

Texas Music Project won't Mess with la musica de Tejas

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Commentary

The phrase *Texas Music* packs a considerable variety of meanings - everything from Van Cliburn to Willie Nelson, with many variations in between - and the Dallas-based Texas Music Project is just beginning to cover all those bases with a series of compact-disk collections.

The dawning series goes by the name of *Don't Mess with Texas Music*. Its newly released second volume concentrates on the state's Latinate traditions and bears the name of *Don't Mess with la Musica de Tejas*.

The *Latino* influence is ever-present over the long haul of history, ranging from Lydia Mendoza's *pura Mexicana* ballads of the last century to Alfredo Casares' hyper-energetic fiddling as a pioneer of the Western Swing tradition. The new disk's concentration of modern-day artists - all donating their work for the benefit of school-music programs - bears out such a variety with striking results.

Proceeds from the disk will benefit music education for Latino students in Texas schools. The Texas Music Project is allied with such organizations as the Fort Worth Arts Education Project and Bass Hall's Performing Arts Fort Worth and was involved in the successful fundraising push that brought T-Bone Burnett's Great High Mountain concert to this burg in June.

The Texas Music Project is a statewide initiative founded by the Social Marketing Resource Center to strengthen - and to restore, in many instances - music education in Texas' schools.

Don't Mess with La Musica de Tejas is anchored in the work of Flaco Jimenez, the masterful accordionist best known to the pop-country audience as a mainstay of the late Doug Sahm's Texas Tornadoes ensemble.

"Music is as important to learn as the ABCs," says Jimenez, "whether a young person makes a career out of it or not. It is an expression of ourselves in a way that all can understand, which makes it an important subject for our youth to learn."

The first volume of *Don't Mess with Texas Music* dates from 2003. That project brought together such artists as Willie Nelson, Clint Black, Erykah Badu and the Dixie Chicks. Its sales will contribute more than \$100,000 to music education programs beginning in September 2004, says Bruce Orr of the Texas Music Project.

"Thanks to Texas musicians, our statewide corporate sponsors, and the communities that have supported this initiative, we are beginning to make an impact by meeting both the needs of Texas communities and the companies that serve them," Orr says.

The new disk includes selections by Ruben Ramos, Los Lonely Boys, Jay Perez, Del Castillo, Havana NRG, Michelle, Los Desperadoz, Elida Reyna, Grupo Fantasma, Patricia Vonne, Latin Breed, Grupo Vida, Randy Garibay, Sisters Morales, Michael Salgado and Henry Brun. Sources of corporate underwriting include Starbucks Coffee, Dell, HEB, Pepsi-Cola, Brooks Mays Music Company, Quilling, Selander, Cumiskey Lownds P.C., and Gaylord Texan Resort Convention Center.

"The Texas Music Project fills a void highlighting the benefits of music education and the needs of schools," says Hector M. Flores, president of the League of United Latin American Citizens.

The Texas Commission on the Arts will handle distribution of funding "The Texas Music Project provides the Texas Commission on the Arts with a long-term opportunity to work with private-sector partners toward a shared goal of improving **arts education**," says Ricardo Hernandez, the agency's executive director.

“Don't Mess with La Musica de Tejas also brings to light the tremendous contribution that *Tejano* and *Latino* musicians have made to the cultural fabric of Texas. The project highlights the power and positive economic and social impact that pride in one's cultural heritage can bring to bear on a community.”

The Texas Music Project can be found at www.texasmusicproject.org.