

**'COMADRE COACH' FREES YOUR INNER LOCA**

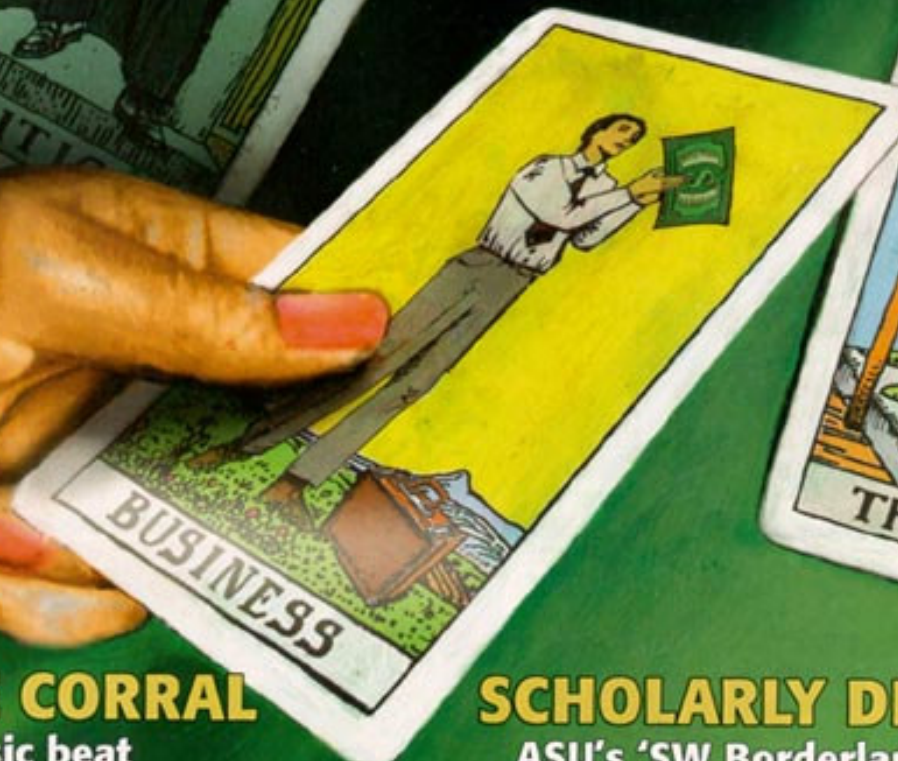
# LATINO PERSPECTIVES

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Groovin' to a classic beat

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# Flutist Joe Corral's *groovin'* to a classic beat

Symphony musician credits family's influence

BY DAVID HUBBARD

Flutist Joe Corral says every note that pours through his flute is a tribute to his father, Jose Pepe Corral.

Now in his 38th year with The Phoenix Symphony Orchestra, Corral said his father's passion for song turned into a family tradition. Growing up, everyone in the family played instruments and sang.

To this day, whether Corral is playing a classical flute passage or improvising on jazz standards—the musician has just released "Groovin' Higher"—the pleasure of playing guitars and singing Mariachi favorites as a child hasn't escaped him.

Corral was born in Camp 53 in the West Valley farming community of Litchfield Park in the late 40's. He was three when his father tired of working in the fields and moved his family to Kearny to work as a carpenter for the copper mines. The Corrals lived in what was once the town of Sonora.

"I've been into music since age five. My grandmother bought me a ukulele and I earned my first nickel as a musician playing my rendition of 'Five-foot Two, Eyes of Blue,'" Corral recalls. "My earliest music training amounted to tagging along with my dad and the mariachi guys. They worked in the mines during the day and played gigs at night.

"My dad made a special trip to Phoenix to buy me a guitar, and I picked up guitar chords and all those wonderful Mexican rhythms and voicings just by watching, listening and playing by ear."



Joe Corral, right, practices with band members, from left, Jerry Donato, John Lofton and Fred Forney.

## EARLY BEGINNINGS

Music consumed Corral, and his talent began to emerge in grade school. It was then that his dad and the school's band director concluded, or conspired, that the young prodigy should study the flute.

"I was cool with that. No one had a problem with boys playing this instrument," says Corral. "In fact, I remember several burly football players who also played flute in the band."

A few summers of hard labor in the mines as a teen further convinced Joe that a career in music was the way to go. Like most kids of his era, he went through his rock 'n' roll phase playing for The Lancens, a local band that played a mix of popular hits and Mexican favorites.

But he counts his band director, Glenn Gee as a major influence. Through Gee's encouragement and summer music camps, Corral discovered the more intricate world of jazz music and got his formal introduction to classical flute.

"He saw a lot of potential and told me that I had to be a player," Corral recalls. "He even helped me, my two brothers and a cousin form a jazz vocal group and sing like the Four Freshmen."

And all the while, he was still playing vihuela, a small round-backed guitar, with the mariachis.

Corral attended Arizona State University on a full scholarship as a performance major, and earned his position with the Phoenix Symphony during his senior year. Around the same time, he joined up with Arizona's Official Balladeer, Dolan Ellis, playing guitar and performing live shows. He cultivated his jazz flute-playing skills, with the

help of pianist Charles Lewis, through steady gigs at the old Phoenix jazz haunt, the Century Sky Room.

While all that was going on, Corral continued grooming his "classical chops," studying with renowned flutists such as Julius Baker at the New College Musical Festival in Florida; and playing on several occasions as the featured soloist at National Flute Association conventions.

## KEEP ON GROOVIN'

Now Corral has "Groovin' Higher", his first jazz CD—a summation of his life in music, to this point, he says.



Joe Corral has a reputation for being a musician's musician.

For the sessions, Corral gathered a group of his equally gifted jazz and classical colleagues at Clarke Rigsby's Tempest Recording studio in Tempe; some from the local jazz scene and a few recruits from The Phoenix Symphony. "Groovin' Higher" is available through Corral's website, [www.jocorral.com](http://www.jocorral.com).

In the CD's liner notes, trumpet virtuoso Doc Severinsen, who conducts the Phoenix Symphony Pops every year, writes, "I have known Joe for 20 years both as a jazz flutist and with The Phoenix Symphony. He does not straddle the two disciplines, but plants his beautiful talent firmly in whichever he is doing at a given time."

Together, Corral and his assembly of musicians laid down a mix of straightforward jazz arrangements to showcase every facet of Corral's musical mind and soul, playing all the instruments of the flute family from bass and alto to piccolo. Grammy-winning arranger Bob Freedman, arranged the horn and strings behind Corral's emotional and adroit improvisations.

The selections range from Dizzy Gillespie's "Groovin' High" and "Night in Tunisia" (deftly arranged for piccolo, tuba and Latin percussion) to Hoagy Carmichael's haunting ballad, "The Nearness of You", and local favorite Chuck Marohnic's contemplative "Pages of Stone" (ironically inspired by stone canyon walls outside Sonora, AZ). Charles Lewis' "Jimenez No. 2" has a quintessentially Latino groove.

"My Latino foundations are always with me and always comes through," says Corral. "As children, we were not taught to sing in order to become the best singer. We played and sang and laughed and never took ourselves too seriously."

"No one told me I had to be a 'serious' musician. No one cared if we sang out of tune. All we had to do was understand and appreciate the music. And to this day, I can't tell if what I do has ever felt like work." **E**