additional contextual information for the teacher:
  - Dominant narratives also erased the jíbaro's mixed-race (blend of European, African, and Indigenous) origins, characterizing them solely as a white peasants who represented Puerto Rico's Hispanic heritage. Though jíbaro music has strong ties to European literary traditions (in particular the poetic strophe known as *décima*) and stringed instruments (such as the guitar, *cuatro*, and *tiple*),

African—and to a lesser extent Indigenous—elements are intrinsic to jíbaro music and cultural practices as well.

- Optional Discussion:
  - *Can you think of a rural/peasant social group in the United States that suffers the same type of stigmatization, and who have made tremendous cultural contributions in the field of music?*
    - Students may come up with several answers, but you may also suggest: **the American hillbilly or Cajun.**
      - Note: To learn about a rural/peasant social group that has been stigmatized despite their significant cultural contributions, visit the Cajun and Zydeco Music Pathway.

### **Slide 11: Música Jíbara: Cultural Influences**

#### Attentive Listening:

- Remind students that like jíbaro identity itself, *música jíbara* has three main cultural influences: **European (Spanish), Indigenous (Taíno), and African.**
  - Note: In Lesson 1, students learned that many types of "fiesta" music in Puerto Rico (including *música jíbara*) blend musical characteristics drawn from three distinct cultural settings: Indigenous (i.e., Taíno), African (West), and European (i.e., Spanish).
- As they listen again to “Y amo la libertad (And I Love Freedom)” again, prompt them to think about (and see if they can identify) the possible cultural influences of the musical sounds they are hearing (European, Indigenous, or African).
  - Consider leading a short discussion with students based on their ideas. **Then, move to the next slide to learn more!**

### **Slide 12: Música Jíbara: Cultural Influences**

#### Share Information:

- Some European/Spanish influences: **stringed instruments** (such as the guitar); **sung poetry; Spanish language**).
- Some Indigenous influences: **instruments** such as the güiro (scraper); **language** (certain words are drawn from the Taíno language)
- Some West African influences: **percussion instruments** (especially drums); **rhythmic patterns and feel (syncopation)**
  - Note: Learn much more about these musical characteristics in Path 2.

### Slide 13: Música Jíbara on the Move!

#### Share Information:

- Today, almost 6 million people of Puerto Rican descent live in the rest of the United States. Many of these people are 2nd and 3rd generation immigrants who are still passionate about their Puerto Rican heritage.
- Tell students that the term *diaspora* (which was briefly introduced in Lesson 1) is often used to describe a group of people who identify with a homeland (e.g., Puerto Rico), but live outside of it (e.g., Washington).
- Optional discussion question: *Are you or someone you know a member of a diaspora?*

### Slide 14: Migration and Music

#### A. Share Information:

- As is the case with all diasporic musics, outside its place of origin, the way that música jíbara is produced, transmitted, and performed has changed over time.
- For example, although música jíbara originated as in rural areas and continues to be practiced in the countryside, it has also developed into an urban form of expression.
  - Additional contextual information for the teacher: At the turn of the 20th century, cities became centers of industry. Many Puerto Ricans migrated to urban centers in Puerto Rico and the United States for better job opportunities. During the 1940s, more "jíbaros" began to migrate to urban centers in Puerto Rico and the United States (mainly New York City) looking for employment, thus affecting the social and cultural contexts within which música jíbara is produced, transmitted, and performed. Although música jíbara originated as in rural areas and continues to be practiced in the countryside, it has also developed into an urban form of expression.

#### B. Lead Discussion:

- *Why do people migrate?* (People migrate for a variety of reasons. Some people move **in search of work or economic opportunities, to join family, or to study**. Others move **to escape conflict, persecution, terrorism, or human rights violations**. Still others move **in response to the adverse effects of climate change, natural disasters, or other environmental factors**.)
- *Why and how does music change when people migrate?* (As music travels with people who move from one place to another - some changes can be expected. **Individual musicians have agency, and often make purposeful changes based on the musical cultures the encounter and the musicians they meet. Lyrics** might change [especially when a song is

translated from one language to another - since there are different ways of translation]. Sometimes there are changes in **instrumentation** [based on materials and instruments people have access to] and/or a **fusion of musical styles** [which sometimes creates entirely new genres]).

### Slide 15: Learning Checkpoint:

- *What is música jíbara, where did it originate, and what are its cultural influences?*
  - **Música jíbara is a broad term for Puerto Rican folk songs from mountain regions and rural areas. It is an oral tradition with Indigenous (Taíno), Spanish, and African influences.**
- *What are some meaning of the word “jíbaro”?*
  - **The term jíbaro is a marker of identity connected to Puerto Rican history and culture.**
  - **Traditionally, it referred to rural farmers of white or mixed-race ancestry.**
  - **Today, it can apply to Puerto Ricans of all ethnic and social backgrounds.**
  - **It is a symbol of Puerto Rican pride and represents core values like hard work, patriotism, and hospitality.**
- *What is migration and how does it affect music traditions (like música jíbara)?*
  - **Migration (a reality of the modern world) is the movement of people from one place to another.** Today, almost 6 million people of Puerto Rican descent live in the rest of the United States!
  - **As is the case with all diasporic musics, outside its place of origin, the way that música jíbara is produced, transmitted, and performed changes when it establishes itself in a new place.**
  - **New identities are formed in diaspora, reinterpreting and fusing cultural elements from home (e.g., Puerto Rico) and the host nation (e.g., New York City).**
  - **As an example, although música jíbara originated as in rural areas and continues to be practiced in the countryside, it has also developed into an urban form of expression, especially in the diaspora.**

### Slide 16: Lesson Navigation Slide





## **2. Path Two: Seis Jíbaro**

### **To prepare:**

- Read through the path.
- Preview the **Lesson 2, Path 2 Slideshow** (slides 17–30).
  - Open the “Launch Slideshow” link on the righthand menu of the Lesson landing page. *(If you are able to use a different screen than the students, have them open the “Student Slideshow” link, which will not show the notes.)*

### **Slide 17: Path 2 Introduction Slide: Seis Jíbaro**

### **Slide 18: A Quick Review: Música Jíbaro**

#### Share Information:

- In Path 1 we learned that *música jíbaro* (“MOO-see-cah HEE-bah-rah”) is a broad term for Puerto Rican folk songs from the mountain regions and rural areas.
  - Although *música jíbaro* originated as in rural areas and continues to be practiced in the countryside, it has also developed into an urban form of expression.
  - It has Taíno, Spanish, and African cultural influences.
- More detailed contextual information for teachers:
  - It is an oral tradition rooted in rural creole culture, but also a product of social and cultural exchange among the native Puerto Rican Taíno, European settlers (predominantly from Spain), and people of African origin.
  - *Música jíbaro* is associated with the mountain regions of Puerto Rico, influenced by literary and musical forms brought to the island by early Spanish settlers during the colonial period.
  - The use of poetry and instruments, such as the guitar, signal its Spanish heritage.
- Note: Jíbaro identity in Puerto Rico and the diaspora is discussed in depth in Path 1.

### **Slide 19: The Sounds of Música Jíbaro!**

#### Share Information:

- Tell students that in Path 2, we will learn more about the musical sounds that are associated with a form of *música jíbaro* called seis.

### **Slide 20: Two Forms of Música Jíbaro**

#### Share Information:

- There are two musical forms of *música jíbaro* considered to be uniquely Puerto Rican in style and character: **aguinaldo** (“ah-ghee-NAHL-doe”) and **seis** (“sayees”).
  - The aguinaldo is associated with (e.g., Christian festivities like Christmas and Epiphany) and is explored more deeply in Lesson 3.

- Lesson 2 focuses on **seis**: a secular (non-religious) form of music that features sung poetry and the use of stringed instruments, drums, and other percussion.
  - Note: The *décima* ("DAY-see-mah") is a poetic form of ten lines with a rhyme scheme of abbaa/ccddc. We will discuss the *décima* in Path 3.

### Slide 7: Seis Jíbaro: Listening for Instruments

#### Attentive Listening:

- Remind students that seis is a type of song that uses sung poetry (called *décima*), stringed instruments (e.g., cuatro and guitar), drums (e.g., bongos), and other percussion (e.g., güiro).
- Play an excerpt from "[Y amo la libertad \(And I Love Freedom\)](#)" by Ecos de Borinquen, an example of seis music.
  - Ask students to listen specifically for these instruments (also pictured on the slide).

### Slide 22.1: Seis Jíbaro: The Guitar and Cuatro

#### Share information:

- In seis music, melodic and harmonic materials are performed by members of the chordophone family.
  - They are the **guitar**, which is said to have originated in 16-century Spain, and the guitar-like **cuatro**.
    - The *cuatro* is a folkloric string instrument and a national symbol of Puerto Rican identity.
      - The name derives from earlier versions of the instrument built with only four strings, or four double-courses of strings; however, the modern cuatro (shown on this slide) has five double-courses (ten) of metal strings.
- Note: The track is included again on this slide, in case you would like to listen specifically for the cuatro.
- Optional: Click the down arrow to learn more about the history of seis and its connection to Spain.

### Slide 22.2: Seis and Spain: Historical Connections

#### Share Information:

- In this lesson we have learned that música jíbara has connections to Spain (most notably - stringed instruments like the guitar and the use of the Spanish language).
- The term *seis* (six) is likely tied to a Spanish religious ritual called *seises* (plural), a 16<sup>th</sup>-century Christian ritual practice from Seville, Spain.
- *Seises* were performed by six pairs of boys, dancing and singing before an altar during Corpus Christi and other religious events.

- The connection between both traditions is that early seis performances in Puerto Rico were both intended for six dancing couples only, although they later included many more dancers.

### Slide 23: Seis Jíbaro: Cuatristas

#### Watch Video:

- Share that cuatro players are called *cuatristas* and are known for fast and virtuosic playing and improvisation skills (improvisation is central to seis music).
- Play the short, embedded video, which illustrates this information.
- Additional information for the teacher:
  - Innovations by modern cuatristas include the use of chromaticism (notes that are not in the scale) and jazz harmonies.
  - Other seis instruments of the chordophone family are the *bordonúa* (bass), *tiple* (“TEE-play”), and *requinto* (“ray-KEEN-toe”), all adapted from the Spanish guitar.

### Slide 24: Seis Jíbaro: The Güiro

#### Share Information:

- Seis music is usually accompanied by the **güiro** (pronounced “GWEE-roe”).
  - The *güiro* is an Indigenous instrument made from a thin, dried gourd that may be varnished or unfinished. It has small, equidistant grooves cut into the anterior face of the gourd, which are scraped with a *puya*, or long metal comb, producing a ratcheting sound.
  - Note: The track is included again on this slide, in case you would like to listen specifically for the cuatro.
- Additional information:
  - **Maracas**, also an Indigenous instrument, are also often used in seis music.
    - *Maracas* are rattles traditionally made of a dried calabash containing seeds, or any similar dried gourd that produces a rattling sound when shaken. Modern maracas are often made of leather, wood, or plastic.
  - Güiro and maracas are instruments that are widely used in various Latin American and Caribbean musical cultures.
  - Modern ensembles can also include **electric bass** and **bongos** (a pair of small, portable, open-bottomed drums of different sizes).

### Slide 25: Seis Jíbaro: More Attentive Listening

#### Attentive Listening:

- *Can you guess whether this type of music is for dancing or listening and why?*
  - **It can be both! The rhythm of the seis is lively and was originally meant for dance – and it feels/sounds “danceable”. However, taste in**

**dance music has changed over time, so today it is mostly used for listening. It is a popular medium for poetic texts and improvisation (which you can learn more about in Path 3).**

- *Does the sound express rural (countryside) or urban (city) culture; why and how?*
  - **Rural: uses acoustic instruments**
  - **Although students won't notice unless they speak Spanish, you might want to mention that the lyrics are bucolic (e.g., countryside), and express pride in rural identity (e.g., farmer).**
- Additional question for discussion: *Why do you think the use of acoustic instruments indicates rurality?*
  - **In rural settings, it would be less likely to find places to “plug in” an electric instrument.**

### **Slide 26: Seis: Engaged Listening**

#### Engaged Listening:

- This music is great for engaged listening exercises! Consider the following ideas (tailor to meet the needs of your students).
  - *Can you walk, clap, pat, or move to the steady beat?*
  - *Can you clap a rhythm pattern? (This can be facilitated in many different ways):*
    - Teacher chooses a pattern and students echo (consider drawing from rhythm patterns played on the track).
    - Reading rhythm patterns using staff notation (perhaps notated on the board).
    - Pass the rhythm around the circle ... one student claps a pattern, and everyone joins in ... move on to the next student to choose a new rhythm pattern and the activity continues; consider adding instruments to the activity; etc.).
  - *Can you sing the tonic or central pitch? (Listen to hear if students sing the correct pitch [D]).*
- *Can you sing the bass line? (You may need to turn up the volume or boost the bass!)*

### **Slide 27: Optional: Listening for Melody and Harmony**

#### Attentive and Engaged Listening:

- If time allows and if your students are ready for it, you can also encourage students to engage with melodic and harmonic aspects of the music.
  - **About harmony:** Seis music is typically written in major keys with relatively simple harmonic progressions (e.g., I–IV–V), and often include the so-called “Andalusian cadences” (I–<sub>b</sub>VII–<sub>b</sub>VI–V).

- Ask students to identify chord changes lifting one finger for the tonic chord, two for the subdominant, and three for the dominant. **Hint: I = 2 bars (in 2/4 time); IV = 2 bars; V = 4 bars.**
  - Optional extension activity: Play this I, IV, V chord progression on instruments.
  - Optional extension activities [very advanced]:
    - *Let's see if we can hear what part each stringed instrument is playing:*
      - Let's sing the bass line again: **The bass is outlining the chord sequence (Dmajor-Gmajor-Amajor)**, by playing the root and fifth in syncopated fashion (on the 2 and the end of 2).
      - **Can you hear the high-pitched instrument? (That's the Puerto Rican cuatro. It is playing a countermelody that intertwines with the singer.)**
      - **The guitar is right in the middle, playing a syncopated bass line: the accent comes on the end of 4 (the "upbeat") and 1.** \*\*note: It might be easier to hear the guitar in the instrumental section after the singer finishes the first verse.
    - **About melody**: Each of the various styles of seis has a signature stock melody which differentiates it from others. Stock melodies played on cuatro in the introduction of the song also serve as models for improvisation during interludes between the sung poetry and solo sections.
      - Encourage students to listen for and hum along with the main melody used in this seis.

### Slide 28: Seis in Context

#### Share information:

- The seis is **one of the most prolific music genres in all Latin America**. There are over 100 styles of seis, including foreign varieties and many Puerto Rican ones that are no longer in use or are rarely used.
- **Seis is played in both religious and secular contexts**: weddings, patron saint feast days, baptisms, competitions, festivals, family gatherings.
- **As a dancing category, Puerto Rican seis is influenced by various Spanish dances such as the fandango**, a dance characterized by its use of zapateado (foot stomping) as an instrument.
  - **Over time, however, the seis has lost its popularity as a dance form in jíbaro culture and turned into a medium for poetic and instrumental improvisation.** (Learn more about this in Path 3.)
- **Many regional varieties of seis in Puerto Rico exist and are named after places, people, and other markers of local identification.**

**Slide 29: Learning Checkpoint**

- *What are some of the most important characteristics of seis music? (Sung poetry, improvisation, fast and virtuosic playing by cuatro players, simple repetitive chord progressions - I, IV,V, usually in a major key.)*
- *What instruments belong to the seis ensemble? (Guitar, cuatro, güiro, maracas, bongos or other drums, sometimes electric bass.)*
- *How does seis relate to música jíbara? (Whereas música jíbara is a broad term for "rural Puerto Rican folk song," seis is a particular type of song that follows a certain structure. Many folk songs performed by jíbaros are "seis".)*

**Slide 30: Lesson Navigation Slide**

### **3. Path Three: Concurso! Décima Festivals**



#### ***To prepare:***

- Read through the path.
- Preview the **Lesson 2, Path 3 Slideshow** (slides 31–46).
  - Open the “Launch Slideshow” link on the righthand menu of the Lesson landing page. *(If you are able to use a different screen than the students, have them open the “Student Slideshow” link, which will not show the notes.)*

#### **Slide 31: Path 3 Introduction Slide: Concurso! Décima Festivals**

#### **Slide 32: A Quick Review: Música Jíbara**

##### Share Information:

- In Path 1, we learned that *música jíbara* (“MOO-see-cah HEE-bah-rah”) is a broad term for Puerto Rican folk songs from the mountain regions and rural areas.
- In Path 2, we learned that *seis* is a type of song associated with *música jíbara*. Seis ensembles incorporate sung poetry, stringed instruments (e.g., cuatro and guitar), drums (e.g., bongos), and other percussion (e.g., güiro).

#### **Slide 33: Décima and Concursos**

##### Share Information:

- Tell students that in Path 3, they will find out how seis musicians use a poetic form called *décima* to out-do each other in staged competitions called concursos.

#### **Slide 34: Watch and Listen: “Dialogos”**

##### A. Watch Video:

- Tell students they are going to watch a video performance of **seis** music (one of the most popular forms of *música jíbara*).
- Play “Dialogo” by Ecos de Borinquen (recorded at the 2005 Smithsonian Folklife Festival).

##### B. Lead Discussion: *Why do you think this mini-documentary is called “dialogos” (dialogues)?*

- **There is a dialogue between the singers (called trovadores – “troh-bah-DOOR-ays”)–they are taking turns in this performance, the two singers take turns improvising, in conversation with one another.**
- **There is also a musical dialogue between the trovador and the musician (who is playing the *cuatro*).** Learn more about trovadores on the next slide.

### Slide 35: Seis Jíbaro: Trovadores

#### Share Information:

- Seis jíbaro ensembles include **trovadores** (“tro-vah-DOOR-ays”): Poet-singers, who have mastered the art of improvisation.
- Trovadores improvise on a wide range of themes, including bucolic scenes, religious references, patriotic sentiment, political commentary, and historic events, often using satire as a medium of expression.
- Trovadores use a Spanish poetic form called *décima* to structure their compositions. (You will learn more about this on the next slide).
- Trovadores improvise “on the spot” and can also recite many songs from memory.
- Seis is a rich oral tradition (people usually learn the music “by ear” - not by reading sheet music); Therefore, the singers (trovadores) play an important role in the preserving and transmitting this music from one generation to the next.

### Slide 36: What is *Décima*?

#### A. Share Information:

- ***Décima*** is the ten-line Spanish poetic form that trovadores use to structure their compositions. The name “*décima*” comes from the fact that the poetic form is made of ten (or diez) lines.
- *Décima* has certain characteristics:
  - A **main theme** (this is called **pie forzado**)
    - Pie forzado (“PEE-ey for-ZAH-doh”), literally means, forced foot).
  - Each stanza has **10 lines** (diez)
  - Each line usually has **eight syllables** (octosyllabic)
  - A certain **rhyming scheme**

#### B. Explore:

- Take some time to unpack these characteristics described above, using the example shown on the slide (students will have an opportunity to listen to this *décima* on the next slide).
- Especially if you have Spanish speakers in your class, practice speaking the words and counting the syllables (Note: It's not always “exactly” eight syllables).
- Pay attention to the rhyming scheme.

### Slide 37: Listening for *Décima*

#### A. Share Information:

- Remind students that trovadores must master the *décima* so they can improvise over this ten-line scheme “on the spot.” This takes a long time!



- To improvise their poetry successfully, a trovador must possess a clear idea of the formal features of the *décima*—its rhyme scheme, the octosyllable meter, and how it relates to the *pie forzado* (main theme)—as well as having intimate knowledge of the harmonic and rhythmic elements of *seis* music.
- Bonus question: What do you think the *pie forzado* for this song was (the main theme)? (**The *pie forzado* was "freedom" - it was suggested by an audience member** - so the trovador improvised the verses.)

<u>Décima Example</u>	<u>Rhyme Scheme</u>	<u>Translation</u>
Cual los pájaros del monte Los nómadas del espacio Entré ligero y despacio Sin fronteras ni horizonte. Como el parlero sinsonte Que ofrece a la humanidad Cofre de tonalidad En pentagrama divino Así pinto mi camino Y amo la libertad.	A B B A A C C D D C	Like the birds of the woodlands, Nomads of the sky, Flying easily yet slowly, Without frontiers or horizon. Like the prattling mockingbird Offering humankind A chest of tonality In divine staff. So do I trace my path, For I love freedom.
Excerpt from “Y amo la libertad (And I Love Freedom)” by Ecos de Borinquen		

#### B. Attentive Listening:

- Listen to the first part of this track several times, while following along with the lyrics on the slide and reading through the translation.
- Remind students to take note of the structure: 10 lines, about 8 syllables per line, ABBAACDDC rhyming scheme. (Note: The last line is repeated.)

### **Slide 38: Creative Connections: Write Your Own *Décima*!**

#### Creative Activity:

- In this activity, students will go through the process of writing their own *décima*: 1) Choose a theme (*pie forzado*), 2) Write 10 lines, 3) Make sure each line has about 8 syllables, 4) Follow the rhyming scheme (ABBAACDDC), 5) Practice your *décima*.
- Tailor this creative activity to meet your needs! **Consider these ideas**:
  - Especially with younger students, it might be best to work together to write a class *décima* (group activity).
  - Write *décimas* in small groups during class time.
  - Assign as homework (students create *décimas* individually)
  - Students choose their own *pie forzado* (theme)
  - Teacher chooses the *pie forzado* (and all students write about the same theme).

- Each student comes up with an idea for a theme and places it in a hat/bowl. Students draw and have to write a *décima* about that topic.
- Each student comes up with an idea for a theme and places it in a hat/bowl. The teacher draws one and all students write a *décima* about that topic.
- Ideas for extending this activity for the music classroom [advanced]:
  - Add instruments to recreate the *seis* style: Use chordal instruments (piano/ukulele/guitar/Orff instruments, etc.) to create the I (2 bars), IV (2 bars), V (4 bars) chord progression, as well as percussion instruments.
  - Students can speak (or sing, if they want to make up a melody) their *décimas* with this accompaniment framework. Encourage students to re-visit the recording on the previous slide for ideas about rhythms and melodic patterns (they could even set their lyrics to the melody from "Y Amo la Libertad").
- Note: The example we have been listening to is shown again on this slide for reference. The students can write their *décimas* in English (or any language they choose). Please remember that in this example, the English translation does not follow the rhyming scheme (but the original Spanish text does).

### **Slide 39: Concursos: Seis / Décima Festivals**

#### Share Information:

- The term **concurso** ("kohn-KUR-soh") means "competition" in Spanish and although it may not be a *fiesta* in the strict sense, today this festive staged event is the premier performance venue for *seis* improvisation and competition in front of an audience.
- The audience presence is important in keeping the energy of these events. At times, audience members even dictate the "tone" of the contest by suggesting themes that trovadores develop in their improvisation.
- Advance to the next slide to learn more about concursos.

### **Slide 40: Concursos: Audience Participation**

#### Share Information:

- Concursos are often compared to sporting events because of audience participation, which adds a sense of excitement.
- Trovadores create spontaneous compositions (i.e., improvisations) under pressure of time, the demanding expectations of the audience, accompanying musicians, and a jury.
- Concurso audiences include fans and occasional viewers, from older and newer generations. Some may not fully understand the complexities of this tradition, but they do enjoy participating in the struggles and triumphs of trovadores as they duel off.

- While winning a concurso represents a great honor, most importantly, these staged competitions are central to the preservation, transmission, and longevity of seis music and culture.

### **Slide 41: Judging a Concurso**

#### Share information:

- During the concurso, trovadores duel and try to outdo each other. This is known as **controversia** (“con-tro-VER-seah” Eng., controversy).
- Trovadores are judged on:
  - **Mastery** of the décima poetic form.
  - **Creativity** of melodic and lyrical improvisations within this structure related to the pie forzado (selected by the jury and announced publicly to the audience.
  - **Audience engagement** and **expression**.

### **Slide 42: Concursos: The Role of Cuatristas**

#### Share Information:

- As trovadores improvise, they are accompanied by virtuoso **cuatristas** (someone who plays the cuatro and performs cyclical harmonic and rhythmic patterns, as well as melodic interludes).
- Cuatristas are also judged ... on their ability to perform as an accompanist and as an improviser (creating spontaneous variations on stock melodic patterns, which showcases their creative ability during solo sections).
- Trovadores and cuatristas engage in a sort of musical dialogue throughout the performance.
- The virtuosity of cuatristas and quick wit of trovadores make concursos great entertainment!
- Note: Especially if you did not complete Path 2, you can click the down arrow to see a cuatrista in action.

### **Slide 43: “Concurso de Trovadores” Winners**

Watch Video: To get an idea of what a concurso is like, watch excerpts from this video. It was recorded at the Bacardí Festival, which for over twenty years has sponsored the largest and most prestigious concurso in Puerto Rico, Concurso de Trovadores Bacardí.

- The trovadores in this video are the first-place winners from 1984-1998. They are accompanied by cuatros, guitar, güiro and symphony orchestra.
  - Notice the large stage, sound equipment, number of musicians, thousands of people in the audience, and that the video is a TV recording.

- As students watch, encourage them to think about the criteria for a successful concurso performance: Mastery of the structure (décima), effective improvisation related to the topic (pie forzado), and expression/audience engagement/creativity.
- Optional discussion activity: You have limited experience with the structure (décima), you don't know the pie forzado (topic), and you may not speak the language ... but in your limited experience: *Does anyone in this group seem to "out-do" anyone else or engage the audience more than others? If they were competing against each other, who do you think would win and why?*
- Optional extension activity: After watching the video, you may be inspired to have your students perform their rhymes for each other in a controversia!

### Slide 8: Décima, Beyond Puerto Rico

#### Share Information:

- The décima is firmly rooted in the musical traditions of many cultures, both in Spain and Latin America (including Portuguese-language décimas in Brazil). **It is closely tied with live performance and, often, improvisation.**
- Concursos are organized regionally as well as on a national level, with over 90 competitions held in Puerto Rico yearly. There are also international trovador festivals and television shows.
  - The great enthusiasm for this type of event highlights the central role improvisation plays in seis music as a living oral tradition and as a unique creative process and mode of making music.
  - These events bring together performers and musicians from various countries to share their related yet distinct traditions.

### Slide 45: Lesson Path 3: Learning Checkpoint

- *What are concursos and what is their social function? (A concurso is a festive, staged, competitive event. It is a premier performance venue for seis improvisation and competition. They are often compared to sporting events because of audience participation, which adds a sense of excitement).*
- *What is the relationship between cuatristas and trovadores? (Within the context of a concurso, trovadores improvise, accompanied by cuatristas in a sort of musical dialogue. Cuatristas are also judged).*
- *What is the structure of décima? (Formal features of the décima: rhyme scheme, octosyllable meter, pie forzado, harmonic and rhythmic elements).*

- *What are the criteria for a successful concurso performance?* **(Performances are judged based on improvisation and structure. Trovadores must master the use of the poetic form known as décima. Trovadores duel and try to outdo each other with their melodic and lyrical improvisations. Competitors must base their improvisations on the pie forzado (i.e., forced foot): a theme selected by the jury and announced publicly to the audience during a performance).**

**Slide 46: Lesson Navigation Slide**

## **2014 National Music Standards Connections**

MU:Cr1.1.5a: Improvise ideas for melodies, rhythmic passages, and arrangements for specific purposes that reflect characteristic(s) of music from a variety of historical periods studied in rehearsal.

- Can I improvise ideas for a *décima* that adheres to certain features (structure, rhyme scheme, octosyllabic meter, *pie forzado*)?

MU:Cr2.1.5a: Demonstrate selected and developed musical ideas for improvisations, arrangements, or compositions to express intent, and explain connection to purpose and context.

- Can I practice and demonstrate the *décima* I wrote?

MU:Re7.1.5a: Demonstrate and explain, citing evidence, how selected music connects to and is influenced by specific interests, experiences, purposes, or contexts.

- Can I describe how *seis* music is performed in the context of a *concurso*?

MU:Re7.2.5a: Demonstrate and explain, citing evidence, how responses to music are informed by the structure, the use of the elements of music, and context (such as social, cultural, and historical).

- Can I describe and demonstrate the musical sounds of *seis* music in Puerto Rico?
- Can I identify and explain the structural characteristics of *décima*?
- Can I identify several instruments used in a Puerto Rican *seis* ensemble?
- Can I explain the social context (use and purpose) of *seis* music in Puerto Rico?
- Can I explain how cultural context relates to the themes of *seis* music (*pie forzado*)?
- Can I explain why *concursos* remain culturally important?

MU:Re8.1.5a: Demonstrate and explain how the expressive qualities (such as dynamics, tempo, timbre, and articulation) are used in performers' and personal interpretations to reflect expressive intent

- Can I describe how *trovadores* and *cuatristas* use certain expressive qualities to convey expressive intent (e.g., improvisation, *décima*, *pie forzado*, *controversia*)?

MU:Re9.1.5a: Evaluate musical works and performances, applying established criteria, and explain appropriateness to the context, citing evidence from the elements of music.

- Can I explain what a *concurso* is and identify criteria upon which a *concurso* performance is judged?
- Can I use these criteria to evaluate the performance of *trovadores*, within the context of a *concurso* (competition)?

MU:Cn10.o.H.Ia Demonstrate how interests, knowledge, and skills relate to personal choices and intent when creating, performing, and responding to music.

- Can I identify common topics/themes in seis music?
- Can I explain how trovadores make up verses when they perform seis music?
- Can I make personal choices to create my own original décima?

MU:Cn11.o.T.Ia Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.

- Can I describe música jíbara and its historical development (origins) in Puerto Rico?
- Can I explain jíbaro identity/lifestyle and how it relates to música jíbara?
- Can I provide examples of how music traditions (like música jíbara) have been affected by migration?
- Can I identify connections between seis music and poetry?
- Can I explain the purpose and historical and cultural significance of concursos?

## **Additional Readings and Resources**

Bofill-Calero, Jaime O. 2013. "Improvisation in Jíbaro Music: A Structural Analysis." [PhD diss.], University of Arizona.

Bofill Calero, Jaimo O. 2016. Liner Notes for Ecos de Borinquen. *El Alma de Puerto Rico: Jíbaro Tradition by Ecos de Borinquen*. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings SFW40570. <https://folkways-media.si.edu/docs/folkways/artwork/SFW40570.pdf>.

Moore, Robin. 2010. *Music in the Hispanic Caribbean: Expressing Music, Expressing Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Sheehy, Daniel. 2003. Liner Notes for Ecos de Borinquen. *Jíbaro Hasta el Hueso: Mountain Music of Puerto Rico by Ecos de Borinquen*. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings SFW40506. <https://folkways-media.si.edu/docs/folkways/artwork/SFW40506.pdf>.

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