LBC’s Mariachi Ensemble began as a dream of now Music Specialist, José Soto. José knew from personal experience the impact mariachi could have on students in the community; that this type of program wouldn’t just teach children how to play an instrument or read music, but would also provide a bridge for community building, cultural understanding, and family connection. In 2015 that dream became a reality with the first Mariachi Camp held at Lawrence Cook Middle School. In 2017, the reality deepened with the opportunity to start a year-round program.

The year-round Mariachi Ensemble started with 31 participants from that year’s summer camp and now serves over 70 students who range in age from 12–18. Students come from communities around Sonoma County including Cloverdale, Sebastopol, Santa Rosa, and Rohnert Park, which speaks of the dedication students and families have to the program.

Since 2017, the Ensemble has performed at over 50 community events including Santa Rosa’s Sesquicentennial at Courthouse Square, for Dolores Huerta, Los Cien, and the Center’s Fiesta de Independencia. The Ensemble was selected to compete in Arizona at the annual Tucson International Mariachi Competition and at the California State Fair Mariachi Competition in Sacramento prior to the shutdown last March.

The importance of the LBC’s mariachi program cannot be understated, and to hear students speak of the impact that it has had in their lives is incredibly powerful. In their own words, students describe the way mariachi makes them feel:

*As you start playing you just start feeling really happy, I feel like it’s a balloon that’s expanding, and it’s filled with happiness. That happiness keeps you going. Sometimes I feel like I don’t want to stop.*
—Laura Martinez, Violinist

*The way it has deepened their connection with their culture and families:*  
*Mariachi helps me with Spanish, and it feels like I am starting to have a really strong connection to my culture.* —Juliana Avalos, Violinist

*I’ve learned a lot about my parents, I’ve learned a lot about Mexico.* —Bryan Villalobos, Violinist

How important it is to their lives:

*If I didn’t have this program, I feel like I wouldn’t be living my life, because this program is my life. It’s the whole chapter in my life that isn’t finished, it needs more.* —Michelle Perez, Guitarist

Click here to watch the video to hear more from the the students about the program and its impact in their lives.
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF THE ARTS

ART IN ACTION MAKES AN IMPACT

The LBC has prioritized arts education since it opened forty years ago, and the Mariachi Ensemble is just one of 24 programs that the Education and Community Engagement team offers throughout the year.

Schools and teachers have access to teaching artists, live performances at the Center, professional development trainings, and more! The LBC’s education programs provide critical access to the arts that many schools are unable to provide due to lack of funding and support.

The Center’s engagement initiatives even extend beyond the Center’s work with schools to reach audiences of all ages, including programs like the annual Posada Navideña and Fiesta de Independencia celebrations, master classes, and pre- and post-discussions with world-class touring artists. To date, hundreds of thousands of students and families have been impacted over the years from the Center’s educational programming.

A DAY TO REMEMBER

When we reopened the Ticket Office to the public on June 11th, it had been 15 months since patrons had visited the Center. As Patrons began lining up to secure their tickets for new shows, the LBC team felt so grateful for everyone that came to support us. Anita Wiglesworth, Director of Programs said, "It was a momentous day filled with emotion! After being dark for so long, having the opportunity to talk to our patrons and hear their excitement to return to live performances and kind words was incredible."

Welcome back, we cannot wait to see you at the LBC soon!
Upcoming Events

AN EVENING WITH CHICAGO
Watch free on Facebook
September 4 at 8pm

CARLTON SENIOR LIVING SYMPHONY POPS
REMEMBER WHEN ROCK WAS YOUNG: THE ELTON JOHN TRIBUTE
August 29 at 3pm

PHIL LAWRENCE
Watch free on Facebook
July 14 at 5pm

SQUEEZE
September 7 at 8pm

VINTAGE TROUBLE
September 12 at 2pm

REDWOOD CREDIT UNION PRESENTS
FIESTA DE INDEPENDENCIA
September 17 at 8pm

45TH ANNUAL SAN FRANCISCO
COMEDY COMPETITION
SEMI-FINALS
September 12 at 2pm

JOSH TURNER
September 24 at 8pm

AEG PRESENTS
BIANCA DEL RIO: UNSANITIZED
October 2 at 8pm
EMMYLOU HARRIS  
October 4 at 8pm

JOHN HIATT &  
THE JERRY DOUGLAS BAND  
October 8 at 8pm

TAPE FACE  
October 12 at 7pm

AMY GRANT LIVE IN CONCERT  
October 15 at 8pm

SYMPHONY POPS  
FIEDLER’S FAVORITES  
BILL CUNLIFFE, PIANO  
October 17 at 3pm

UNIQUE LIVES & EXPERIENCES PRESENTS  
JOHN CLEESE  
WHY THERE IS NO HOPE  
October 19 at 7:30pm

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS & INSTITUTIONAL FUNDERS