



BAJA CULTURE

El Triunfo Music Museum Provides Educational Opportunity

World music history and instruments on display
By Anika Moran

Located in the midst of the sprawling Sierra la Laguna mountain range, a sign off Mexico Highway 1 announces your entrance into the old mining town of El Triunfo. The sign proclaims that there are a grand total of 327 inhabitants in this charmingly crumbling ghost town. For many travelers, El Triunfo may be just a kilometer marker on this stretch of Highway 1, but it contains significant history pertinent to the region. During its heyday, the town was the largest in the Baja, drawing people from all over the world to mine the silver found nearby. These outsiders introduced their own cultures to El Triunfo, with European musical traditions making a particularly lasting impression on the area. The current Museo de la Música (Music Museum) is proof of this; a high-ceilinged, 19th century building containing music-related relics left by the settlers, the museum is a pleasantly cool and interesting reprieve from the glaring sun on a long drive. Operated by the informed and talented pianist, Señor Nicolas Carrillo, those interested in musical and regional history will find an educational opportunity in the Music Museum.

Opened on December 12, 2003, the Music Museum houses numerous instruments, scores, and photographs brought during the mining times, as well as newer acquisitions donated by the people of Southern Baja. Most of the instruments are pianos, but the collection also includes guitars, various percussion objects, a soprano saxophone, and more. The first room on the museum tour contains a few pianos set against each wall of the small space. Here, the oldest piece in the collection is kept: manufactured by Jonas Chickering in 1796, this piano was revolutionary for its use of iron in the innards of the instrument, meant to improve sound quality. Each succeeding room holds a variety of carefully displayed instruments and curios, with signs explaining successive stages in world music history.

The final and largest room of the building is a concert hall, added on 10 years ago in the same style as the rest of the building. Here, Señor Carrillo sometimes treats visitors to a brief concert of beautifully executed pianism. This maestro also gives formal concerts in the space throughout the year, with and without accompanists, organizes the museum's youth spectacles, discussions, and workshops, and gives piano lessons. Originally from El Triunfo, Señor Carrillo first learned piano at his grandfather's knee, and went on to study at the Sorbonne in Paris. Laughing at himself, he notes that in the course of his European experience, he found himself intimidated by pianists in Austria and so deviated from his preferred repertoire of Bach, Chopin, or Beethoven. "I was afraid to play piano in Austria, so I played Mexican music," he says. Unabashedly, the maestro adds that the crowds liked it. Most recently living in San Francisco, Señor Carrillo was called back to El Triunfo by the Tourist Board in order to run the museum, and has done so happily and successfully.

The museum, like the town of El Triunfo itself, is not very large, but it does attract a small daily flow of tourists, and is worth a visit for the novelty of the experience of viewing this piece of Baja history. It is open Wednesday through Sunday from 9:30 am to 6:00 pm. The entrance fee is \$2. El Triunfo is located on Highway 1, and once in the town you cannot miss the official blue "Museo" signs. In addition to visiting the museum, take time to drive around this tiny outpost of Baja history; as Señor Carrillo said in answer to what there is to like about the town, "Everything." **BP**



Sr. Hector Carrillo performs at The Music Museum in El Triunfo.
Photo by Anika Moran

Celebrating The Triumph Of Art And Bicycle Racing

Third annual El Triunfo Arts Festival thrills
By John Brooke

On a sunny Sunday in April, Baja's wealth once more flowed through the cobbled streets of the historic mining town of El Triunfo when the third annual El Triunfo Festival of Arts was held. Over the past three years the festival (held in the tiny pueblo off Mexico Highway 1 between Los Barriles and La Paz) has grown. This year it was a huge fiesta. The unmistakable traditional Banda music charged the atmosphere with gaiety. There was

dancing, singing, and art. Jewelry, paintings, sculpture, carvings, pottery, and clothing were offered proudly in stands that lined the town's streets. Plenty of food and drink was offered as well. The recently opened Cafe El Triunfo welcomed droves of smiling customers with pizza and bread, baked in a wood burning oven. The big surprise of the day was a major Baja bicycle race which happened to coincide with the Arts Festival. The race

course ran through town, adding a pinch of adrenalin to the cultural mosaic, as racers peddled like mad among the art peddlers, deftly avoiding collisions with exuberant shoppers and gawkers. At the end of the day, trophies were awarded to cyclists of all ages, vendors packed up their stands and happy shoppers went home with their new treasures to await next year's festival. **BP**

