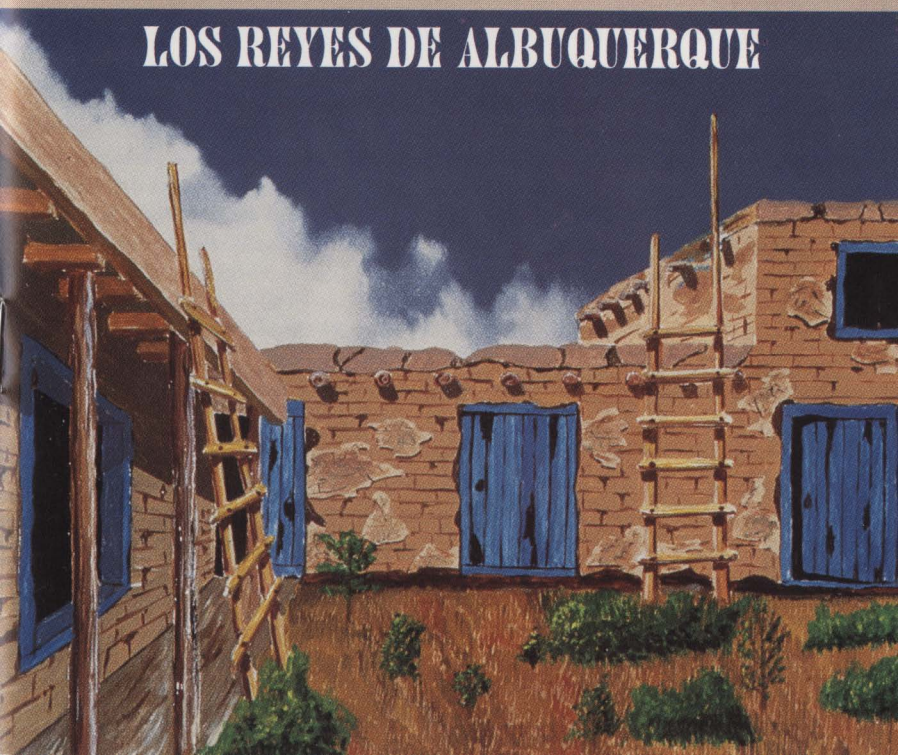


LO **MEJOR** DE

LOS REYES DE ALBUQUERQUE



SPECIAL THANKS TO:

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS FOLK ARTS PROGRAM

LA COMPANIA DE TEATRO DE ALBUQUERQUE

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THE MANY KIND AND WONDERFUL INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE LENT THEIR
SUPPORT FOR OVER THIRTY YEARS "QUE DIOS LOS BENDIGA"

Produced by LOS REYES DE ALBUQUERQUE FOUNDATION

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Folk Arts Program

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LOS REYES DE ALBUQUERQUE

LO MEJOR DE LOS REYES DE ALBUQUERQUE

This recording is a compilation of the "greatest hits" of Los *Reyes de Albuquerque*, one of New Mexico's premier Hispanic "folk music" performing ensembles. *Los Reyes* have been a central feature of New Mexican Hispanic musical life for over 30 years. This recording documents their centrality to that tradition. It demonstrates the stylistic changes that *Los Reyes* have experienced, changes that mirror the aesthetic and cultural history of New Mexican Hispanic folk and popular music. This historical survey of the career of one of New Mexico's foremost musical groups thus also serves as a microcosm of New Mexican Hispanic music over the course of three decades. It indicates the sources from which that tradition has sprung, shows the development of that tradition, and points the way for what is to come.

New Mexican Hispanic Folklife, and the "Folk" / "Popular" Continuum

Upon examining the list of compositions, one might be surprised to find a number of pieces that are not originally New Mexican; a few that are not strictly "folk music", and some that are neither originally "New Mexican" nor strictly "folk". However, it can be asserted that all of these compositions are authentic elements of New Mexican Hispanic folk music tradition, in that all have entered New Mexican oral tradition, all are securely established in that traditional body of music, and all have been accepted by the Hispanic New Mexican populace as their own, traditional, characteristic, authentic, and representative folk songs.

New Mexican "folk" music is often identified, by the general public and also by

many scholars of folklore and folk music, with certain forms and genres originating in earlier times in colonial New Mexico or in Spain or Mexico, and of very ancient origin. It is also associated with certain types and genres local to New Mexico or currently found only there and nowhere else. These forms include primarily the *alabados* of the *Penitentes*; ballad types such as the *romances* and *inditas*; and social dances such as the *varsovianas*, *redondos*, *cutilios*, *chotizes*, *cuadrillas*, etc.

But the “folk” music of New Mexico properly includes all the music which the “folk” of New Mexico consider as belonging to them and associated with them and reflective of their culture as being a part of their culture.

As New Mexican Hispanic culture has changed and developed over the past 450 years, so has New Mexico’s Hispanic expressive culture. Just as New Mexico’s graphic art forms (such as the production of sacred images known as *santos*) and other types of folklife have changed and developed over time, so has New Mexico’s performing arts, specifically music.

Music is central to New Mexican artistic life. It is a central part of the “aesthetic locus” of the culture. As cultural foci have changed, and ethnic and cultural identity have changed, the centrality of music to the culture has remained constant. Music in New Mexican Hispanic culture serves a number of socio-cultural purposes, including ethnic boundary maintenance and the preservation and perpetuation of cultural and ethnic identity.

In earlier times, such music was invented, performed, and perpetuated in small social group settings in the home, in small performance situations and transmitted orally/aurally from person to person or (occasionally) in the form of printed broadsides, newspapers, etc.

Today, the mass media is often employed to aid in the preservation and perpetuation of New Mexico traditional culture. Recordings-- originally 78, 45, and 33 1/3 rpm--now most often cassette tapes and CD’s preserve and make available traditional music to a wide audience; Spanish language radio and television then spread it to an even wider audience.

But live performance preserves the immediate audience contact that was the

essential feature of musical interaction in earlier times.

Los Reyes de Albuquerque and New Mexican Musical Life

Popular and traditional musical life in New Mexico is very lively. Spanish-language radio programs from Las Vegas in the North to Las Cruces in the South regularly feature a wide variety of local performers ranging the gamut from amateur to professional. Record shops stock a wide variety of recordings by these performers, as well as others from Mexico and other parts of the American Southwest.

One of the most long-lived, as well as most influential of the typical Northern New Mexican Hispanic performing groups has been Los Reyes de Albuquerque. Founded by Roberto Martinez in 1962, this group has been at the forefront of presenting traditional New Mexican music, and perpetuating it.

But they are not mere preservers; they have been an active force in the musical life of New Mexico, adapting and changing as the cultural forces and expressive needs of the community have adapted and changed, and being in the forefront of bringing new influences to bear in expressing New Mexican Hispanic musical identity.

Los Reyes have been especially influential in 3 complementary ways:

- 1) They make audiences aware of New Mexican forms which are no longer especially current in the society, but which are loved and revered by certain segments of the society--especially rural audiences and older people.
- 2) They reflect the continuing influence of “greater Mexican” culture on ongoing New Mexican Hispanic life. They bring recent and contemporary Mexican *ranchera* and *mariachi* styles into New Mexican musical life. As such, they represent one of the major “modernizing”, “urbanizing” forces in contemporary New Mexican Hispanic urban (re: Albuquerque) society;
- 3) They combine these currents and influences in the development of a unique, typically New Mexican expression, which they use in the expression of New Mexican Hispanic concerns and values. They do this through the medium of

the *corrido*, or ballad, which is widespread throughout the Spanish-speaking world (especially the United States Southwest and Mexico), but which in their hands takes on a particularly typical, local New Mexican character, focus, and function.

Los Reyes are quick to point out that they are *not* a *mariachi* group. Yet, they employ *mariachi* dress, instrumentation, repertoire, style, and technique. Many could say that they are not, strictly speaking, a "folk" group. Yet, they very often perform very traditional, even archaic repertoire.

They are an individualistic, very unique ensemble. But they are one which is very reflective of Northern New Mexican Hispanic musical and expressive culture as it now and as it has existed in the past. The changes they have experienced are representative of changes in New Mexican culture and musical experience over the past 30 or more years.

This current volume is retrospective of Los Reyes's contributions to musical life in New Mexico. The bulk is representative of their current situation, of what they have contributed to New Mexican music in the last few years. Some are older recordings. Perhaps a future volume will focus more on older, more historical recordings.

History and Development of Los Reyes de Albuquerque

Los Reyes de Albuquerque was founded in 1962 by Roberto Martinez. Originally a six-member *conjunto*-style group featuring trumpet and accordion lead melodies, the group always demonstrated a strong grounding in Mexican Hispanic folk tradition and a deep commitment to preserving and perpetuating that heritage. Early on the group developed a repertoire featuring original *corridos* commemorating local topics, local events, and items of interest to the New Mexican Hispano population, *canciones* from the urban Hispanic Southwest (Tex-Mex, as well as New Mexican), as well as mainstays of the Mexican folk-popular *ranchera* or *mariachi* tradition.

The original membership of the group included founder Roberto Martinez, *vihuela* and harmony vocals; Ray Flores, *trumpet*; Miguel Archibeque, *guitar* and lead vocals;

Isidro Chavez, *button accordion*; and George Benavidez, *guitarron*. In 1968 Roberto's son Lorenzo Martinez joined *Los Reyes* adding his *folk* and *mariachi* style violin to the group's sound.

Recording was an important activity of the group in the early years, along with live performances, radio and television appearances, etc. Early recordings —by themselves and as a supporting group for other artists — appeared on regional labels including Hurricane Records (Albuquerque) and Infal Records (Denver). The founding of M.O.R.E Records (Minority Owned Recording Enterprises) by Roberto Martinez gave *Los Reyes* a new venue and helped to make them one of the most widely-recorded, best-recognized, and well-known, as well as long-lived and influential purveyors of New Mexican typical music in New Mexican musical history.

This expanded recording activity, as well as a *very* active schedule of live performances, helped to give *Los Reyes* a central position in the New Mexican Hispanic musical scene. Their ready acceptance by local audiences made them a frequent part of local *fiestas* and other celebrations, large and small, and a substantive part of New Mexican Spanish-language radio station programming. This identification with New Mexican Hispanic music made them a favored part of area and nationwide tours and festivals, in which they were given an opportunity to showcase New Mexican music, including the *National Folk Festival*, the *Festival of the American West*, *The Smithsonian Institution's Festival of American Folklife*, as well as the *National Council for the Traditional Arts "Raices Musicales"* tours. This exposure made them reflective of New Mexican traditional life. At the time that they were helping to establish and define typical New Mexican Hispanic music, they were selected to present it to the world at large and thus to help to define it for the outside world.

National recognition of their place in the evolving Southwestern Hispanic music scene was evidenced by *Time* Magazine's identification of Roberto Martinez as a leader of the *onda nueva* (new wave) of Hispanic music in the 1960's and 1970's.

Personnel and direction of the group remained relatively stable throughout the years, but, like any living organism, it continued to change, grow, and evolve. George Benavidez's untimely death in the early 1970's occasioned Isidro Chavez's switch from

accordion to guitarron. The melodic lead was taken over by Lorenzo Martinez's *violin* and Ray Flores's *trumpet*. The other personnel remained key parts of the group until the early 1990's. This group became the "classic" formulation of *Los Reyes de Albuquerque* the one which defined their style and repertoire, and is best associated with the group.

Lorenzo Martinez established himself as one of the most significant, and certainly the best known exponent of the old Spanish "colonial" *bailes* (social dance) tradition at the age of 16 with the release of his enormously influential first solo album, *El Redondo Largo* in the 1970's. This album, with backing by *Los Reyes's* rhythm section, displayed the group's new emphasis on traditional New Mexican folk music, an emphasis which continues to this day and which is one of the most significant features of their current identity.

Roberto Martinez's early training was certainly the product of a folk background. His early musical experiences and training came from family and community, stemming from his upbringing in traditional, rural Northern New Mexico. But like so many New Mexican Hispanos, his life and professional career were spent in the urban metropolitan areas of the Southwest (Denver and Albuquerque). His musical influences mirror his cultural influences, which in turn were typical of most New Mexicans of his generation and the present — a base in traditional, rural Northern New Mexico, strong defining influences from the modern, urban, acculturated Southwest, and with constant re-invigoration from the traditional root cultural source in Mexico.

In the early 1990's, the personnel has changed somewhat, as various members have gone on to pursue other directions and interests. Original members Roberto Martinez and Ray Flores remain with the group, but Miguel Archibeque and Isidro Chavez have left the group. Archibeque's place has been taken by Robert Martinez, Jr. (Roberto's other son and Lorenzo's brother) and Miguel Ojeda, founder of the original *Mariachi Tenampa*, has replaced Chavez playing the *guitarron*. Although Lorenzo is now a permanent member of *Mariachi Tenampa*, New Mexico's premier *mariachi* band, he still contributes to, and on occasions performs with *Los Reyes*. His place in the group has been taken by his student, Angela Perez.

Lo Mejor de Los Reyes de Albuquerque

The present recording, and its companion volume, *Lo Mejor de Lorenzo Martinez y sus Violines*, document the growth and development of *Los Reyes de Albuquerque* over the past 30 years. Also, they demonstrate their central place in the growth and development of New Mexican Hispanic music — both folk and popular over the same time span. The present volume emphasizes *Los Reyes's* vocal traditions, and their centrality in the changing, modernizing, urbanizing musical life of Hispanic New Mexico. The companion volume displays their grounding in New Mexican Hispanic folk tradition.

Included here are *Los Reyes's* first recording, *El Corrido de Daniel Fernandez*, Roberto Martinez's tribute to a New Mexican native son killed in the Vietnam War. It demonstrates *Los Reyes's* mastery of the narrative folk song (ballad) tradition, especially in its typically and characteristically Mexican-American form, the *corrido*. Roberto Martinez's latest *corrido*, *El Corrido del 720*, (which honors the Las Vegas, New Mexico National Guard Unit which served in the Gulf War) as well as his well-known *Corrido de Rio Arriba* (which documents the land grant struggles of the 1960's and 1970's) clearly establish Roberto Martinez and Los Reyes's centrality in the *corrido* tradition, and their place in establishing and developing a typically New Mexican *corrido* style and tradition.

Los Rey's mastery of the lyric song (*cancion*) tradition is also well represented. *Canciones* represented here range from traditional Mexican and New Mexican folk songs (*La Mancornadora* and *Pajarillo Barranqueno*, respectively) through Mexican *charro* movie music (*Alla en el Rancho Grande*) to classic popular *ranchera* songs by Mexico's best-known and best-loved composer, Jose Alfredo Jimenez (*Yo*) as well as others (*Tu, Solo Tu* and *Volver, Volver*).

Most of this compilation consists of material of Mexican origin which has been incorporated New Mexican Hispanic musical tradition. But a substantial portion of it consists of original New Mexican material, including Roberto Martinez's *corridos*, compositions by New Mexico's leading urban popular singer/composers Albert ("Al

Hurricane”) and Morris (“Tiny Morrie”) Sanchez, and New Mexico’s official Spanish-language state song, *Asi es Nuevo Mejico* by Espanola, New Mexico composer Amadeo Lucero (sung on this recording by former lieutenant governor, singer, and radio personality Roberto Mondragon).

Los Reyes de Albuquerque remain an integral and essential part of New Mexican Hispanic folk and popular musical life. Evidence for this exists in the fact of their recent selection to be featured performers in the Smithsonian Institution’s Festival of American Folklife, as well as in the Smithsonian Institution’s “Music of New Mexico” recording project and folk festival.

Los Reyes maintain a very active touring and performance schedule. The present compilation highlights 30 years of centrality in New Mexican folk and popular musical life, and serves as a promise and an indication of many more years and much more musical involvement still to come.

Jim Leger
Ethnomusicologist
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Las Vegas, New Mexico

Tradicion

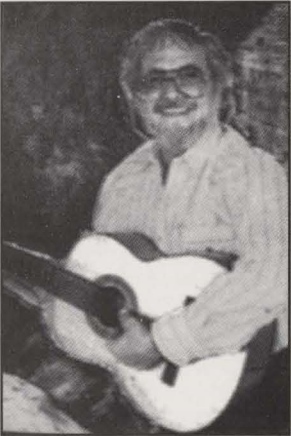
Cultura

*Los Reyes de Alburquerque
Foundation*

*Roberto Martinez
President*

*Raymundo Flores
Executive Officer*

SHEILA MARTINEZ: Eleven year old Sheila is the granddaughter of Roberto Martinez, one of the founders of Los Reyes de Albuquerque. Her mother Debra Martinez, a well known singer known as “La Chicanita”, is passing her art form to Sheila. Sheila has performed at the Smithsonian Institution’s Festival of American Folklife in Washington, DC, the Festival of the American West in Utah, the New Mexico and Colorado State Fairs and other events throughout the southwest. As guest artist she sings “Volver, Volver”, a ranchera song which has become a very important part of the New Mexican Hispanic musical tradition.



ROBERTO MONDRAGON: Former Lieutenant Governor of New Mexico, Roberto Mondragon is a well known radio personality, balladeer, story-teller and community activist. He has contributed much towards the preservation and promotion of the traditional Hispanic music and culture of New Mexico. Roberto has accomplished this through his radio programs, television and movie appearances, and performances, including the Museum of American History in Washington D. C..

Lo Mejor de **LOS REYES DE ALBUQUERQUE**

- | | |
|---|------|
| 1. El Sube y Baja (<i>F. Valdez / R. Ortega</i>) | 1:57 |
| 2. Dos Seres Que Se Aman | 2:57 |
| 3. Tu Solo Tu (<i>Felipe Valdes Leal</i>) | 3:17 |
| 4. La Chaparita de Oro | 2:42 |
| 5. La Mancornadora | 2:04 |
| 6. San Juan Del Rio | 2:37 |
| 7. Las Mananitas Guadalupanas | 3:03 |
| 8. Noches Tenebrosas | 2:54 |
| 9. El Corrido de Daniel Fernandez (<i>R. Martinez</i>) | 3:48 |
| 10. Asi Es Nuevo Mexico (<i>canta Roberto Mondragon</i>) (<i>Amadeo Lucero</i>) | 2:26 |
| 11. El Bandolero | 2:51 |
| 12. Cuatro Meses | 2:54 |
| 13. Corrido de Rio Arriba (<i>Roberto Martinez</i>) | 4:03 |
| 14. El Corrido de Juanito (<i>M. Sanchez/A. Sanchez</i>) | 3:18 |
| 15. Yo (<i>Jose Alfredo Jimenez</i>) | 3:41 |
| 16. Volver, Volver (<i>Canta: Sheila Martinez</i>) | 2:54 |
| 17. Tus Desprecios | 2:44 |
| 18. Alla En El Rancho Grande | 2:36 |
| 19. Mi Virgen Ranchera | 2:55 |
| 20. Cuatro Milpas | 2:47 |
| 21. Pajarillo Baranqueno | 2:26 |
| 22. Hermosísimo Lucero | 2:39 |
| 23. El Corrido Del 720 (<i>Roberto Martinez</i>) | 5:00 |
| 24. Viva Quien Sabe Querer | 2:50 |

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