

TEATRO ZARAGO.



LYDIA MENDOZA

**"Teatro Mason"**  
127 SOUTH BROADWAY  
EMPRESA FRANCISCO FOUCÉ  
**HOY 2 TANDAS HOY**  
A LAS 7:00 Y 9:30 P. M.  
EL CLAMOROSO EXITO ARTISTICO DE LA TEMPORADA  
—PRESENTACION DE LA ARTISTA QUE LOS MEXICANOS  
CONOCIAN A TRAVES DE SUS DISCOS— que asiaban  
oir y conocer en Persona



# LYDIA MENDOZA!

La Campesina Grabadora de Discos Mexicanos  
Y SU CIA. DE REVISTAS

Con un ATRACTIVO PROGRAMA—en el que participa también el grupo de artistas locales de la

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**"LA PIZCA DE LA UVA"**

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JULIA MONTOYA — CARMELA PEÑA — DANIEL F. REA — RAMON MUÑOZ  
PRESENTACION EN UN GRAN FIN DE FIESTA DE

**LYDIA MENDOZA**

Y su propia COMPANIA DE REVISTAS MEXICANAS en la que figuran MARIA DE JESUS, gen  
til damita joven—LEONOR y MARY, duetistas de guitarra—TINA y MANON, pareja de baile—  
ANTONIO MONTES, tanguista de moda y el CUARTETO MENDOZA, cancioneros populares.

MAESTRO DE CEREMONIAS **CARLOS "DRACULA" VILLARIAS**

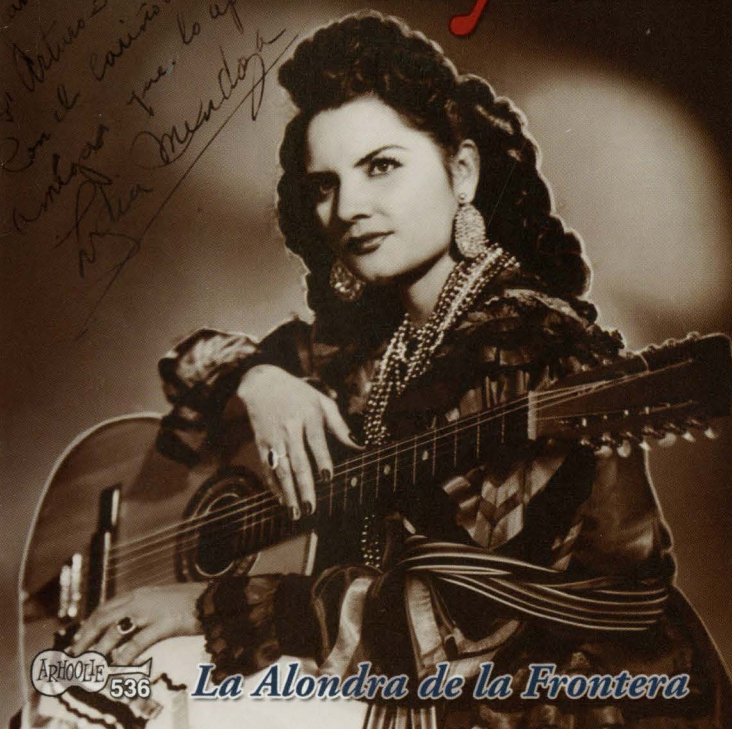
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The **BEST** of **Lydia**

*una de las mejores artistas de México  
con el cariño de sus  
amigos que la apasionan  
Lydia Mendoza*



MENDOZA

ARHOLLE 536

*La Alondra de la Frontera*



# The Best of Lydia Mendoza

## 1. MAL HOMBRE (Canción Tango)

1934 - Lydia and her 12 string guitar  
(PD - arr. by Lydia Mendoza/SAMP)

## 2. TÚ DIRÁS (Canción)

1938 - Lydia and her 12 string guitar; Maria Mendoza - mandolin - with unknown string bass  
(Pedro Galindo/Peer International)

## 3. ADIÓS MUCHACHOS (Canción Tango)

1937 - Lydia and her 12 string guitar  
(Julio Sanders - Cesar Verdani)

## 4. DELGADINA (Corrido)

1937 - The Mendoza Family: Leonor Mendoza - vocal & guitar; Lydia Mendoza - vocal and violin; Maria Mendoza - vocal and mandolin; Francisco Mendoza - vocal and pandero. (PD)

## 5. PIENSA EN MÍ (Bolero)

1936 - Lydia and her 12 string guitar  
(PD - arr: Lydia Mendoza/ Tradition Music Co./ Bug Music)

## 6. SE MURIÓ LA CUCARACHA (Canción Polka)

1938 - Lydia - vocal and 12 string guitar; probably Maria Mendoza - vocal and mandolin; unknown string bass.  
(PD - arr: Mendoza/Tradition Music Co./Bug Music)

## 7. MEDALLA DE DIOS (Vals Ranchera)

1954 - Lydia with Narciso Martinez (accordion) y su conjunto  
(Aurelia Garcia B.)

## 8. CONTESTACIÓN A "AMOR QUE MALO ERES" (Bolero)

1952 - Lydia and her 12 string guitar; Enrique Rodriguez - requinto.  
(Marquette Morante)

## 9. AUNQUE ME ODIES (Canción)

1954 - Lydia with Tony De La Rosa (accordion) y su conjunto  
(Jose Morante/SAMP)

## 10. ENREDASTE MI VIDA (Ranchera)

1964 - Lydia with Gilberto Lopez (accordion) y su conjunto  
(PD - arr: Lydia Mendoza/Tradition Music Co./ Bug Music)

## 11. SI FUE POR ESO (Bolero)

1954 - Lydia with Narciso Martinez (accordion) y su conjunto  
(Zuniga - Sandoval/ Peer International)

## 12. NO ES CULPA MIA (Vals Ranchera)

1979 - Lydia and her 12 string guitar  
(PD - arr: Lydia Mendoza/Tradition Music Co./ Bug Music)

## 13. BESANDO LA CRUZ (Canción)

1979 - Lydia and her 12 string guitar  
(PD - arr: Lydia Mendoza/Tradition Music Co./ Bug Music)

## 14. LUIS PULIDO (Corrido)

1979 - Lydia and her 12 string guitar  
(PD - arr: Lydia Mendoza/Tradition Music Co./ Bug Music)

## 15. AMOR BONITO (Ranchera)

1979 - Lydia and her 12 string guitar  
(Lydia Mendoza/SAMP)

## 16. FLORES NEGRAS (Bolero)

1982 - Lydia and her 12 string guitar  
(Sergio DeKarlo/Peer International)

## 17. PERO AY QUÉ TRISTE (Canción)

1982 - Lydia and her 12 string guitar  
(PD - arr: Lydia Mendoza/SAMP)

## CREDITS:

**Cover photo** courtesy Lydia's daughter, Yolanda Hernandez Mendoza.

**Uncredited photos** courtesy Lydia Mendoza and family.

**Edited by** Chris Strachwitz with suggestions from the family.

**Sound restoration of Adiós Muchachos by** Tom Diamant.

## Song texts transcribed and translated by

Antonio Cuellar, Lucina Rodriguez, and Haley Ausserer, except transcriptions found on earlier Arhoolie releases which were done by Zack and Juanita Salem, Guillermo Hernandez, and Yolanda Zepeda.

**Graphic design by** Morgan Dodge.

**Selections** # 1, 2, & 4 from Arhoolie CD 7002; # 3 previously unavailable; # 5 from CD 7001; # 6 from CD 7018; # 7 & 11 from CD 361; # 8 & 10 from CD 392; # 9 from CD 343; # 12, 13, 14, & 15 from CD 3012; # 16 & 17 from CD 490.

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# LYDIA MENDOZA



photo © C. Strachwitz

**L**YDIA MENDOZA began recording with her family in 1928, rising to fame across the US Southwest in the 1930s after the release of “Mal Hombre”, her first and biggest hit. Her remarkable music and strong character established Mendoza as the Queen of Tejano (as Texas Mexican music has been called) and the first Mexican-American popular culture icon. Mendoza’s achievements are legion: she would entertain and inspire generations of Latinas and Latinos across North and South America before finally achieving wider fame. Presidents Carter and Clinton would both celebrate her achievements, and chroniclers of American music history now acknowledge her as a pioneer. Indeed, the fact that Mendoza always sang in Spanish meant she never received her full due. Her talent in taking an oral music and shaping it into a definite 20th Century sound and style ranks

her alongside Louis Armstrong (jazz), Jimmie Rodgers (country) and Bessie Smith (blues).

Lydia Mendoza was born in Houston, Texas to a Mexican family who had fled the chaos of the Mexican Revolution. Her grandmother and mother Leonor were both musical, and from early childhood Lydia and her siblings were taught a variety of musical instruments. This early training was anything but a luxury. The Mendozas soon found themselves impoverished migrant workers with the family’s patriarch, Francisco Mendoza, disillusioned by life’s disappointments and the discrimination he experienced in the US. He turned to drink, which forced his children to earn money by playing music on the streets. Lydia never went to school or enjoyed a normal childhood, instead her early prowess at singing and playing the 12-string guitar designated her the family’s



main source of income even before adolescence. The Mendozas regularly moved between Texas and the northern Mexican city of Monterrey, with Francisco relentlessly changing jobs and cities.

In 1927 the family dedicated themselves to music, playing for tips along the Rio Grande Valley. A small 1928 advertisement in *La Prensa*, the region's popular local paper, announced that Okeh Records was searching for new talent and holding auditions in San Antonio. Francisco, daily studying *La Prensa*, convinced a friend with a car to drive the family to San Antonio where they auditioned and were subsequently paid 140 dollars to record twenty songs. Before the 78s were pressed and released the family left for Michigan, on a contract to do farm work. Francisco found this work not to his liking, and instead got the family playing on Detroit city streets, at restaurants,

and in migrant worker camps. In 1930 the family returned to San Antonio, where they became fixtures in the city's old public market. It was here in 1931 that Manuel J. Cortez, a broadcaster who fronted San Antonio's only daily Spanish language radio program, heard Lydia sing and invited her to guest on his program. Leonor was initially reluctant as this meant giving up valuable earning time in the plaza, but Lydia insisted. She performed two songs and the phone lines lit up. Cortez offered her a regular spot but Leonor insisted she be paid to perform. An advertising sponsor was found, and Lydia began performing two songs every night for \$3.50 a week.

"With that three-fifty we felt like millionaires," recalled Lydia. "Now at least we could be sure of paying the rent. Life was nothing but working in order to live. That is the reason I had so little gaiety in my youth, just

bitterness and sadness."

As Lydia's popularity rose, Cortez insisted she stop singing in the Plaza, booking her and the family group into restaurants, tent shows and talent contests (which Lydia easily won). This helped Lydia reach a wider public, yet Cortez kept the bulk of the proceeds, paying the Mendozas only a basic stipend.

In the spring of 1934 Blue Bird Records came to San Antonio and began auditioning local talent. At Lydia's insistence the family recorded six songs, followed by Lydia making her solo debut on six more selections. Two months later a 78 featuring "Mal Hombre" (Cold-Hearted Man) was released and immediately became a huge hit across the Southwest's Mexican communities. Blue Bird offered to sign Lydia to a contract guaranteeing royalties but Francisco, unfamiliar with the workings of the music industry, insisted she receive a





Top: (l-r) Juanita and Manuel.  
Bottom: (l-r) Lydia and Maria. 1941

payment of \$40 for every two songs. Lydia recorded hit after hit, her strong voice and fluid guitar playing establishing her as a unique artist.

In 1935 she married Juan Alvarado, a cobbler who became smitten with Lydia as she sang in the Plaza. Later that year the couple was horrified to receive a demand for \$ 30,000 from the IRS (Internal Revenue Service). Blue Bird dealt with the tax authorities, and it wouldn't be until decades later that the family realized Lydia had missed out on hundreds of thousands of dollars in royalties. Although hit records made Lydia a popular attraction, performing was limited at first mainly to tents, schools or church halls. In spite of her ever growing popularity, discrimination against Mexicans was strong, even among theatre owners and with many motels and restaurants bearing signs stating "No Dogs or Mexicans Allowed". The family overcame this

by staying in Catholic churches and taking cooking equipment with them. Poor roads and Lydia's husband's wild driving meant accidents were frequent. Lydia checked out of a hospital after one crash to play a concert, and another wreck claimed the life of her sister Panchita.

Lydia was by now the most famous Mexican-American woman alive, her music so valued by her people that they nicknamed her *La Alondra de la Frontera* (The Meadowlark of the Border) and *La Cancionera de los Pobres* (The Songstress of the Poor).

Lydia retired over the war years – gasoline and tires were rationed making touring very limited – to raise her three daughters. In 1947 Lydia was persuaded to go on the road again. Much to her surprise she was still capable of packing venues. In Los Angeles, her return was such an event that thousands of Chicanos mobbed the theatre, and the police

and fire brigade were called to clear the street. She subsequently returned to recording, first with just her 12 string guitar but by the mid 1950s frequently backed by orchestras. This created a fuller, richer Tejano sound that appealed to the developing tastes of the US's burgeoning Spanish-speaking population.

In 1950 a Mexican promoter offered Lydia \$5000 for just two concerts in Chihuahua – her debut Mexican performances found her welcomed as a superstar and playing to 20,000 people a night. That welcome in the North, however, did not extend to the rest of Mexico where promoters simply were not used to a woman singer appearing with only her guitar! In Mexico City they hired her to be accompanied by a mariachi but they didn't even know her songs. When the public clamored for just Lydia, she was finally allowed to finish the concert by herself. Although Lydia



toured and recorded on occasions in Mexico, she was treated as a “pocha” by most music executives. Later in her career, Lydia was invited to appear in Colombia by fans and was treated like royalty. Her success there persuaded Falcon Records of McAllen, Texas to have Lydia record an album of purely Colombian songs.

Lydia’s husband Juan Alvarado died in 1961. While working a theatre in Denver she met Fred Martinez, a Mexican-American businessman who became her second husband and the subject of one of her most famous songs, “Amor Bonito”. In the 1970s, San Francisco Bay Area roots music label Arhoolie Records began issuing albums of Lydia’s pioneering recordings, introducing her to a younger audience and leading to appearances at folk festivals and employment as an oral music teacher at Fresno State University. Les Blank and Chris Strachwitz’s acclaimed

1976 documentary feature “Chulas Fronteras” focused on Texas Mexican border culture and featured Lydia singing and cooking (plenty of chilies with everything!).

Anglo America, so long oblivious to the first Mexican-American icon, began offering recognition. Lydia was invited to sing at President Carter’s 1977 inauguration, and in 1982 became the first Texan to receive a National Endowment for the Arts Heritage Fellowship. In 1999 she received the National Medal of Arts at a White House ceremony, where she shared the stage with Aretha Franklin, Norman Lear, Michael Graves and George Segal. Then President Bill Clinton said “Lydia learned much from the oral tradition of Mexican music that her mother and grandmother shared with her. In turn, she shared it with the world, becoming the first rural American woman performer to garner a large

following throughout Latin America.” Lydia received many other awards, and her performing costumes are now on display in The Smithsonian Gallery in San Antonio. She continued recording and touring into the 1980s, releasing a “Live” album recorded at a concert in Berkeley, Ca. and “La Gloria De Texas”, a superb album recorded by Chris Strachwitz in her daughter’s kitchen! In 1993 *Lydia Mendoza: A Family Autobiography* was published. Comic artist Robert Crumb drew Lydia and included her on his 2003 Hot Women compilation CD.

It is estimated that Lydia recorded over 800 songs and released close to 50 albums. A stroke in 1988 curtailed her ability to play guitar, yet when I traveled to San Antonio to interview her in 2005 I found an articulate, proud individual who, although having lived for nearly ninety years in the USA, had never concerned herself with learning to speak English.



photo © C. Strachwitz

Lydia Mendoza, singer-songwriter, born May 21, 1916; died December 20, 2007. Her husband and two of her daughters predeceased her. She is survived by her daughter Yolanda, 13 grandchildren, 12 great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild.

— Garth Cartwright (with editing by Chris Strachwitz) from his obituary which appeared in Britain’s *The Guardian*, December 2007



## Editor's Note:

**T**HE HAUNTING, LILTING SOUNDS of rural Texas-Mexican border music invaded my ears while in high school in California. I was especially taken by the sound of the piercing, somewhat nasal, vocal duets which were not unlike the best Anglo hillbilly singers I was also enjoying on the radio. As a record collector, I soon discovered that on early discs from the 20s and 30s the singers were usually accompanied by only two guitars. By the early 1950s, however, a totally unique and more powerful sound of an accordion along with a pumping string bass was backing many singers mainly on recordings from Texas. I also enjoyed singers who were accompanied by the delightful string band sound of Mariachis with just one trumpet player who backed the voices like a rural jazz musician! But those records were mostly from Mexico.

The vocal duet of Las Hermanas Mendoza became one of my favorites, even though the two sisters did not use an accordion, but a commanding 12 string guitarist. I soon discovered that Lydia Mendoza was a third sister who played that 12 string! Lydia, although she obviously had a beautiful voice, sounded almost too sophisticated to my then jaded and rural music-oriented ears! There were no books about this music, and in trying to discover its history I talked to the people and musicians who lived it and gleaned whatever information was written on the 78 rpm record labels. Slowly my knowledge improved and in the process I became more accepting and appreciative of the many voices, styles and sounds of this incredibly poetic, diverse and varied regional music.

In the 1970s I decided to make



a documentary film with Les Blank about the history of this music, which seemed to be totally neglected by my fellow record collectors and music friends. My first objective was to document the main historical figures of the genre still active and performing, hoping to focus the film on their music and careers. That's why we started in Houston, Texas, to meet with Lydia Mendoza. I knew she was the most important Tejana singer of the past forty years, and I quickly became fascinated by her as she welcomed us into her home and took us along to film her at several appearances. Lydia was a magnificent singer and with her 12 string guitar was a humble but charismatic performer. We also heard that all of her siblings were still living in San Antonio but sisters Maria and Juanita were no longer singing as a duet. After visiting with Lydia Mendoza, we went to San Benito to document

the most important accordionist who set the pace for all those to follow: Narciso Martinez, "El Huracán del Valle". The resulting film, "Chulas Fronteras" (Brazos Films) eventually took a rather different direction and the importance and significance of the pioneers became understated and overshadowed by the powerful present day experience of this incredibly vibrant culture. On the DVD (which includes both films, "Chulas Fronteras" and "Del Mero Corazon") we have added 30 minutes in which editor Maureen Gosling presents some belated visual recognition of several pioneering musicians and Lydia is featured singing several more songs.

Since our first meeting I visited Lydia Mendoza many times, recorded her for Arhoolie Records on two occasions, and with the help of Jaime Nicolopulos, produced the book *Lydia Mendoza – A Family*



Lydia recording at the Texas Hotel in San Antonio, TX, October 1936 with Eli Oberstein supervising. In the background seated: left, mother Leonor Mendoza and right, probably sister Panchita.



# "Teatro Mason"

127 SOUTH BROADWAY

EMPRESA FRANCISCO FOUCÉ

## HOY 2 TANDAS HOY

A LAS 7:00 y

9:30 P. M.

Siguen los éxitos de la genial  
cancionera y guitarrista - Cam-  
peona Grabadora de Discos Me-  
xicanos



# LYDIA MENDOZA!

## Y SU CIA. DE REVISTAS

Reforzado el Espectáculo con el grupo de artistas locales de la

## Compañía "ARTE MEXICANO"

En cual llevará a la escena

## "EL DRAMA DE LA BOTICA"

— Y en un —

## GRAN FIN DE FIESTA

Presentación de LYDIA MENDOZA y su Compañía de Revistas  
en la que figuran MARIA DE JESUS, gentil damita joven -  
LEONOR y MARY, duetistas de guitarra - TINA y MANON,  
pareja de baile - ANTONIO MONTES, tanguista de moda y el  
CUARTETO MENDOZA, cancioneros populares.

Maestro de Ceremonias:

CARLOS "DRACULA" VILLARIAS

Temporada Relámpago — Precios Populares

*Autobiography* (Arte Publico Press -  
available from [www.arhoolie.com](http://www.arhoolie.com)).

For this book we interviewed not only Lydia but her brothers, sisters, other family members, record producers, theatre owners and various other important people in her life. On several occasions we had the pleasure of Lydia joining us when we showed the final film in Texas, where many old friends would come up to greet her. Lydia also joined us once the book was published and autographed copies for her legions of fans.

My favorite recording of Lydia took place in San Antonio in May of 1979, when I had been informed that she was to give a concert at the Hemisphere Plaza. She gave a superb but fairly short performance. Experience had taught me that elderly musicians often take considerable time to get really warmed up. At the end of the show I greeted and congratulated Lydia and asked her if

she would mind making a recording for me before returning home to Houston. She told me that she was actually staying the night with her daughter in San Antonio and I was welcome to bring my equipment to the house. As soon as I had set up my Nagra recorder and two microphones in the kitchen, Lydia sang one superb song after another - she never stopped and never did a second take! It was as if she was simply continuing the concert - although for just me and the microphones! Heeding to her wishes, the relatives stayed quietly in the living room! The result was the album "La Gloria de Texas" (Arhoolie CD 3012).

The second chance for me to record this great lady came in 1982 when Lydia Mendoza was touring the West Coast and booked to play at Wheeler Auditorium on the University of California campus here in Berkeley. She performed without

a PA system and my two mikes captured her pure artistry along with the reaction of the enthusiastic crowd of mostly young Chicano students. I didn't publish the results until 2001 when the best songs finally appeared on "Lydia Mendoza - Live! In Concert" (Arhoolie CD 490).

I visited Lydia for the last time in May of 2007 at the rest home where she had been living since suffering a stroke. She was alert and her mind was clear and full of memories. To our mutual embarrassment we got the help of her roommate's relative to translate since my Spanish is miniscule and Lydia, as usual, was too proud to attempt to speak to me in her broken English! Adiós Lydia! We will all miss you but your legacy will live on thanks to the wonders of recording.

— Chris Strachwitz, Feb. 2008

## The Songs:

**LYDIA'S REPERTOIRE:** Unlike today's one hit wonders of the pop world, Lydia was a true songstress with probably over 1000 songs solidly fixed in her head and almost always deeply felt. Although she composed very few originals, Lydia throughout her long recording and performing career constantly learned new songs which appealed to her. During her early life Lydia apparently focused mainly on romantic songs but with a harsh edge that reflected her sadness. Lydia's life was not unlike that of many of her listeners for whom each song became a brief poetic respite from the drudgery of daily life.

During the 1930s most phonograph records were bought by the general public for home enjoyment. From the late 30s on, juke boxes became major

consumers of records as well as major broadcasters of vernacular and regional music. Radio only slowly accepted Mexican music on its airwaves and then mostly the polite and genteel kind. As juke boxes became more and more prolific in the 1940s, 50s and 60s, and could hold more and more discs, they began to replace live music in the cantinas and beer joints. During the post-World War II period "honky-tonk" culture came to the forefront and demanded a new kind of song. These songs often reflected the frustrations of men drinking alone in bars, complaining about ungrateful or unfaithful women. During that period many women duets rose to fame singing such material from a man's point of view! Lydia Mendoza, like her sisters, recorded her share of such songs, but would always put deep emotion into







Lydia's first welcome outside the city of Chihuahua, 1950.

each performance.

If you look at Lydia's discography, which you will find at the end of the book *Lydia Mendoza – A Family Autobiography*, you will be amazed by the variety of Spanish language songs she mastered during her lifetime of performing. They range from early tangos, such as “Mal Hombre” which

probably had its origins in the red light districts of urban Argentina, to boleros, canciones, rancheras, corridos, danzas, etc. Her repertoire came from her family, her mother and grandmother, from the pens of famous composers as well as unknowns, and also included many songs written by local Tejano poets.

## MAL HOMBRE

Era yo una chiquilla todavía  
cuando tu casualmente me encontraste  
y a merced a tus artes de mundano  
de mí honra el perfume te llevaste.

Luego hiciste conmigo lo que todos  
los que son como tú con las mujeres,  
por lo tanto no extrañes que yo ahora  
en tu cara te diga lo que eres.

Mal hombre,  
tan ruin es tu alma que no tiene nombre,  
eres un canalla, eres un malvado,  
eres un mal hombre.

A mi triste destino abandonada  
entablé fiera lucha con la vida,  
ella recia y cruel me torturaba  
yo más débil al fin caí vencida.

Tú supiste a tiempo mi derrota,  
mi espantoso calvario conociste,  
te dijeron algunos –Ve a salvarle  
y probando quien eres te reíste.

Poco tiempo después en el arroyo  
Entre sombras mi vida defendía  
Una noche con otra tú pasaste  
Y al mirarme sentí que te decía

Quién es esa mujer tu la conoces?  
Y a la vez respondiste una cualquiera  
Al oír de tus labios adulteraje  
Demostrabas también lo que tú eras.  
Mal hombre...

## COLD-HEARTED MAN

1

I was but a young girl  
when, by chance, you found me  
and with your worldly charm  
you crushed the flower of my innocence.

Then you treated me like all men  
of your kind treat women,  
so don't be surprised now that I tell you  
to your face what you really are.

Cold-hearted man  
your soul is so vile it has no name  
you are despicable, you are evil,  
you are a cold-hearted man.

Abandoned to a sad fate,  
my life became a fierce struggle  
suffering the harshness and cruelty of the world  
I was weak and was defeated.

In time you learned of my downfall  
how my life had become a road to hell  
our friends advised you, “You can help her,”  
but being who you are, you just laughed.

Shortly after in the stream  
Among shadows I defended my life  
You slept with another woman  
And when she saw me I sensed that she asked you

Who is that woman? Do you know her?  
And looking at me you answered she's a nobody  
and when I heard from your lips, adultery  
you demonstrated again the kind of person you are.  
Cold-hearted man...

## TÚ DIRÁS YOU WILL SAY

Tú dirás, tú dirás, tú nomás  
si a mi amor le correspondes,  
tú dirás, tú dirás, tú nomás  
y, si no, pa' que te escondes.

Tú dirás, tú dirás, tú nomás  
si mi amor te da de alazo  
y si no te hago caso  
y si no te hago caso  
Ay, pos, tú dirás.

Pero ya me estoy desesperando,  
no me importa que tú me echés a volar;  
si no me quieres nomás por ese Pancho,  
entonces, ay, pos, tú dirás.

You will say, only you can say,  
if my love is to be yours,  
you will say, only you can say,  
but if it's no, why do you hide it?

You will say, only you can say,  
if my love does it for you,  
but, if I don't go after you,  
but, if I don't go after you,  
oh, well, what do you say?

But I'm losing my patience,  
I don't care if you cut me loose;  
if you don't want me because of that Pancho,  
then, oh, well, what do you say?

## ADIÓS MUCHACHOS

Adiós, muchachos, compañeros de mi vida  
barra querida de aquellos tiempos.  
Me toca a mí hoy emprender mi retirada,  
debo alejarme de mi buena muchachada.

Adiós, muchachos. Ya me voy y me resigno.  
Contra el destino nadie la talla,  
se terminaron para mí todas las barras.  
Mi cuerpo enfermo no resiste más.

## GOODBYE BOYS

Goodbye, boys, my life companions  
Beloved gang of days gone by  
It's my turn today to start my retreat  
I must leave behind the childish pranks

Goodbye, boys, I am leaving and I resign myself  
No one can resist destiny  
My days in the bars have ended  
My sick body cannot take it anymore



(l-r) Narciso Martinez, Lydia and Valerio Longoria.

photo © C. Strachwitz

Acuden a mi mente recuerdos de otros tiempos  
De los bellos momentos que antaño disfruté  
Cerquita de mi madre, santa viejita, Y de mi  
noviecita que tanto idolatré  
¿Se acuerdan que era hermosa?  
más bella que una rosa  
y que ebrio yo de amores le di mi corazón  
más el Señor, celoso de sus encantos,  
hundiéndome en el llanto se la llevó?

Memories of past times come to my mind  
Of the beautiful moments that I enjoyed long ago  
Near my mother, dear old lady  
And the girlfriend who I idolized  
Do you remember how beautiful she was?  
More beautiful than a rose  
And that, drunk with love, I gave her my heart?  
But, the Lord, jealous of her charm,  
Leaving me deep in tears, took her away from me.



Delgadina se paseaba  
en su sala bien cuadrada  
con su manto de hilo de oro  
que en su pecho le brillaba.

-Levántate, Delgadina,  
ponte tu vestido blanco  
porque nos vamos a misa  
al estado de Durango.

Cuando salieron de misa  
su papá le platicaba:  
-Delgadina, hija mía,  
yo te quiero para dama.

-No lo permita mi Dios  
ni la reina soberana.  
Es ofensa para Dios  
y también para mi mamá.

-Delgadina, hija mía,  
oye bien lo que te digo  
mira, si no condeciendes,  
yo te pongo un buen castigo.

-Papacito de mi vida,  
eso sí no puedo hacer  
porque tú eres mi padre  
y mi mamá es tu mujer.

Delgadina walked around  
in her spaciouly squared parlor  
with her golden threaded mantle  
shining on her bosom.

-Arise, Delgadina,  
put on your white dress  
because we are going to mass  
to the state of Durango.

Coming out of mass  
her father was saying:  
-Delgadina, my daughter,  
I want you as my lady.

-May the Lord forbid it  
and the Heavenly Queen.  
That would be an offense to God  
and also to my Mama.

-Delgadina, my daughter,  
listen carefully to me,  
if you don't consent  
I will give you a harsh punishment.

-Little Papa of my life,  
this I cannot do,  
for you are my father  
and my Mama is your wife.

-Vénganse los once criados  
pongan presa a Delgadina,  
remachen bien los candados,  
que no se oiga su bocina.

-Papacito de mi vida,  
tu castigo estoy sufriendo,  
regálame un vaso de agua  
que de sed me estoy muriendo.

Cuando le llevaron l'agua  
Delgadina estaba muerta,  
con sus manitas cruzadas,  
su boquita bien abierta.

Ya con ésta me despido  
con la flor de clavelina,  
aquí termina la historia,  
la historia de Delgadina.

-Come, the eleven servants,  
put Delgadina in prison,  
fasten well the locks,  
let not her voice be heard.

-Little Papa of my life  
I am suffering your punishment,  
give me a glass of water,  
for I am dying of thirst.

When the water arrived  
Delgadina was dead  
with her arms crossed  
and her little mouth wide open.

With this I say farewell,  
with the clavelina flower,  
this ends the story,  
the story of Delgadina.



Si tienes un hondo penar piensa en mi.  
 Si tienes ganas de llorar piensa en mi.  
 Ya vez que venero tu imagen divina,  
 tu barbara boca que siendo tan niña a mi  
 enseño a pecar.

Piensa en mi cuando beses,  
 cuando llores también piensa en mi.  
 Cuando quieras quitarme la vida no la quiero,  
 para nada para nada me sirve sin ti.

If you feel a deep longing, think of me!  
 If you feel like crying, think of me!  
 Don't you see I worship your divine image,  
 your barbaric mouth while I was still so young  
 taught me to sin.

Think of me when you kiss!  
 Think of me also when you cry!  
 You may take my life when you want it,  
 for it's useless to me without you.

Ya murió la cucaracha.  
 Ya la llevan a enterrar entre cuatro zopilotes  
 y un ratón del sancristán.  
 Ya murió la cucaracha.  
 Ya la llevan a enterrar entre cuatro zopilotes  
 y un ratón del sancristán.

Me casé con una monja  
 por vestirme de santito.  
 La monja se condenó  
 y a mí me faltó poquito.

Yo me casaría contigo por interes de las vacas  
 pero tú me vas saliendo que se murieron de plaga.

Yo me casaría contigo por interes de los gueyes  
 pero tú me vas saliendo que se volvieron magueyes.

The cockroach died.  
 She is being taken to be buried between four buzzards  
 and the sacristan's mouse.  
 The cockroach died.  
 She is being taken to be buried between four buzzards  
 and the sacristan's mouse.

I married a nun  
 so I could dress like a little saint.  
 She was condemned  
 and I was almost sentenced too.

I would marry you for your cows  
 but you would ensure that they died of plague.

I would marry you because of your oxen  
 but you would ensure that they turned into cactus.

Con la música y el vino me querido consolar  
 porque una mujer ingrata, porque una mujer ingrata  
 es la causa de mi mal.  
 Me emborracho, grito y lloro pa' podermela arrancar  
 pero sé que ni borracho nunca la podre olvidar.

A la ventana de tu lecho he venido a platicar  
 y no quiere hacer caso a mis palabras de amor.  
 Yo te llevo aquí en mi pecho como medalla de Dios.

Adiós prenda de mi vida, ya me voy a retirar.  
 Nunca olvides este hombre que se acuerda de tu nombre  
 que a sus pies vino a llorar.  
 Estas lágrimas que lloro siempre te vas acordar  
 y así como yo te ruego tu también vas a llorar.

With music and drinks I've tried to console myself  
 because an ungrateful woman  
 is the cause of my wrongdoing.  
 I drink, yell, and cry, try to remove her  
 but I know that even drunk, I will never forget her.

I've come to your window by your bed to chat  
 and you're apathetic to my words of love.  
 I carry you in my chest like a medal of God.

Farewell, love of my life, I am going to leave.  
 Never forget this man who remembers your name,  
 who came to cry at your feet.  
 You will always remember the tears that I cry.  
 Just like I beg you, you will also cry.





8

No quiero saber de ti  
porque no quiero aborrecerte.  
Sin odio ni rencor pude olvidarte,  
hoy vas a enfrentarte con la realidad.

Tu empeño es fingir dolor,  
dolor jamás habrás sentido,  
porque en tu vanidad resalta el odio  
a cambio de todo no te hago maldad.

Y a encendido tu cariño el recuerdo de mi amor.  
Es tu propia soledad la que atormenta  
y te inspira tu canción,  
Me asombra el saber de ti,  
del ser que nunca se perdía.  
Ahora me sorprende la ironía  
como llegó el día y caíste también.

I don't want to know about you  
because I don't want to loathe you.  
I was able to forget you without hate or resentment.  
Today you are going to confront reality.

You are determined to feign pain,  
pain that you've never known,  
because in the wake of your vanity  
I don't wish you evil at all.

Your caring set fire to the memory of my love.  
Its your loneliness that torments  
and inspires your song.  
I'm amazed to know about you,  
the one who would never be lost.  
Now the irony surprises me,  
how the day came when you too would fall.

9

AUNQUE ME ODIAS

EVEN THOUGH YOU HATE ME

Quiero mirarme en esos ojos que me desprecian.  
Quiero besar tus labios rojos que me maldicen.  
Quiero sentir el palpitir cuando suspiras  
y así decirte que aunque me odies  
seré tu amor.

Entre tus ojos miro el desprecio que tú me guardas.  
Entre tus labios hallo el veneno que me has de dar.  
Déjame verme en esos ojos aunque me hiera.  
Déjame verte aunque me muera después de amar.

I want to see myself in those eyes that despise me.  
I want to kiss your red lips that curse me.  
I want to feel the palpitation when you sigh  
and tell you that even though you hate me,  
I will be your love

In your eyes, I see the disdain that you keep.  
In your lips I find the venom that you will give me.  
Let me see myself in those eyes even if it hurts me.  
Let me see you even though I'll die after loving you.

10

Los desdenes como puñaladas,  
me dejaron el alma sangrando  
recordando cuando me mirabas  
poco a poco me fui enamorando.

Yo pensaba olvidarme de pronto  
del cariño que tú me negabas  
si lograra arrancar de mi mente  
la certeza de que me engañaba.

Han pasado y pasado los años,  
han pasado pasado los días  
y despierto dormido y borracho,  
nunca olvido que no me quería.

Han pasado las horas muy largas,  
muchas de ellas viví en la cantina,  
y las copas me saben amargas  
y no puedo arrancarme esta espina.

El jardín de mis sueños tu fuiste,  
una hiedra que enredo mi vida.  
Yo no sé por qué no me dijiste  
que eras de otro tú la consentida.

No comprendo lo que tú me diste  
pa' quererte como yo te quiero,  
que sabiendo que no me querías  
olvidarte mujer yo no puedo.

The disdain feels like daggers  
that left my soul bleeding,  
remembering when you looked at me  
and little by little I fell in love.

I thought I would forget soon enough  
of the love you denied me  
if I was able to tear from my mind  
the truth of your betrayal.

Years have passed and passed,  
days have passed and passed,  
I awake from being drunk and asleep,  
I will never forget that she didn't love me.

Long hours have passed  
many of those I spent at the bar  
the drinks are tasting bitter  
I am unable to tear away this thorn.

You were the garden of my dreams,  
an ivy that entangled my life  
I don't know why you didn't tell me  
that you were someone's sweetheart.

I don't understand what you gave me  
to love you the way that I do  
knowing that you didn't love me  
I can't forget you woman.

Fue tu cariño toda mi existencia nunca lo he negado  
y de tus labios conocí la gloria cuando me besaron.  
Hoy lo comprendo si por ti he sufrido  
esa fue mi suerte,  
yo no lo niego que te quise mucho pero inútilmente.

Your love was all my existence, I've never denied that  
And from your lips I knew bliss when they kissed me.  
Now I understand that if I suffered  
it was because of my luck,  
I don't deny that I loved you in vain.

Si fue por eso que ya me olvidaste  
ya cerró la herida.  
Después de todo y con decepciones  
que linda es la vida.  
Si fue por eso si te quise mucho,  
ya no tengas miedo  
vive tranquilo, yo te lo aseguro que ya no te quiero.

If that's the reason that you've forgotten me,  
the wound is closed  
After all the deceptions,  
how beautiful life is.  
If that's the reason that I loved you so much,  
don't be afraid  
Be calm, I assure you I don't love you anymore.

Diosito santo, Diosito bueno,  
¿Qué quieres que haga? si yo la quiero  
Sé que es pecado querer lo ajeno  
y sin quererla sé que me muero.

Heavenly God, merciful Lord  
I can't help it if I love her  
It's wrong to desire what belongs to another  
but without her love I know I'll die.

Si su cariño era de otro  
¿Qué quieres que haga? yo no sabía.  
Yo no pensaba que me engañaba  
cuando juraba que me quería.  
Diosito santo (se repite).

But if her love belonged to someone else,  
what could I do? I didn't know  
I didn't realize she was lying  
when she said she loved me.  
Heavenly God (repeat)

Por eso bebo, por eso lloro,  
aunque me digan que es cobardía;  
quiero olvidarla, pero no puedo,  
Diosito santo, no es culpa mía.

That's why I drink and why I cry  
although I'm told it's only weakness  
I want to forget her but I can't  
Heavenly God, it's no fault of mine.



Lydia entering Chihuahua, June 27, 1950.





¿De qué sirve querer,  
con todo el corazón?  
¿De qué sirve sufrir el deber  
respetando un amor?

Pa' mi solo eras tú,  
no hubo nadie jamás;  
eras solo pa' mí,  
y besando la cruz te lo puedo jurar.

Tú eras el sol,  
eras la luz que me alumbro,  
oscuridad, hoy eres tú  
con tu traición.

Me voy lejos de aquí,  
donde pueda olvidar  
¿De qué sirve llorar,  
si tu amor ya perdí?  
y no encuentro la paz.

Tú eras el sol...

What's the use of loving  
with all your heart?  
What's the use of suffering  
in order to be true?

You were the only one for me,  
there was never anyone else,  
you were my only,  
and upon the cross I swear it to you.

You were the sun,  
you were the light that shined on me.  
Today your deception  
brings me darkness.

I'm going far away  
where I can forget.  
What's the use of crying  
if I've lost your love  
and can't find any peace?

You were the sun...

De aquí hasta el rancho "Las Peñas"  
 les traigo el nuevo corrido:  
 por andar haciendo señas  
 mataron a Luis Pulido,  
 ¿Quién iba imaginarse  
 que lo matará un amigo?

Alegre estaba la fiesta  
 se celebraba una boda;  
 Pulido ya muy tomado  
 le hacía señas a la novia,  
 a veces quería besarla  
 como si estuviera sola.

Antonio, muy ofendido,  
 queriendo allanar la cosa:  
 -Luisito, si eres mi amigo,  
 respeta más a me esposa.

Pulido se tira un grito  
 que se oye en el rancho entero:  
 -la hembra que a mí me cuadra  
 la quiero porque la quiero  
 si alguno se me atravieza  
 lo despacho a San Pedro.

Se agarraron a balazos  
 se dieron a quemar ropa  
 Pulido cayó bien muerto  
 y echó sangre por la boca,  
 Antonio nomás herido  
 pero por poco y le toca.

From the ranch of "Las Peñas"  
 I bring a new corrido:  
 Luis Pulido was killed  
 for getting out of line;  
 Who would imagine  
 that a friend would kill him?

There was a wedding celebration,  
 the party was going well.  
 Pulido was very drunk  
 and started to flirt with the bride.  
 At times he would try to kiss her  
 as if she were by herself.

Antonio, quite hurt,  
 tried to calm the situation  
 "Little Luis, if you are my friend,  
 please show respect for my wife."

Pulido let out a yell  
 that was heard throughout the ranch  
 "When there is a female that suits me  
 I love her with wild passion;  
 and anyone who gets in my way  
 I'll send to St. Peter in death."

There was a flurry of gunshots  
 at such close range  
 Pulido dropped dead,  
 bleeding from the mouth.  
 Antonio was only wounded,  
 barely saving his life.

Pulido perdió la vida,  
 Antonio ganó a la buena,  
 así acaba siempre el hombre  
 que quiere a mujer ajena.

Pulido lost his life  
 Antonio won, fair and square;  
 that's always the ending  
 of a man who desires another's wife.

## AMOR BONITO

## BEAUTIFUL LOVE

El mundo estará muy lleno  
 de amores y de querencias,  
 pero pa' mí hay uno solo  
 que da luz a mi existencia.

Mi amor es rete bonito,  
 radiante como un lucero,  
 y las tristezas de mi alma  
 se alegra con su recuerdo.

Doy gracias a mi Diosito  
 por lo bueno que es conmigo  
 él siempre oye mis plegarias  
 a todo lo que le pido.

Amor bonito, bonito,  
 cariño, mi cariñito  
 te quiero porque te quiero,  
 porque eres mi amor bonito.

Mi amor es rete bonito  
 radiante como una estrella,  
 de pensando en tú cariño  
 se acaban todas mis penas.

The world might be full  
 of lovers and affairs  
 but for me there is only one  
 that brings light to my existence.

My love is so beautiful,  
 radiant like a star  
 and the sadness of my soul  
 becomes joyous in its recollection

I give thanks to the Lord  
 for being so good to me.  
 I think he hears my prayers  
 and all that I ask of Him.

Beautiful love, beautiful  
 Beloved, my dear love  
 I love you because I do  
 because you are my beautiful love.

My love is so beautiful,  
 radiant like a star,  
 and just thinking of your love  
 brings an end to all my troubles.



Me hacen daño tus ojos, me hacen daño tus manos,  
me hacen daño tus labios que saben finger.  
A mi sombra pregunto si esos labios que adoro  
en un beso sagrado podrán mentír



Aunque viva prisionero en mi soledad  
mi alma te dirá te quiero  
Nuestros labios guardan flama y un beso moral  
que no olvidarás mañana  
Flores negras que el destino nos aparta sin piedad  
Pero el día vendrá en que seas para mi nomás nomás

Flores negras que el destino nos aparta sin piedad  
Pero el día vendrá en que seas para mi nomás nomás

Your eyes harm me, your hands harm me,  
your lips that know how to lie harm me.  
I ask my shadow if those lips that I adore  
could be lying in a sacred kiss.

Even if I live prisoner in my loneliness,  
my soul will still tell you I love you.  
Our lips keep a flame and a moral kiss  
that you won't soon forget.  
Black flowers, that merciless destiny keeps us apart,  
But the day will come when you will be mine, only  
for me.

Black flowers, that merciless destiny keeps us apart,  
but the day will come when you will be mine, only  
for me.

Pero ay qué triste,  
es amar sin esperanza.  
En mi pecho mi corazón latiendo.

De mis ojos una lágrima virtiendo,  
y desde entonces no hay consuelo  
ni esperanza para mí.

Pues si no me quieres  
pues para qué me miras?  
O, que misterio encierra tu mirada.

But oh, how sad,  
to love without hope.  
In my chest my heart is beating.

From my eyes a tear is falling.  
And ever since then there is  
no consolation or hope for me.

Well, if you don't love me,  
why do you look at me?  
Oh, what mystery your gaze contains.





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