

Teacher lends Latin flavor to area concerts



The Fiesta Mexicana Dancers will join Panchito and his orchestra at Schoolcraft College Saturday, Sept. 24, for an evening of music, dancing and Latin cuisine.

By Ethel Simmons
staff writer

A schoolteacher in Detroit's Latin community, Frank Lozano also is known as Panchito — when he leads his dance band, which plays throughout the metropolitan area.

This summer Panchito and Orchestra performed 10 community concerts, including ones in Birmingham, Troy and Livonia, as well as at Detroit's Hart Plaza.

"The band travels in a radius of 500 miles, to St. Louis, Columbus, Dayton and Chicago, to play special parties," Lozano said.

Panchito and Orchestra has played college dates as well, he said, naming the University of Michigan and Wayne State University.

THE BAND will play at Schoolcraft College in Livonia for the first time Saturday, Sept. 24, at a Mexican Fiesta Night. The event to benefit the Schoolcraft Foundation features the Fiesta Mexicana Dancers as well.

"Our band will do some Latin-American music when we play for dancing that night," Lozano said. "We also will do the music of the '40s, '50s and '60s." Besides the entertainment, there will be authentic Mexican cuisine prepared by the college's culinary arts department. For reservations or further information call 591-6400, ext. 213.

Members of Panchito's orchestra have been together for 25 years. For three years the band appeared on the locally produced "Arthur Murray Show," from Channel 4 and broadcast coast-to-coast.

Lozano said his group has been called "the critic's dance band because it plays music for both professional and amateur dancers — the Fred Astaire ballroom type, because we play everything."

The band has played for the Don Demoski International Ball at Detroit's Cobo Hall for nearly 20 years. "It's the Olympics of dancers," Lozano said. "Seven thousand people come from all over the world to compete."

AS PANCHITO, Lozano leads the

band and plays trumpet. Others in the 13-member band include ex-members of name bands, such as those of Stan Kenton and Harry James. "We can go right down the list. They're not on the road anymore and all settled in Detroit," he said.

A Mexican-American born in Chicago, Lozano has lived in Detroit since the age of 3. Like the other band members, he started out as a musician, and he didn't go into teaching until later, 25 years ago.

Today Lozano is principal of the Webster School, "in the heart of the Latin community," he said. He is a specialist in bilingual education.

Lozano said he formed the band when he got out of service. He had been with the Air Force Band at Glen Miller Unit in Reno. After service he played with Tex Beneke, Isham Jones, Lang Thompson, Russ Carlyle and Xavier Cugat. "I had my share of the big bands," he said.

"I wanted to go into teaching and left the road," he said. It was difficult to save money, and the kids were growing

up. "You wear yourself out on the road."

LOZANO SAID there's not much difference between the instrumentation of the local dance bands but that the bands are all very competitive. "The difference is the Latin music," he said of his band. "We carry the rhythm instruments to give it that authentic sound — bongos, conga, timbales."

All band members sing, and sometimes the band has a vocalist.

Lozano is updating Latin numbers to a Latin rock beat called "salsa," which means "sauce." "I got the idea from Perez Prado," he said. "We're changing the rhythms and sounds to the salsa beat, getting more sauce into it. It swings differently."

The Fiesta Mexicana Dancers, appearing on the same program at Schoolcraft, are a group of young people from 14-19. "They rehearse regional dances of Mexico and belong to the Knights of Columbus in Detroit," he said. "They will do the show in full costume of the different regions of Mexico."

Pop-novice crowd gets 2 new entries

Accumulated news and observations. Noted in this column a year or so ago is the developing battle between E. and J. Gallo and Coca-Cola, the latter via its Taylor of California Cellars issue. Taylor has since made gains, surpassing Almaden, and now the two giants have launched new wine labels with which to parry still further.

Both have announced wines aimed at the labrusca, pop-novice crowd. The wines will arrive here in the fall. Gallo's is Polo Brindisi, both a red and white, of low alcohol, priced at under \$3 the bottle. Coke's thrust is called Vivante, and a huge promotional campaign is under way for this in several restricted markets.

Speculation here is whether these constitute an upgrading of the Boone's Farm days, or are just another attempt to provide another alcoholic-will dimension to the public.

full of tannin and marvelous aromas. There is not much around. I found mine at a local wine shop for a dollar less than the 1979 issue.

Two more excellent issues recently available are San Martin's 1980 chablis and 1979 burgundy. At \$3.99 for 1.5 liters, these are very attractive jug wines. And don't miss Mondavi's 1981 Red, his best yet of this genre, also available in 1.5-liter bottles at about \$6 in general distribution.

Most overpriced recent releases is Wente's long-awaited 1980 Brut sparkling wine. Very crutiny. It is questionable whether this wine warrants a price tag of \$14 locally.

wine

Richard Watson

A sad note: The death of Charles Fournier has been reported. The dean of New York winemakers, he made great strides in introducing vintners grapes to the Eastern United States at Gold Seal. He made some marvelous wines and also was Konstantin Frank's sponsor in the 1950s. A great wine man,

a great man.

It seems the California wine inflation in prices has ended, finally. With shipments down nearly 4 percent from last year, it seems the message has begun to register. Nearly all issues coming out now are the same price as last year's, and some are even down a bit.

In the meantime, sales of French and Italian ordinary wines are up dramatically.

THE WINEGROWERS Association of Washington State is all glow these days. Washington's viticultural production has now grown to the point where it has surpassed New York as the No. 2 wine-growing state in the nation.

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