

# LYDIA MENDOZA

La Alondra De La Frontera - LIVE! 

1. LA FERIA DE LAS FLORES (Chucho Monge)
2. GITANA (DAR)
3. MAL HOMBRE (PD - arr. by Lydia Mendoza)
4. CELOSA (PD)
5. MUÑEQUITA LINDA (DAR)
6. EL MUNDO ENGAÑOSO (PD)
7. AMOR DE MADRE (PD)
8. EL GORIONCILLO PECHO AMARILLO (DAR)
9. TORERO (PD)
10. POR TI, AY! POR TI (DAR)
11. ADELITA (PD)
12. PERO AY QUE TRISTE (PD arr. by Lydia Mendoza)
13. TANGO NEGRO (Belisario De Jesus Garcia)
14. LA CAMA DE PIEDRA (Cuco Sanchez)
15. FLORES NEGRAS (bolero) (Sergio DeKarlo)
16. POPURRI: PAJARITO BARANQUEÑO/ OJOS DE PANCHAL/ ETC.



LYDIA MENDOZA  
vocals, and 12 string guitar



All selections previously  
unreleased.

Recorded by Chris Strachwitz  
on April 10, 1982, at Wheeler  
Auditorium - UC Berkeley,  
California, using a Nagra IV-S  
with two Neuman microphones.

The songs on this CD are  
presented in the order Lydia  
sang them.

Produced by Chris Strachwitz  
Cover photo courtesy  
Lydia Mendoza

Graphic design by  
Morgan Dodge

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© C. Strachwitz

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☼ La Alonda De La Frontera - LIVE! ☾

Lydia Mendoza has been the most enduring and widely loved female singer-guitarist in the Mexican music tradition on both sides of the border. Her remarkable career has spanned well over half a century. She can truly be considered a pioneer in the field of Mexican-American popular music, having made her first recordings in March of 1928 playing mandolin with her family in a San Antonio hotel room which had been turned into a make-shift recording studio. However it was her first solo performances recorded in 1934, especially her rendition of "Mal Hombre", which quickly launched her to stardom, first in the Mexican-American community and within a few years throughout the Spanish speaking western hemisphere. She became the first super star in the field

of Mexican-American music at a time when the business of vernacular music was still in its infancy. As an artist, she left behind a generation of theatrically trained performers and emerged as a self-accompanied, self-taught singer-guitarist of immense vitality and charisma. While an accomplished interpreter of traditional Mexican song, Lydia was also able to assimilate the latest commercial music hits emanating via radio from Mexico City (Agustin Lara, Gonzalo Curiel, Maria Grever, etc.) and transform what she heard (often large orchestras backing smooth *bolero* singers) into a vernacular style all her own. With only her voice and her twelve string guitar Lydia bridged the gap between rural and urban styles, and she was one of the first to do so. This placed her in a unique position in the world





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of Mexican popular music at that time: her amazing versatility, as well as the consistency and sincerity of her style, won her a large and devoted following throughout the Spanish speaking Americas.

Unfortunately, through most of her early career Lydia was only marginally able to take advantage of her rapidly increasing fame and reputation. Neither young Lydia nor her family were sufficiently informed or properly advised on how to secure royalties on record sales. Nor were there agents or managers looking out for her interests. A flat fee per record instead of possible future royalties sounded good to her father in 1934 when the Great Depression was still in full swing. Money was hard to come by. By the 1940s Lydia wanted to raise her family and during World War II , rationing became an added obstacle to touring. Lydia's stamina, perseverance, and love for her music helped her to survive as a singer during those difficult times.

Although born in Houston, Lydia today lives in retirement in San Antonio, Texas. Early in her career she became known as "La Alondra De La Frontera" (the lark of the border) and "La Cancionera De Los Pobres" (the songstress of the poor) and over the years she made hundreds of recordings and thousands of personal appearances. Her best performances, including the concert heard on this CD, were made when Lydia's voice was accompanied only by the wonderfully rich sound of her 12 string guitar. The selections heard during this concert reflect the remarkably wide range of material which Lydia had at her instant command: songs from Argentina, Cuba, Colombia, and Spain, intermingled with her vast repertoire of Mexican *rancheras*, *corridos*, *boleros*, *huapangos* and *canciones* along with several of her own compositions. You can hear Lydia respond to the requests from the audience and seldom is she unable to deliver. I have seen and heard





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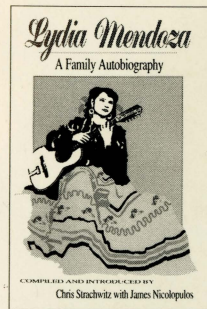
Lydia Mendoza in front of various audiences, from small cantinas to major concert halls, and in each case she was able to render requests whether the audience was familiar with her repertoire or not. In all my years of recording vernacular folk artists I can not recall ever meeting another singer with such an incredibly large and varied repertoire in her head and at her instant command!

As a solo female singer playing her own 12 string guitar accompaniment, Lydia has held a totally unique place in the world of Mexican and Mexican-American popular music. Her contribution to America's musical heritage and history has not gone unrecognized. She has amassed hundreds of awards and honors including the prestigious National Heritage Fellowship presented to her in 1982 by the National Endowment for the Arts. In 1977 Lydia performed at President Carter's inauguration and in 1991 she was inducted into the

Tejano Music and Conjunto Music Halls of Fame. In 1999 Lydia Mendoza received the highest national award given to a performer: the National Medal of the Arts, presented to her in person by President Clinton at the White House in Washington, D.C.

Lydia Mendoza's life story and that of her other siblings along with a complete discography (a listing of all her recordings) can be found in the book: **Lydia Mendoza - A Family Autobiography**, compiled by Chris Strachwitz with James Nicolopoulos (Arte Publico Press, Houston, Texas 1993, 410 pages). Lydia can also be seen briefly in the video documentary film about Texas-Mexican border music: **Chulas Fronteras** by Les Blank & Chris Strachwitz (You can order both the book and the video as well as other recordings by Lydia from Arhoolie Productions.

Chris Strachwitz with  
assistance from Zac Salem - 2001



The Family's story as told to the authors. The book includes a comprehensive discography listing all recordings made by members of the family.

410 pages.

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Book available from Arhoolie Records.

\$30.00 per hardback  
(plus postage and handling)

Other recordings available by **LYDIA MENDOZA** and the **MENDOZA FAMILY**:

ARHOOLIE CD 3012: **Lydia Mendoza** "LA GLORIA DE TEXAS" (recorded in 1979)

ARHOOLIE CD 392: **Lydia Mendoza** "FIRST QUEEN OF TEJANO MUSIC" (recorded in the 1950s & 60s)

ARHOOLIE/Folklyric CD 7002: **Lydia Mendoza** "MAL HOMBRE" (original recordings from the late 1920s and 30s)

ARHOOLIE/Folklyric CD 7008: **Lydia Mendoza** "VIDA MIA" (1934-1939)

ARHOOLIE CD/C 341: "TEJANO ROOTS," Includes: "Feliz Sin Ti" & "Tu Destino" by Lydia and "Tres Consejos" by Las Hermanas Mendoza.

ARHOOLIE CD/C 343: "THE WOMEN," Includes: "Aunque Me Odies" & "Amor Bonito" by Lydia and "Puentes Quemados" by Las Hermanas Mendoza.

ARHOOLIE CD/C 361: **NARCISO MARTINEZ**, Includes: "Medalla De Dios" & "Si Fue Por Eso" by Lydia and "Arráncame El Corazón" by Las Hermanas Mendoza.

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La Alondra De La Frontera - LIVE! In Concert

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