

Violin I

La Bamba

(Son Jarocho)

Traditional *Son* from Veracruz
arranged by Matthew Naughtin

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Allegro (♩ = 138)

8

Violin II

13

mp *cresc.* *f*

17

mf *mf*

22

mf

26

f

30

p

35

mp *mf* *sf*

40

pizz.

f

44

mp *sf*

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48

3 3 3

52

3 arco p

57

mp mf

62

f piu f sf

67

ff

71

3

75

3 3

79

f

83

mf mp 4

92

Viola f ff

La Bamba did not jump out of Ritchie Valens' head in the 1950's – in fact, it probably dates back to the beginning of the 19th century. It was born in southern Veracruz, eastern Oaxaca, and northern Tabasco, and is, in fact, not a “song” but a “son.” *Sones* are a musical form that is found in seven areas of Mexico (with regional variation) including Jalisco where it is the root of Mariachi music. By definition, a *Son* must be in 6/4 time, have an unlimited number of verses (each one of which is a complete thought unto itself), and is played for dancing. However, the *Son Jarocho* (Jarocho designates someone or something from southern Veracruz) is the only form that has both 6/4 and 4/4 time, and *La Bamba* belongs to this genre. While *La Bamba* is the most famous of the *Sones Jarochos*, there are at least 100 others.

As for the *coplas* (verses), *La Bamba* has hundreds – some say over a thousand – but it's fruitless to count them because new ones are created almost every time it is performed. Part of the *Son* tradition is the creating of verses by *cantadores* (singers) which involves adlibbing on the spot. These talented wordsmiths will take a situation and sing messages, jokes, or insults to the dancers, observers, and other musicians. It can be great fun, but also dangerous if someone decides to take offence. In the countryside where this music is still vital and undiluted, this type of play has led to many a fistfight and the occasional use of machetes.

(from *LA BAMBÁ EXPLAINED, Or The Music of Veracruz* by Janice Carraher)