

José Hernández is an internationally renowned mariachi musician, composer, educator, and cultural ambassador.

He is the visionary founder of several groundbreaking ensembles and organizations, including

Mariachi Sol de México de José Hernández®, Mariachi Reyna de Los Ángeles®—the first all-female mariachi show group in the U.S.—the Mariachi Heritage Society, and the very first official mariachi group of the NFL, Mariachi Rams.

Born on August 27, 1958, in Mexicali, Baja California, José comes from a proud lineage of mariachis and musicians, with family musical roots tracing back to the 1700s. He was named after his grandfather, José Hernández, a musician born in 1901 in Jalisco, Mexico, who helped lay the musical foundation that would inspire future generations.

In 1962, at the age of four, José immigrated with his family to East Los Angeles, settling in the Maravilla housing projects. The move provided greater opportunities for his father, Esteban Hernández—a professional mariachi who began performing at the famed El Granada Nightclub on 622 N Broadway in Los Angeles in 1955 with Mariachi Chapala.

From a young age, José showed an extraordinary passion for music. At just six years old, he began performing for neighbors, charging a nickel per song. He formally took up the trumpet in the fourth grade while attending North Ranchito Elementary School in Pico Rivera, California. During high school at El Rancho, he performed mariachi music alongside his brothers and joined the mariachi ensemble at Disneyland Resort in Frontierland during his junior and senior years. Between 1976 and 1981, José performed with his brothers' mariachi ensemble, Los Galleros, directed by his eldest brother, Pedro Rey. He further developed his musical talents at the Grove School of Music in Studio City, where he studied arranging and composition. His work has since been featured in over 20 Hollywood films, establishing him as a creative force in both traditional and contemporary mariachi music.

In 1981, José founded Mariachi Sol de México® with a bold vision: to expand the boundaries of mariachi music and elevate the genre beyond its traditional roots in ranchera and golden-age Mexican cinema. Under his leadership, the ensemble has become a global ambassador for mariachi, known for its musical excellence and genre-blending innovation.

Throughout his illustrious career, José has been nominated for four American Grammy Awards and nine Latin Grammys. He has collaborated with a remarkable roster of artists, including Vicente and Alejandro Fernández, Luis Miguel, Marco Antonio Solís, Lola Beltrán, Celia Cruz, Selena, Vikki Carr, Linda Ronstadt, Arturo Sandoval, José Feliciano, the City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra, and The Beach Boys.

He has received numerous accolades in both the United States and Mexico,

including the prestigious Azteca de Oro Award in Mexico City. In 2021, he was honored with the César Chávez Legacy of Service Award by the Mexican American Opportunity Foundation for his contributions to music and community empowerment, as well as the 2026 Legacy Artist Fellow from the California Arts Council.

José and Mariachi Sol de México® have performed for five U.S. Presidents—Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama. They have served as cultural ambassadors representing Mexico in countries such as North Korea and China and have sold out performances in iconic venues including New York’s Lincoln Center and the Viña del Mar International Song Festival in Chile.

In 1991, José founded the Mariachi Heritage Society, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to preserving mariachi music through education. His innovative curriculum has influenced music education in 37 U.S. states and Latin America. The Society offers after-school mariachi instruction across five school districts in Los Angeles and Orange County, beginning with the LA Music and Arts School in East L.A. Thousands of students have been inspired by José’s teaching and passion for mariachi music.

In 1994, recognizing the need for greater gender representation in mariachi, José established Mariachi Reyna de Los Ángeles. This pioneering all-female ensemble has not only earned Grammy nominations but has also been formally recognized by the Smithsonian Institution for “profoundly changing the course of women in mariachi history.”

In 2019, José once again made history by launching the Mariachi Rams—the first NFL-branded mariachi ensemble—in partnership with the Los Angeles Rams. Together with Sol de México and Reyna de Los Ángeles, this group continues to bridge cultural and musical traditions across mainstream and Hispanic audiences.

Today, José Hernández continues to perform, compose, and educate while working on his highly anticipated autobiography, which will reflect on his 50-year career and the profound impact of mariachi music on American culture and the global stage.