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**Bolivian President Evo Morales Will Announce Jesuit Mission Cultural Campaign and Baroque Festival Tomorrow**

Santa Cruz, Bolivia - March 22, 2006 - Four hundred years ago, on foot and mule, carried by the strength of their

conviction as soldiers of God, Jesuit priests penetrated deep into the Bolivian jungles to "civilize" the native people and develop a network of missions. But along with their heavy Bibles they had carefully packed violins and sheet music, hoping to overcome language barriers and enchant the indigenous tribes with the tones and harmonies of Baroque music.

Not only did the local people listen, but they also learned to play and write music, developing their own distinct Baroque style, with complex chords and eerie melodies. They adapted the Jesuits' instruments, crafting their own from local materials to create instruments such as bamboo violins. Today there are ten orchestras throughout the region - some even tour internationally - which celebrate this unique musical heritage.

This year Baroque music fans do not have to travel by foot or mule to experience the magic of the Baroque music of Bolivia. From April 27 to May 7, 2006, the eastern lowland tropics of Bolivia will come alive with Baroque music as part of the International American Renaissance and Baroque Music Festival "Misiones de Chiquitos". Forty-five groups from twenty countries will perform over one hundred concerts, most of them free of charge. "Visitors have a chance to go back in history," says Maria Parejas of Asociación Pro Arte y Cultura, the non-profit organizer of the event. "The groups will play music from the 18th century in the original churches where the pieces were written." Evo Morales, the recently elected president of Bolivia, will announce the festival season in a formal event in San Javier, Bolivia on March 23 and 24th.

Built between 1745-1775, the Mission Churches are also phenomenal examples of the creative energy that the Jesuits unleashed among the Chiquitano people. Trained to carve and paint the ornamentation of the altars, pillars, frescoes and niches, the indigenous artisans adapted the Baroque style to express their own vision and mythology. The result is an unusual mestizo aesthetic, almost unknown outside of Bolivia. The churches were named UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 1990.

Local artists have revived the original techniques from the 18th century. They carve in tropical hardwoods such as mahogany and cedar and paint with natural ochre minerals that they find locally and mix by hand. All of their designs are replicas or inspired by the carvings and paintings from the church of San Miguel and other Jesuit churches in the Chiquitanía. Salvatierra Imports has the privilege of importing and selling the carvings of the local workshops. Salvatierra Imports also supports youth music in the Chiquitanía with donations of violin strings and funds to SICOR, the Network of Choruses and Orchestras (<http://www.sicor.org.bo>). For more information and photos visit: <http://www.salvatierraimports.com> and <http://www.festivalesapac.com>.



*Local artisans continue the woodcarving techniques developed 300 years ago, mixing local lore with church tradition.*



*The mission church of San Miguel de Velasco in the Chiquitanía. Visitors can listen to original Baroque music during the upcoming festival.*