

NAYELLI PEÑA

In November of 2022, **Nayelli Peña** won the top prize in the largest, and most competitive live mariachi vocal competition in the nation and was named **National Grand Champion** at the 28th Annual Mariachi Extravaganza. Her path toward championship was years in the making, which began in the small South Texas town of Grulla in Starr County – a hotbed for award-winning mariachi groups and vocalists.

Nayelli comes from a long line of family musicians where her father, grandfather and uncle played *Tejano* music. She grew up singing *corridos* and *rancheras* with her father and spent much of her time at her family’s home in Nuevo León, Mexico. Nayelli’s experience of growing up on the border contributed to her appreciation of cultures in both the U.S. and Mexico. “Grulla is so close to Mexico where my grandparents lived, so to me, the people and the cultures are very similar,” she says.

Nayelli began participating in mariachi competitions at the tender age of 13. She won first place in the Mariachi Extravaganza National Vocal Competition middle school category in San Antonio 2018, and for the next nine years, was determined to return for the Grand Champion title. She competed again in 2019 and 2021 before winning top prize as a Grulla High School senior in 2022.

Since then, Nayelli opened for Mariachi Nuevo Tecalitlán in concert at the Lila Cockrell Theater in San Antonio and has been a featured artist at the Mariachi Festival at the Wortham Center’s Brown Theater in Houston. In October, Nayelli performed with the Amarillo Symphony and Trio Los Reyes in a stunning show celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month. Nayelli was awarded a \$5,000 scholarship and currently attends the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in Edinburg, where she studies music.

Nayelli has studied throughout the years with mariachi and vocal instructors that have included Jose Rangel, Diana Solis and Alfonso Rodriguez. This year, she had the opportunity to study with the International Opera Singer Octavio Moreno who says “Nayelli’s voice is pure and honest. She has great clarity and presence that is embellished by the understanding of the poetry and the diligence of her artistic quality. Nayelli is a star in the making!”