



# Oaxaca Times

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FREE

## VIVA MEXICO, VIVA MEXICO, VIVA MEXICO

"What really draws the crowds is the carnival spirit"

September 16th is celebrated all over Mexico as the day of Independence. On the evening of the previous day in 1810 a radical Catholic priest, Father Morelos, went up to the roof of his church, rang the bell to assemble the townspeople and shouted to them to prepare to arm and protect themselves from the advancing Spanish government troops. His short call to arms has been named the 'grito' and Father Morelos's action has been recognized as the start of that important first revolution whereby Mexico got its freedom from Spain. The ringing of the bell is still central to Mexico's celebration of its day of Independence. In Mexico's second revolution another Catholic priest, Father Morelos, became a national hero due to his unselfish and heroic acts. He is also remembered on Mexico's day of Independence.

The holiday has a special meaning here in Oaxaca as the population primarily consists of poor Indian farmers and the revolutions brought freedom from foreign control and land reform to the poor farmers of Mexico. On the evening of the holiday the crowds swell in the zocalo. At the high point there is barely breathing room. The atmosphere is very similar to a New Years celebration in New York's Times Square. Everyone tries to get as close to the central balcony of the government palace on the south side of the zocalo. It is here where the governor of Oaxaca will repeat the words that are tradi-



tionally spoken at the appointed time. The police are out in full force to maintain an open path from the edge to the zocalo to the main portal of the government palace. A parade will precede the ceremonies. Policemen are positioned about 10 feet apart and hold long poles to act as human barricades.

The entire zocalo is lighted by strings of colored light bulb that radiate outward from the central band shell to the buildings surrounding the zocalo. The picturesque sidewalk restaurants under the colonnades have been drowned by the surging crowd while the balcony restaurants are packed with revelers. All over Oaxaca private parties are in full swing. The colorful balloon sellers and the many sidewalk peddlers normally seen in the zocalo have gone as the surging crowd is too heavy to do any business. The side streets west of the zocalo have been blocked to traffic and these streets are completely occupied by the stalls of food vendors, sweets

vendors and games of chance.

As the magic hour of 11 pm. approaches the short parade led by a band approaches the government palace main portal and enters to go to the central courtyard within. Next comes a platoon of soldiers followed by a group of politicians led by the governor of Oaxaca and the mayor of Oaxaca. They are carrying the flag of Mexico and the flag of Oaxaca. Next comes a float carrying Miss Independence and her court. The excitement grows. As the various parade elements arrange themselves in the inner courtyard and prior to the appearance of the governor on the central balcony, a musical group performs on a stage in the zocalo and opposite the central balcony. Even though they use a public address system it is hard to hear them above the murmur of the excited crowd. As the minutes tick by the crowd becomes restless and people start to whistle shrilly. This is their way of telling the governor he is late.

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4 BLOCKS  
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ZOCALO



# COME TO THE TULE FIESTA

Santa María del Tule, or Tule, is a small sleepy village that is located some ten miles south of Oaxaca on the Pan American highway. Tule is listed in most tourist guides because of its famous 2,000 year old tree which is located in front of the town's church. The trunk of the tree is so large that it takes forty people standing with outstretched hands to encircle the tree.

Tule's patron saint is the virgin of the Ascension and her birthday is celebrated each year with six days of ceremony and fiesta. The fiesta starts on August 13 with a religious parade called a "calenda". The "calenda" has a number of small trucks festooned with colorful paper, a band and all the young girls of the village. The happy "calenda" wends its way through the streets of the town announcing the forthcoming birthday celebration of the town's patron saint. The trucks set off fireworks to heighten the excitement. The young girls of the village look forward to this holiday as they get new cloths to wear for the "calenda". Some of the marching girls carry flower laden baskets on their heads. This is one of three holidays celebrated in the town and the least commercialized. It is truly a celebration that belongs to them.

Here in Oaxaca all fiestas are enhanced by colorful street vendors. Street vendors sell sweets, food and tourist trinkets. No fiesta is complete without them. The vendors and the people who come to the fiesta provide splashes of color and an enthusiastic background.

The next day on August 14 a huge mass is held in the church by the tree of Tule. The purpose of the mass is to allow the town's people to further prepare themselves for the forthcoming celebration. Explosive fireworks are set off by the church starting at 11 pm. that evening. The explosions continue intermittently till 3 am. the next morning. Sometimes it is difficult to get a good night's rest during this part of the celebration.

Two hours later, on August 15, a special 5 am. mass is celebrated to wake up the patron saint. During the wakeup service, the traditional song, called the "mañanitas", is sung. The ceremony of the singing of the "mañanitas" is a beautiful tradition which is prevalent throughout Mexico. It is frequently used by sons to honor their mother on her birthday or on Mothers' day. Tradition requires that the recipient be awakened by the singing of the "mañanitas" and so it is necessary to sing the song very early in the morning. The sons insure that their mother is not awake by remaining in the street to sing the song. Frequently the son or sons hire a guitarist to accompany their vocal exercise.

Later in the morning, at 10 am., a mass is held at the church to actually celebrate the birthday of the saint. On August 16 at 5

pm. the "mayordomo" leads a group of people at the doors of the church and showers the crowd with candy and sweets to thank them for participating in the celebration. The honor of being named "mayordomo" is reserved to native sons of Tule. The "mayordomo" volunteers his services and is chosen by the elders of the village. The "mayordomo" pays for all expenses incurred by the town to stage the fiesta. A very elaborate festival can cost as much as \$20,000,000.00 pesos so only well-to-do favorite sons volunteer.

The last three days of the fiesta are celebrated with a "jaripeo". The "jaripeo" is a

mixture of a Spanish bull ring and an American rodeo. It starts about 3 pm. and lasts till 7 pm. Local teenagers ride a farm-raised bull and try to stay on. Sometimes the bull is too docile others with colorful blankets try to get the bull to be more active. At the end of each days "jaripeo" the crowd is showered with candy and sweets.

The last day of the fiesta is highlighted with an outdoor dance that is held in front of the municipal building. Music is supplied by an orchestra. This dance is eagerly awaited by the young people of the town. It is one of the few socially acceptable means for singles to get together. It has added benefit in that it is a contact sport.

This year there is feverish activity to prepare for the fiesta. A public works project is underway to beautify the area in front of the municipal building. This will be the site of the dance and is seen by all the people who come to the fiesta.



## PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Holy Spirit, you who make everything clear for me, who illuminate all my paths so that I might reach my ideal, you who give me the divine gift of forgiving and forgetting the wrong done to me, and who are with me every instant of my life; in this short dialogue I want to thank you for everything and affirm one more that I never want to be separated from you, however great may be my enthusiasm for material things.

I desire to be with you and with all my loved ones in perpetual grace. Thank you for your mercy toward me and my family and friends.

I am grateful for the graces received.

Ma.Alma Gachuzzo Rabiella.

## CULTURAL EVENTS

Cultural activities in the Flores Magon Center 302 Alcalá St.

- 4 Latin American music-7pm-Canto Nuevo band.
- 18 Mexican Music-7pm
- 25 Latin songs-7pm

### STATE SPONSORED ACTIVITIES

- 5 Marimba music-Cathedral patio 6:40
- 6 Mexican music-Cathedral patio-6:30
- 9 Marimba music-Patio Santo Domingo-6:30pm
- 11 Mexican music "
- 12 Oaxacan Dances-Cathedral patio-7pm
- 13 Mexican Dances-Cathedral patio-7pm.
- 15 Mexican night-Cathedral patio-7pm and at 11 pm THE GRITO in front of the government palace.
- 16 Music from the Sierra-Santo Domingo Patio-6:30pm
- 17 concert-Cathedral patio-7pm
- 23 Folk Dances-Santo Domingo patio-6:30
- 24 La Merced church-Festival- all day.
- 27 Concert-Cathedral patio-7pm
- 30 Concert-Santo Domingo patio-6:30

### Special Events of the Month

31 de agosto-San Ramon day!



# "ONE CHORD IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS"

During 1983 and 1984 Federico Alvarez del Toro composed the symphony "The Spirit of the Earth." The premier performance was in London during July 1989. It was inspired by Mayan ritual songs which speak to us musically of the forest, its animals, the celba and the cornfields, the roadway and the home. The composition is performed by a symphony orchestra interpreting a tape recording of a little Lacandones girl's voice and a miramba solo.

Alvarez was raised in middle America, but now lives in Tepozotlan. He is always near the vestiges of the prehispanic culture, which are his authentic roots. These are the principal sources of his inspiration. His work constitutes a vibrant musical exhortation to think of the principals which generate all energies. He exhorts the listener to apply these principles in attaining world peace.

In Chiapas, his native land, Alvarez composed the "Oratorio in the Cave of the Marimba" which was composed on a stone marimba created by nature in a semi-hidden cave in the forest. When struck the stalactites produce sounds of diverse textures and a complexity of micro-intervals. Alvarez feels that it offers a great variety of timbre coloring and unexpected resonances with very high pitches all the way to deep vibrations like bells. Zeferino Nandayapa, a Mexican instrumentalist of recognized merit, carried out in that cave an acoustic exploration with soft marimba drumsticks, producing sounds that were recorded in their entirety and which formed the structural basis of the oratorio.

Alvarez has also composed the cantata "Mitl", which in Naaatl means 'young heart'. The score includes the voice of a native curandera of the people. The work premiered in the Palace of Fine Arts in Mexico City to great public and critical acclaim.

The premier of his latest work, an opera, will be during the Cultural Festival of Mexico City later this year. Jaime Sabines has written the libretto which incorporates a choir of indigenous children. The story is of lovers, Mexico and Guatemala, who are separated by a river and a volcano. They seek refuge in the



jungle where they are transformed into Quetzal birds and are able to live their love together. The characters are contemporary and could exist any time in any place on earth.

In the Chiapan forest, as in Tepozotlan, he looks for the roots of culture. He interprets the voices of children in their indigenous tongue. The murmur of the forest, the sounds of the caves, the winds that blow and fashion mountains, are the chords which harmonize in the musical creation of Federico Alvarez del Toro.

from an article by:

Carlos G. Basurto

Continued

# VIVA MEXICO...

Finally the governor appears on the balcony and is cheered. He rings the large bronze government bell three times. Then, using a powerful public address system, he shouts: "Mexicanos! ... viva la Independencia de Mexico". The crowd roars back: "Viva!". The governor shouts: "Viva los Heroes que nos dieron patria." The crowd roars: "Viva!". Then: "Viva Hidalgo". Response: "Viva!". Governor: "Viva Morelos". Response: "Viva". Then the following is repeated three times: governor: "Viva Mexico". crowd: "Viva". The ceremony is completed by the governor ringing the large government bell three more times and then he disappears into the government palace again.

The entire facade of the government palace is lighted as firework sparklers rain down from its roof. The Mexican national anthem is played. Many of the revelers are too hoarse to sing along. Fireworks explode high above the zocalo. The short parade reverses itself as it leaves the government building. Sparkling firework displays start up in front of the church located on the other side of the zocalo. The crowd shifts to the other side of the zocalo. Chains of young people stream through the crowd. Everyone is happily excited.

The next day there is a parade. Last year the entire parade route was lined with army recruits from the local army barracks. The governor and mayor ride in a car preceded by a contingent of motorcycle police. The police band and the army band supply the music. Each school in the area is represented by a contingent of students plus an honor guard bearing the schools identifying banner. There is a contingent of soldiers and sailors. The army displays some of its trucks pulling field cannons. There is a contingent of fire fighters plus some horses with costumed riders and finally the ambulances representing the hospitals, etc.

This is a holiday to be seen and remembered.



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