

MUSIC OF MEXICO Vol.4

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# Los Campesinos de Michoacan

"CANCIONES DE MI TIERRA"





Mexico is very rich in regional musical traditions and some of these are well represented north of the border especially if they have gained widespread popularity such as Musica Nortena and the Mariachi tradition. Having had the pleasure of recording several important Norteno conjuntos in Texas, some of the best Jarocho harp groups of Veracruz (Arhoolie 3008), and the fine falsetto singing and fiddling of the Huastecan region (Arhoolie 3009), I had unfortunately not heard much music from the state of Michoacan. A few years ago, however, I was captivated by the sound of Conjunto Michoacan which had a hit on almost every juke box, even in South Texas. That group used only one fiddler and they had no harp but the record made me want to hear more of this wonderful regional sound. About two years ago Philip Sonnichsen and guitar-ron player Jon Clark and I were having dinner on Valencia Street in San Francisco's Mission district where Mariachis serenade. Since Philip was working on a book about the history of Mariachi music we were curious if any groups in this area used a harp which was common with some mariachis. Several of the Mariachis at the restaurant (and Jon Clark seemed to know them all) said they heard some harp players were working in Redwood City, just a half hour drive south of San Francisco, at a bar on Middlefield Road. A few weeks later my curiosity led me down the peninsula and as I walked into the club, where a long bar was at the far right and several pool tables in the middle, I was amazed to hear not one, but two groups. They were not your usual Mariachi bands, rather each consisted of two fiddlers, a harpist, along with vihuela and a jarana. One "conjunto de arpa", as they called themselves, was at the left end of the bar playing for a customer and just as soon as they finished their song the group on the right end of the bar segued into a song for a customer on their end. I felt I was in paradise, or in Michoacan, surrounded by wonderful fierce and honest music.

The unincorporated part of Redwood City where I met Los Campesinos, is almost a suburb of Apazingan, Michoacan because for blocks and blocks there are restaurants, discotecas, cantinas, and other businesses which all let you know, some via their names, that everyone here is from the state of Michoacan. Other musicians can be seen wandering from bar to bar, just like in Mexico: Norteno conjuntos with accordion and a string bass trailing behind, trios, guitar duets, and full Mariachis with several violins and two trumpets. The musicians appear wherever homesick workers congregate who have some change in their pockets but no family or home to go to. These men gladly pay from \$3 to \$5 per song to have a conjunto serenade them while drinking a beer and thinking about their lost love and friends in far off Michoacan. The musicians serenade not only in the cantinas, but in parks, at picnicks or at out-door events where you might hire them in the parking lot. Los Campesinos are often also asked to play for house parties where they get paid by the hour or by the night. They have also begun to perform outside their own communities, at Arhoolie's 25th anniversary party, at San Francisco's Mexican Museum, at the Mission Cultural Center, and in July of 1987 are scheduled to play the American Folk Festival in Lowell, Mass. Los Campesinos sing with feeling and vitality, usually in the Mexican duet style, and play to stir the emotions, to remember good times, to drink to, and to cry to. Their repertoire consists of popular rancheras, corridos, huapangos, boleros, and the older sones and the very old valonas. During a son, and there are several heard on this record, someone in the audience will usually come up to the harp player, crouch down and with his two hands beat out a very intricate rhythm on the box of the harp. Los Campesinos have a very excellent such "Tamborero" in Emiliano Preciado who has won many contests for his talent in Apazingan where annual festivals are held featuring the best musicians in the area.

Michoacan and South Texas are about the same distance from the rich farm lands and industrial areas of California which have attracted workers for generations. Michoacan's strong agricultural tradition has helped make the state a leading supplier of field workers for many Western US communities. Around the turn of the century US recruiters traveled through Western Mexico actively looking for workers to help lay railroad tracks. In the early 1940s many Michoacanos were invited to come to California's San Joaquin Valley to work in the fields as part of the government sponsored BRACERO program. Whenever the US wants cheap labor it invites the neighbors to the south, but when times and employment gets tight, we push them out and no one yet knows what effect the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 will have on the workers and their communities who have contributed so much to the wealth and culture of the West Coast.

Salvador Baldovinos, founder and leader of Los Campesinos de Michoacan tells his own story: "I was born May 29, 1948 Salvador Baldovinos Mendoza on a ranch called "Ranchos Viejos" near the town of Coalcoman in the state of Michoacan. My parents were very poor farmers and I grew up in poverty, ashamed of not having enough clothing. I never went to school because our ranch was too far from the town. My father taught me how to work in the fields and to plant crops and eventually I taught myself how to read and write and basic arithmetic. I had always felt drawn towards music ever since I was a little boy. My father managed to scrape together enough money to buy me a guitar in Uruapan and from then on I started play a little and sing songs with my mother. I heard harp groups since childhood and a preference for the traditional instrumentation of these groups stayed with me. I liked some harp groups who made records especially Trio Los Aguilillas (from Aguililla, Michoacan) and Los Hermanos Jimenez; and for vocals I also enjoyed Las Jilguerillas and Dueto America.

In 1973 I came to the United States for the first time. I worked in the fields in the Salinas Valley, in California, and then at a garlic processing plant. On weekends I practiced my guitar but I still did not make any money with it. I later went to Washington state and worked in a slaughter house where I was often alone attending machinery and practiced singing, trying to develop my voice and I dreamed of someday making a record, but I continued to work in the fields. In 1981, when I was living in Greenfield, Calif. I bought a harp from another musician and started to play it a little. Together with my compadre who played violin, we started playing a few parties. Later my cousin who played guitar joined us. While playing a party in Livingston I met a friend who has family in Redwood City who were also musicians and we began to commute to play on weekends and finally I decided to move there. We played in the bars around Redwood City to crowds of fellow Michoacanos and some weekends we would drive across the state with my harp loaded in back of the truck, just to play one party! But I continued to work as a laborer. I organized Los Campesinos in 1983 and since then I have spent all my time with music and building up the group's repertoire and I even wrote a few songs. My wife Elisa is from the same town of Coalcoman and we had been sweethearts since childhood. Our daughter Norma is now four years old and she likes music, likes to dance when we play, and I hope I can buy her a guitar soon. (Chris Strachwitz & Salvador Baldovinos with help from Zac & Juana Salem, 1987).

A—4: UNA PLEGARIA A MI MADRE

No hay carino comparado  
Con el santo amor de madre.  
Pero siempre lo miramos  
cuando ya es demasiado tarde.

Cuando uno tiene a sus padres  
Los mira con indiferencia.  
Cuando nos dan un consejo  
Uno siempre lo desprecia.

Cuando yo tenia mi madre  
Ella siempre me decia:  
"Hijo querido de mi alma  
Ya no me acabes la vida".

"Que se ha de llegar el dia  
Que te encuentres solo en el mundo.  
Entonces vas a saber  
Lo que sufro es profundo".

Yo no escuchaba sus quejas,  
Mucho menos sus consejos  
Me salia y me emborrachaba  
Sin hacer caso a sus ruegos.

Por eso es que ahora en la calle  
Vivo borracho y perdido.  
Para que quiero la vida  
Si mi madre se ha ido?

Hoy mi dios me la ha quitado  
Para mi mayor tormento.  
Perdoname madre mia  
Tu que estas alla en el cielo.

A—4: A PRAYER TO MY MOTHER

There is no affection to compare  
With a mother's saintly love.  
But we always realize this  
When it is too late.

While your parents are still alive.  
One treats them with indifference.  
We never appreciate  
The advice they give us.

When my mother was around  
She always used to say:  
"My dear child,  
Don't be the end of me".

"The day will come when you'll  
Find yourself alone in the world.  
Then you'll know  
Just how much I suffer".

I didn't listen to her complaints,  
Much less her advice.  
I stayed out and drank  
Without hearing her pleas.

For that reason I now  
Live drunk in the streets.  
Why should I want to live  
If my mother has left me.

Now God has taken her from me  
For my worst punishment.  
Forgive me my mother,  
You who are in heaven.

B—2: EL CORRIDO DE LOS HERMANOS MENDOZA

Voy a cantar un corrido  
Para aclarar bien las cosas  
Mataron en Michoacan  
A los hermanos Mendoza.

Año de setenta y siete  
Una fecha inolvidable  
Murieron Jesus y Leopoldo  
En presencia de su madre.

Fue una injusticia senores  
Todos estan en lo cierto  
Por no pensar bien las cosas  
Cuatro hombres fueron los muertos.

Era una tarde por cierto  
La fiesta se comenzaba  
Mandaron quitar las armas  
Pa' que no pasara nada.

Que suceda Remative  
Llamandole la atencion  
Entreguenme las pistolas  
Se las pido de favor.

Ysile le contesto  
Yo no me cruzo de brazos  
Y luego manda a su hermano  
Que le diera dos balazos.

La balacera se oia  
Por toda la vecindad  
Murio Jesus y Leopoldo  
Atondo y Natividad.

Ya habian pasado nueve anos  
Manuel estaba tomando  
Cuando se encontro Valencia  
Como el estaba deseando.

Manuel Mendoza decia  
Cuando lo estaba retando  
Mis hermanos no eran perros  
Por eso estoy reclamando.

El dia seis de septiembre  
Alla por la madrugada  
Delante de un policia  
Manuel luego se mataba.

Año de ochenta y seis  
Un sabado en la manana  
Ha muerto Jose Valencia  
En presencia de su hermana.

Voy a echar la despedida  
No se les vaya a olvidar  
La muerte de los Mendoza  
Ya la empiezan a pagar.

B—2: THE BALLAD OF THE MENDOZA BROTHERS

I'm going to sing you this ballad  
So that the record will be straight  
The Mendoza brothers were killed  
In the state of Michoacan.

In the year of seventy seven,  
An unforgettable day,  
Jesus and Leopoldo were killed  
In the presence of their mother.

It was unjust, people  
Everyone agrees  
For not thinking things through  
Four men lost their lives.

It was in the afternoon  
The party had just begun  
It was ordered that everyone  
Should leave their weapons at the door.

It was then that Remative  
Asked for everyone's attention  
"Give me all of your guns,  
We don't want any trouble here".

Isile answered him:  
"I'm not just going to stand by".  
And he ordered his brother  
To shoot him.

The shots were heard  
Throughout the neighborhood  
Jesus and Leopoldo died  
In the barrio of Natividad.

Now nine years had passed,  
And Manuel was in a bar  
When in walked Valencia,  
Which was what he was waiting for.

Manuel Mendoza said  
While he threatened him;  
"I'm going to settle our account,  
Because my brothers weren't dogs".

On the sixth of September  
In the early dawn hours  
In front of a policeman  
Manuel killed him (Valencia).

In the year 1986,  
One saturday morning,  
Jose Valencia was killed  
In the presence of his sister.

Now I'm going to say farewell  
But don't forget about  
The death of the Mendoza brothers  
It is starting to be repaid.

B—6: LINDO COALCOMAN

Quisiera tirar un suspiro  
Para empezar a recordar  
Y decirles a mis amigos  
Ay que lindo es Coalcoman!

Es un pueblo muy hermoso  
Y su gente a todo dar  
Sus mujeres muy bonitas  
No se pueden comparar.

Ay, que lindo es Coalcoman!  
Solo tiene dos salidas  
Una va para Colima  
Y otra rumbo a Apatzingan

Ya con esto me despido  
Ya me voy a retirar;  
Yo le digo a mis amigos  
Si uno no lo conoce  
Que lo vayan a visitar.

B—6: BEAUTIFUL COALCOMAN

To start this song  
I'd like to sigh,  
And tell all of my friends  
How beautiful Coalcoman is!

It's a beautiful town  
And the people right—on.  
The women are beautiful  
Beyond compare.

Ay, how beautiful Coalcoman is!  
There are only two ways out of town  
One heads towards Colima  
And the other towards Apatzingan

With this I say goodbye  
It's time for me to leave.  
I say to all my friends  
If they don't know the town  
they should go visit.

B—7: EL QUIOSCO

Feliccita las tres salia en el quiosco  
Y las cuatro ni tu sombra se veia  
Alli parado te esperaba hecho en tonto  
Que era una cita y no llegaste vida mia.

Desesperado camine rumbo a la esquina  
Paso el camion y subi desconsolado  
Una pareja de novios abrazado  
Creian mis ojos que me estabas enganando.

Me dieron ganas de llorar  
Y como pude me aguante  
Ya me enganaste, ya que mas hay  
Me buscare nuevo querer.

Alla en el quiosco te encuentre  
Alla en el quiosco te perdi  
En un camion yo te halle  
En brazos de otro muy feliz.

B—7: THE VILLAGE SQUARE

Feliccita, it struck three in the village square,  
And it struck four, and still you didn't come.  
I was standing there like an idiot waiting  
For you to show up, but darling you didn't make it.

Hopelessly, I walked to the corner  
The bus passed by and I got on  
I saw a couple hugging each other  
And my eyes thought you had deceived me.

I wanted to cry,  
but I held back the tears,  
You deceived me, what more is left?  
I'll look for a new love.

There in the village square I had found you  
There in the village square I lost you  
On the bus I saw you  
Happily in the arms of another man.



# Los Campesinos De Michoacan

Conjunto de arpa de Salvador Baldovinos

## Side A:

- 1) CLAVEL DE PRIMAVERA (Ranchera)  
(Spring Carnation)
- 2) VOY A TIRARME A LOS VICIOS  
(Vals-Ranchera)  
(I'm Going To Fall Into Ruin)
- 3) LA PEINETA (Son)  
(The Comb)
- 4) UNA PLEGARIA A MI MADRE (Ranchera)  
(A Prayer To My Mother)
- 5) AGUILILLA (Huapango)  
(Aguililla, Michoacan)
- 6) CAUTIVA Y TRISTE (Ranchera)  
(Captive And Sad)
- 7) CANTINERO AMIGO (Ranchera)  
(Bartender Friend)

## Side B:

- 1) QUERIDA MUJER (Ranchera)  
(Beloved Woman)
- 2) EL CORRIDO DE LOS HERMANOS MENDOZA  
(The Ballad Of The Mendoza Brothers)  
(Salvador Baldovinos—Tradition Music Co. BMI)
- 3) JOVEN DIVINA (Ranchera)  
(Wonderful Girl)
- 4) EL ESTILLERO (Son)  
(The Twig)
- 5) TU DELIRIO (Ranchera)  
(Your Delerium)
- 6) LINDO COALCOMAN (Ranchera)  
(Beautiful Coalcoman)  
(Salvador Baldovinos—Tradition Music Co. BMI)
- 7) EL QUIOSCO (Ranchera)  
(The Village Square)

Salvador Baldovinos—lead vocals & harp  
Elisa Baldovinos—vocals on A-4, B-2, & B-7  
Jose Gonzales—violin (and vocal on B-5)  
Gumecindo Saucedo—violin  
Emiliano Preciado—vihuela (and vocals on A-2, A-5, A-6, & A-7) and tamborero on the sones  
Jose Antonio Prado—jarana (and vo. on A-1, B-1,& B-3)

Recorded at Renown Sound Productions (Brett Brown—engineer) Redwood City, Ca. 2/3/1987 except A-4, A-7, & B-6 which were recorded at Bay Records in Alameda, Ca. (Mike Cogan-engineer) on 11/10/1985 with slightly different personnel & first released on AR C—3022

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