World Adventures With My Harp
with Alfredo Roland Ortiz

PREPARING FOR THE EXPERIENCE
The harp is an important instrument in folk and popular music throughout South America. Harps are played for festivals and celebrations by street musicians and concert artists, and in ensembles with guitars and violins. In ensembles, musicians will often play head or ear music. This is music they have learned by listening and improvising instead of reading from a printed score. The galopa, a lively dancing rhythm, and the guarania, a slow and flowing melody, are two types of Paraguayan music traditionally played on the harp and accompanied by guitars playing a syncopated strumming pattern.

Harp design, like harp music, varies from region to region but the Arpa Paraguaya, the national instrument of Paraguay, is the most popular of the Latin American harps. Handcrafted from wood and very light (10-15 pounds), the Arpa Paraguaya has a bright, powerful sound. Most South American harp players use their right hand to play the melody while their left is used to play the accompaniment on lower strings. The right plays with the fingernails while the left with fingertips or fingernails. The harp is tuned to the diatonic major scale or natural minor scale. Most harps have 32 to 36 nylon strings.

THINK ABOUT IT
Were there distinct differences, or similarities, between the music of various countries or regions?
What are those differences or similarities?

Which of the songs did you like best? Why?
What country was this song from?

DIG DEEPER
To learn more about rhythmic patterns and how to build a simple tuned instrument, check out The Music Center’s Artsource Curriculum, “Joropo Azul and Zayante, Paraguayan Folk Harp.” www.musiccenter.org/education/Teacher-Resources/Artsource-Curriculum/Available-ArtSource-Units/Alfredo-Rolando-Ortiz---Joropo-Azul--Zayante/

TRY THIS CHALLENGE
Investigate and report on another musical instrument that is often used in South American music (e.g., guitar, claves, maracas). What are its origins? Describe any changes in the instrument’s evolution or use, and discuss any distinct or special qualities that it may have.