

A Yankee Sings *Corridos*:
An Anglo Performance And Investigation
Of A Texas-Mexican Folk Tradition

by
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A THESIS

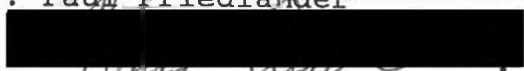
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The *corridos*, or ballads, of the Tejano, occupy a vital place at the foundation of Texas-Mexican traditions. The lyrics and music of *corridos* create a strong cultural identity among a people oppressed by socioeconomic inequities caused by racial intolerance. An Anglo performance of these folk songs requires both a substantial investigation into the probable textual and musical development of the genre, as well as those conventions of form which make it distinctive. While such a project provides invaluable performance experience, its greatest reward lies in coming to know the music of the Tejano.

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INTRODUCTION

Music is made by people and for people. My study and performance of the *corrido*, the Texas-Mexican ballad, emphasize the essential place of music in a society. This is difficult to do. Music is flexible and ever changing, and while attempts to study it and place it in different categories may be useful, it is my opinion that this activity is relatively unimportant next to the music itself. Thus, throughout my research and rehearsal of the songs I will sing, my primary endeavor has been to gain a certain undefined sensitivity for the melodies and rhythms of this music and, through them, to know this people and culture.

Yet, deep as they are, such intuitive aspirations can only present the final form of a music that has been shaped by the movements, crises, and joys of a people. Therefore a historical investigation is essential to understanding the fundamental place of this music among *Tejanos*. Furthermore, since I am an Anglo and it is in the language of the *corrido* text that the social values of the culture are most concretely expressed, such an investigation becomes vital. And it is the texts of the five pieces I will perform that provide me with this expression. My choice of texts and musical styles attempts to highlight characteristics of

Tejano music and to present a general idea of the development of the genre.

As I have stated, the *corrido* is the ballad of the Texas-Mexican. As a genre it concerns itself with words, actions, and experiences common to the people. It is their voice and concentrates on the exploits of local heroes, tales of romance, disasters, all things that speak to everyday life. This first chapter offers some information concerning the origins of the *corrido* text and its music. The second chapter intends to show the importance music holds in Tejano culture as a function of heritage, values, and life's problems. The final chapter expresses my thoughts on the merits of such an investigation, discussing how the study and performance of a people's folk genre can be both rewarding and problematic when attempted by one who belongs to another community.

CHAPTER ONE

A STORY OF THE *CORRIDO*

A *corrido* is a both a literary and a musical genre.¹ This is true of most music that is accompanied by a text. One of the important questions to ask concerns the weight of one or the other of these elements. Do people primarily write these songs because they want them to sound beautiful, seeking to emphasize the quality of a vocal instrument? In this case the words may be relatively unimportant and serve only as a vehicle for the music. And this is not the case for the *corrido*. My study of the music and the texts of these ballads indicates that the literary role of the *corrido* is more important than the musical one. I say this not to judge the quality of the music, but rather to indicate that its social function among Tejanos is essentially narrative.

The composer of *corridos* adheres to conventions of structure and form. The *corridista*, as he (and less frequently she) is called, adopts a basic unit of a stanza of four lines, a quatrain. Each line contains approximately eight written syllables (in performance words are sometimes run together in order to make the words fit the rhythm established by the melody). By way of introduction the first quatrain usually sets the time frame and the topic:

¹ The Spanish words *corrido*, *corridista*, *romance*, and *Tejano* will only be italicized the first time they appear.

El día veintiocho de abril,
a las seis de la mañana,
salimos en un enganche
para el estado de Pensilvania

(On the twenty-eighth day of April,
at six o'clock in the morning
we left on a labor contract
for the state of Pennsylvania)
(from "La Pensilvania" Paredes 56-7)²

The body of the text recounts a story, informs of a specific event, or broaches any subject the corridista feels is pertinent enough to the people to make them stop and listen to what he is singing about. Ultimately the design is to sell copies of the corrido printed on brightly colored paper. These are known as *hojas sueltas* or broadsides. Having told the story the corridista often leaves the audience with a moral, and closes with a *despedida* in which the singer bids the listeners farewell:

Mexicanos, no hay que fiar
en nuestra propia nación,
nunca vayan a pedir
a Mexico protección.

Ya con ésta me despido
pues se me llegó este día
vivan los hombres valientes
como fue Rito García

(Mexicans, we can put no trust
in our own nation;
never go to Mexico
asking for protection.

Now with this I say farewell,
for my day has come;
long live brave men
such as Rito García.)
(from "Rito García", Paredes 58-9)

² All corrido texts and their English translations are cited as they appear in Américo Paredes' work, A Texas Mexican Cancionero.

The corridista reflects popular sentiment. He is independent but is a product of a social environment. What are the forces that have determined the nature of his song? Where did the conventions of form and content come from? To answer these questions I must consider the history of the corrido as scholars have seen it.

The term "corrido" itself, or 'running,' recalls the Spanish ancestry of the genre in the southern province of Andalusia. The term was applied to convention which developed in the performance of the *romance*, the *romance corrido* reflecting a style in which each syllable is given its own pitch.³ However, the corrido differs from the romance in its rhyme scheme (abab or abcb), and thus reflects another Iberian tradition, the *copla*, a literary genre popular in Spain and in which the second and fourth lines rhymed. The *copla* also provides the antecedent for topical narrative; the text was usually humorous, satirical, or an expression of unrequited love.

The transition from the romance tradition to that of the corrido is not clear. Evidence is too limited to provide a step by step analysis of its evolution. Simmons notes that the Spanish conquest of Mexico led to the establishment of the romance tradition in the Americas. He cites sources from the 16th and 17th century which illustrate that the habit of

³ Duvalier as cited in Simmons "El canto es corrido porque las treinta y dos notas musicales que corresponden a las treinta y dos sílabas del cuartero octosílabo, se cantan sin interrupción alguna" (8).

composing a romance to recount an event or comment on political leaders became rooted in Mexico (Simmons 9). Colonial events, such as the social upheaval surrounding the struggle for independence from Spain in 1810, helped to establish this tradition firmly as an expression of popular sentiment (Simmons 12). Periods of social upheaval provided ample material for narrative involving topics of particular interest to the common people; the theme of lives lost during political struggles was to become a major characteristic of the corrido.

Simmons suggests that by 1808 there is a Mexican composition which anticipates the tradition recognized today. Although written in a popular narrative style, dealing as it does with the struggle against Spain, the *Corrido de Carlos IV* lacks some of the conventions associated with later ballad composition: "it lacks the opening salutation, the closing leavetaking of the singer, and the usual dating of the event narrated" (Simmons 12). Leandro Rivera, a composition which does adhere to these standard characteristics, finally appears in 1841:

Año de mil ochocientos
cuarenta y uno han contado.
Ya murió Leandro Rivera;
!a ver si nos enmendamos!
...
Y, ay! con ésta y me despido,
dándole vuelta a una higuera.
Y aquí se acaban cantando
versos de Leandro Rivera.

(In the year eighteen hundred
and forty one as they counted
Leandro Rivera died

Let's see if we avenge it!
 ...
 And, ay! with this I say good-bye
 dancing 'round the fig tree
 and here I stop singing
 verses about Leandro Rivera)
 (translation mine, Simmons 15)

Especially noteworthy are the style based on the quatrain, the eight syllable line, and the characteristic opening and closing stanzas.

Writers of corridos derived these conventions from Spain. While a step by step description of their evolution from Spain, through Mexico to the borderlands of the Rio Grande is impossible to give, a comparative textual analysis which examines a particular corrido (my performance piece "La Pastora", the Shepherdess), clearly establishes the link between the old Spanish romance and the Texas-Mexican genre.⁴ This is but one example which supports this link; Espinosa affirms that at least in New Mexico "hundreds of coplas from the 16th and 17th centuries have been conserved in their original form" (translation mine, 1).⁵

Paredes lists "La Pastora" with songs from the colonial period. It is one of many variants of a popular *romance* entitled, "La Bella Dama y el Pastor" from the 15th

⁴ It is almost entirely on the basis of text that such a link must be established since the melodies heard today have been shaped both by several centuries of popular development in relative isolation from Spanish music, as well as the adoption of stylistic elements from the Americas.

⁵ "En Nuevo Méjico... se conservan centenares de coplas en la misma forma en que se hallan desde los siglos XVI y XVII" (11).

Century.⁶ Folklorists have collected versions of this ballad from Argentina, Chile, and other destinations for Spanish colonists. Whatever the version, there is thematic commonality: a fickle shepherd who either rejects or is unaware of a young woman's sexual advances.

The Spanish text involves a young and beautiful noble woman who attempts to lure a poor shepherd into her garden. "With love in her voice" (Wright 23 l. 9), the lady invites the shepherd to enjoy some food, leisure, and her own self during the midday hours. To encourage him, she offers to show him her body in all its wonder:

"Hermosuras de mi cuerpo
yo te las hiziera ver;
delgadita en la cintura,
blanca soy como el papel,
la color tengo mezclada
como la rosa en el rosel,
las teticas agudices
que el brial quieren hender,
el cuello tengo de garça,
los ojos de esparver,
pues lo que tengo encubierto
maravilla es de lo ver."

[my body's a beauty,/I'd show you the rest;/I'm slim at the waist,/my skin, it is fair/it's white and it's pink/as a rose can compare,/my nipples push out/ through the gown, they're so tight/my neck, it is slender,/my eyes, they are bright;/for all that's now covered/is fine to see too."
(Text and translation Wright 24)]

The shepherd is suspicious of her motives, however, and angry that a lady of her class should call to him, he says that he is busy working to feed his wife and family.

Furthermore, he has a specific job to do:

⁶ Wright (150) cites C.V. Aubrun ("Le romance 'gentil dona gentil dona'. Une énigme littéraire", Iberoromania, 18, 1983, 1-8) giving a probable date circa 1470 for the Catalan version.

"Y mi ganado en la sierra
que se me yva a perder,
y aquellos que lo guardan
no tenían qué comer."

[(I must) go the mountains/and round up my sheep,/the
shepherds who guard them/ have nothing to eat (Wright 24)].

He must tend his flock and seemingly has no desire to waste
any time in her garden, delightful as it may be.

The shepherd in the Texas-Mexican version, "La Pastora,"
is afflicted more by stupidity than antagonism. As in the
Spanish text, he is approached by a woman, but this time she
comes upon him as his sheep rest in the field. She attempts
to seduce him first with money, then by having him notice
the beauty of her hands, feet, and legs, telling him that
they can be his if he will only stay the night with her. The
shepherd fails to recognize the thinly disguised sexual
implications of what she is telling him and, in a
wonderfully humorous exchange, simply responds each time by
comparing his own physical attributes to hers:

"Mira qué piernas tan blancas,
con sus venas tan azules,
te las doy porque te quedés
sábado, domingo, y lunes"

"Yo también tengo piernitas
con sus venas tan azules,
mi ganado está en la sierra,
ya me voy y no lo dudes."

["Did you ever see such white legs, with such veins of blue?
You can have them if you stay Saturday, Sunday, and Monday."
"I also have pretty legs with veins of blue;
my sheep are on the mountain; I'm going now and don't you
doubt it."(Text and translation Paredes 8-9)]

In this version, however, it is the girl who gets angry.
After so many repetitions of "my sheep are on the mountain,"
she finally gives up trying to convince the shepherd and

tells him that it is time he left. Although he understands what she had been hinting at in the end, he is too late.

Though the setting is different, and the story reverses the outcome of the meeting of the lady and the shepherd, it is clear that these are two versions of the same story.⁷ The nearly duplicate references to "sheep on the mountain" bears out this claim. Thus, separated though these versions are by geography and time, they illustrate other similarities between well known Spanish romances and the older corridos of the border regions.

If a comparison of the Spanish version and its Texas-Mexican variant illustrate the similarities between the two, it also emphasizes geographical and societal differences. The border version has been shaped by Texas-Mexican culture and departs significantly from the original social milieu of Spain in favor of a thoroughly Mexican environment (Paredes 6). It exchanges a rural and pastoral setting for the urban class distinctions found in the Spanish version in which the noble "bella dama" appears within the confines of a garden, or on a balcony above, as in most of the New Mexican variants. Although the style of the text has undergone a significant transformation, the Hispanic origins of this corrido text are relatively easy to establish.

⁷ Espinosa cites at least six versions of the same romance in New Mexico, all of which contain the same basic plot and structure as the Texas-Mexican version, including the familiar refrain "mi ganado está en la sierra" (32-7).

To substantiate the musical link with Spain is considerably more complicated. It seems that the music that accompanies the corrido text has gone through many changes to arrive at a standard melodic form. According to Geijerstam the melodies that accompanied the original romances and corridos have not survived. He suggests that Texas-Mexican melodies are diatonic rather than reflecting the traditional modality that one readily identifies as typically Spanish (usually Phrygian; think of *flamenco* guitar music) (Geijerstam 50).

As a folk genre, the transmission of corrido music, even more so than the text, depends on an oral and aural tradition. To trace its melodic development from a romance sung at the time of the conquistadors to the modern era would necessitate a substantial amount of recorded or transcribed music from this period. To my knowledge, such a resource is unavailable:

The problem of the origin of Hispanic tunes in Latin American folk music is generally unsolved. But we can say with some certainty that the tunes sung in Latin America are for the most part not simply imports from Spain and Portugal (while the words more frequently are). They are more usually songs either composed in Latin America in the styles brought from Europe, or they are indeed songs brought from Europe centuries ago but so changed by the process of oral tradition that the tunes in Europe that are related to them can no longer be recognized as relatives. (Nettl 193)

Peña speculates that the unique development of Texas-Mexican music in general is due largely to the syncretic forces caused by the wealth of European music which migrants to the

region diffused as they came north, particularly from Monterrey (I will present this idea later).

Whatever the origins, it is clear that a firm tradition exists. The tune of the corridista centers on a major tonality, involving movements around the tonic, subdominant, and dominant degrees (standard I, IV, V chord progression):



As this example shows, the melodic contour is simple, rarely exceeding an octave in range, and illustrates certain conventions in construction.⁸ Phrases correspond to the length of the textual line, and are therefore usually short. This example marks a vocal technique of stylistic importance: the voice affects a strong falling motion, dropping in a glissando of as much as a major third at the phrase ending. Metrically, the corrido seems to be almost exclusively compound, either 6/8 or 9/8, although 2/4 is sometimes used as tempo increases.

Changes in the melodic structure of the corrido have been kept to a minimum. It is not the melody that is important to the corridista; rather, he composes the lyrics of his corrido and then chooses an appropriate, more or less

⁸ It should be emphasized that these are transcriptions of variants heard by Américo Paredes, passed down as they are by oral tradition. As such, they have developed their own stylistic aspects.

standardized, melodic line in order to convey the message. "Most *corridos* can be sung to borrowed *corrido* tunes, and having learned two or three melodies, makes it possible to sing a large number" [sic], according to Aurora Lucero-White Lea, as cited by Simmons (27).⁹

Spanish traditions are evident in vocal performance style and in instrumentation. The nasal vocal technique may be traced to Arab influence closely associated with the differences found in Iberian music in general: "The influence of Arabic music on Spanish folk song seems to have been considerable, which is not surprising when we remember the centuries of Arab rule over the peninsula [800-1400]...[an important] feature common to Spanish and Arabic music is the manner of singing, which is rather tense, nasal, and harsh-sounding" (Nettl 113). This singing style is evident among males in the Texas Mexican tradition. "Male duets...were by and large more nasal and raspy" (Peña 7). Harmonies of parallel thirds and sixths characterize duets.

Basic instrumental accompaniment is provided by the guitar, a further reflection of Spanish origin. While the six string guitar is most commonly used today, the *bajo sexto*, which is actually a twelve stringed bass guitar, is the traditional instrument. Larger than the six string and tuned differently than the twelve string used in American folk music, the *bajo sexto* is more cumbersome to play and

⁹ Her article from Literary Folklore of the Hispanic Southwest (San Antonio, Texas, 1953) is cited in Simmons, 120.

does not allow for the florid runs usually associated with Spanish guitar (Paredes xxiv).

Traditionally the corrido was sung in a variety of situations with different ensembles. It may be sung quietly in the family circle, or it may be performed loudly at the top of one's voice--especially true for men travelling alone on the open road. It is generally the old songs which are sung at home while people hear new songs at the cantinas. Singing among agricultural workers was common, but not in the call and response style associated with some African peoples. But it is in the family that the transmission of corridos follows a progression by heritage, handed down from generation to generation.

Iberian influences only account for certain aspects of the corrido. One can speculate, however, on the general forces that might have influenced its development. Because folk music is a naturally fluid genre, transmitted orally and aurally, it is likely to be easily influenced by other sources. Certain inflections in the voice, a strum habitually used on the guitar, all contribute to a natural evolution which, with the compounding of such elements, eventually leads to substantial changes. Visiting artists contribute to the musical vocabulary available.

Peña proposes one explanation for the development of melody along the border. Added to the traditional folk melodies of Mexico may have been other varieties of song which came to the region via Monterrey (Peña 20-9).

According to his thesis, Tejanos considered Monterrey, the capital of Nuevo León, to be of central importance to their economic and social lives. This link provided a means for the transmission and dissemination of the musical trends in Europe, initially imported to Mexico by a culture hungry bourgeoisie. Eventually these trends 'trickled down' to the masses. Through trade with the northern border regions, travel to and from this area by Tejanos returning to visit family and friends, and the travels of musicians (*trovadores*), these trends were brought to the border, some of which may have been incorporated into the music.

One vital feature that this link explains is the prevalence of the accordion in border music. German, Polish, and Czech immigration to the Americas introduced the instrument along with its music: polka, waltz, and *schottische* (Peña 21-2). While people from these countries did settle in Texas, Peña feels that the interethnic conflicts that existed at the time make an introduction from Mexico more likely. There is no doubt that these immigrants and their music had a profound impact on Texas-Mexican instrumental music and that there was a considerable amount of influence on both sides: "the Mexicans borrowed from the German music and the Germans borrowed from the Mexican music" (Marre).

Contemporary trends in Tex-Mex music must be looked at through the development of a particular type of ensemble, known as *conjunto*. The music of the conjunto came to be

known as *ranchera*. As the name suggests, this music evolved on the ranches, and blends the accordion with already existing Mexican folk elements, of which the corrido is a part. Although originally an instrumental style, it gradually incorporated vocals as well. The style, Peña says, evolved over the period 1930-1960, featuring an ensemble based around the accordion, which included a trap drum set, either plucked contrabass or electric bass, and guitar (usually bajo sexto). The accordionist is usually the band leader and not surprisingly also the lead vocalist; Tony de la Rosa, Beto Villa, Flaco Jimenez and his son Santiago Jimenez Jr., are just some of the names of famous conjunto accordionists.

Conjunto reached its experimental peak with the work of EL Conjunto Bernal, a trio of brothers who challenged the limits of the established tradition. Despite their work in the 1960s, and innovative use of three part vocal harmony and the five row chromatic accordion, they remained adventurers in a style that has not really changed since the 1950s:

The style had reached its cultural limits and was now considered a 'finished' art form that eminently fulfilled its sociomusical design. Conjunto articulated the Tejano proletarians unique socioesthetic values--values that were in substantial opposition to those of the middle class in particular and of the larger American society in general. (Peña 101)

This fact annoys contemporary artists like Esteban (Steve) Jordan who want to advance the style beyond the standard polka rhythms. Jordan, an extremely inventive and virtuosic

accordionist, has worked to transcend the limits of this tradition by working with American artists like Ry Cooder.

Conjunto faces a difficult period as it confronts competing music from other parts of the Hispanic world. Immigration into the Rio Grande valley has put pressure on an already stagnating music. However, Peña concludes that "Texas remains...conjunto music's stronghold, particularly in the area bounded by Austin, San Antonio, Alice, Corpus Christi" (107). Conjunto is vital and will continue to be heard. The corrido is a major part of the tradition upon which it is based.

If Paredes suggests that the contemporary corrido is unique to the border region (N.P.R.), it is because the border and its conflicts have seemingly sustained and continue to sustain the active production of corridos, now dealing with contemporary issues of today's world. The Texas-Mexican *corridos* have evolved into an expression that is uniquely Tejano. As I will discuss in the next chapter, this development occurred due to conflictual relations between Texas-Mexicans and Anglos.

CHAPTER TWO

THE VOICE OF A PEOPLE

The Third World, it is said, begins South of the border.¹ As the twentieth century comes to a close, life for the vast majority of Tejanos means confronting racism, poverty, and despair. Disparity between the Tejano and Anglo's economic and social status, provoked by cultural and racial intolerance, shape the folk music of the Tejano. An overview on the nature of the history of the Tejano, the land, culture, and society, reveals the historical dynamic behind the people. This is essential to understanding the function of the corrido for the Tejano and why it continues to be important.

As I have indicated, the geographical focus for my study of the corrido is the Texas border region, and in particular, along the lower, or southern border. This is an area bounded by the Nueces river and the Rio Grande, encompassing the counties of Cameron, Nueces, and Webb. As De León and Stewart note, "the chaparral (evergreen scrub oak), the Spanish language, and the general pervasiveness of Hispanic cultural salients distinguished it from other geographical regions in the state" (11). This area forms a

¹ Marre, Video documentary Tex-Mex: The Music of the Texas-Mexican Borderlands 1982.

part of the wide and arable coastal plain and is suited to growing cash crops such as cotton.

The demography of the region is overwhelmingly Hispanic. The character of urban settlements illustrates this:

Many communities along the American side of the southwestern border are almost totally Mexican-American, and larger cities such as Brownsville, Laredo, Corpus Christi, El Paso, and San Antonio carry the mark of Spain and Mexico ...in the ever-present flow of the Spanish language on street corners. (Encyclopaedia Britannica 166)

It is generally accepted that this region has not enjoyed the same prosperity as others in Texas. It is a function of geography that as White penetration into Texas advanced the north and eastern region of the state were developed sooner than the more distant and, for them, hostile west and south. During the advance of economic development from the mid 1800s to the turn of the century, these latter areas were viewed historically and economically as the Mexican periphery of a predominantly Anglo interior. One of the resources of this periphery was cheap Mexican labor.

It seems the Tejano population has always been marginalized. Historically the northern regions of the Spanish empire were characterized by sparse population. There was exploratory activity in the area during the seventeenth century which established some settlements and missions in the Rio Grande valley. These actions increased in the coming centuries as the Spanish attempted to take greater control of an area so far from a central government located over a thousand miles to the south, primarily in the

colonization of the state of Nuevo Santander. The distances proved too great as a number of events converged to separate this region from the rest of the empire. Foremost among these was the independence of Mexico from Spain in 1821.

There had been Anglo settlement in what was to become Texas at the beginning of the 19th century. The Louisiana Purchase from France in 1803 justified American claims to territory up to the Rio Grande. Slowly and with Spanish authorization, Anglos under the leadership of Moses Austin and his son Stephen F. Austin established settlements in Texas territory. Interethnic conflict increased as North and South met.

There was also resentment against the Mexican government. This came to a head in 1833 after a successful Mexican coup by Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna brought a change in power. Stephen Austin hoped to secure a response to colonial grievances and went to Mexico city but was imprisoned instead. This incited the Texas revolution in 1835 and 1836 after Austin's release, and led to the subsequent formation of a provisional government, and declaration of an Independent Texas Republic. The sequence of events which leads to the Mexican-American conflict and culminates in the siege of the Alamo in San Antonio is well documented. Both Anglos and Texas-Mexicans took part in the struggle against the Mexican troops. After a ten year period as a republic, Texas became the 28th state in the union and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) was signed (164).

The latter half of the 19th and the 20th centuries brought profound changes in Texan society. With the introduction of a modern economy and increased industrialization speeded by the discovery of oil in 1901, the status of the Texas-Mexican changed radically. Formerly, Tejanos had held jobs in commerce and light industries as well as agriculture. However, lacking the leverage of education and equal status with their Anglo counterparts, they were gradually pushed into agricultural labor and the bottom of the service industry.

The situation only worsened:

What the evolutionary process of economic change did was to force the bulk of Tejanos into making their way as jornaleros (day laborers) ...many were tied to menial service jobs such as laundering, cooking, and general servant work. (De León and Stewart 35)

Mexicans were dislodged from the craft industries and, due to discrimination compounded by a lack of facility in English, were unable to penetrate white collar professions: "in both rural and urban areas Tejanos were displaced from central production roles in the economy and concentrated into positions at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy" (89).

The Mexican-American 'problem' was developing. Although education is seen as a major factor, De León and Stewart note that in the latter half of the 19th Century it was more a question of ethnic origin than educational background: "no major discrepancies existed in the percentages of literate

and illiterate Tejanos working in agricultural and service employments, indicating that literacy skills made little difference for Tejanos' access to certain jobs" (37). Certainly this situation has improved somewhat, especially with the Civil Rights movement and the Chicano power movements in the 1960s, but in general the bilingual factor remains. Many view even an accent as a deterrent to employment possibilities. For this reason, and in contrast to white perceptions of urbanization, cities have not held the same mythical promise for Tejanos.

But the lure of "el norte" still exists for the Mexican population in general. Immigration compounds the problems. Historically the major push has been economic. This was particularly true during the Porfiriato, named after the dictator Porfirio Diaz under whose rule conditions in rural areas became so bad that the Mexican Revolution of 1910-20 erupted. Today the worsening Mexican economy has brought stories of desperate attempts at illegal immigration to the United States. Whites, however, recognized the advantages of this influx of a potentially cheap resource: "society tolerates laxity in policing the border because demand persists for continued cheap labor and a work force willing to assume undesirable jobs" (6).

Oppression has produced a variety of reactions within the Tejano community. There are those who attempt to embrace the Anglo society completely and essentially become like the whites they see around them. In her study of barrio life in

Dallas, Shirley Achor defines this group as "accommodationists," those who try to enter the main stream. The main feature of this group is their separation from their Tejano heritage. They become the "good" Mexicans who speak English well and have adapted to enter the dominant hegemony that is American life: "divergence from tradition--in family life, in religious practices, in political behavior, and in social relationships--marks the accommodative mode of adaptation...ethnicity is deemphasized" (Achor 124).

In contrast to those who seek assimilation, Achor finds the insulationist. Here the relationship with the dominant society is minimized. The Anglos are distrusted, and their world is not understood. Mexican Americans must maintain the traditional and cultural values that define them as "la Raza"(the race): family ties are of great importance, and this is mirrored by the emotional support offered within the larger neighborhood community, the barrio. Achor notes that Spanish is the preferred language and that "such an ambiance allows the individual a sense of dignidad and self-respect that is frequently denied him in other surroundings...A person's merit...is not dependent upon such Anglo standards of success as wealth, education, or occupational prestige" (117). It is the insulationist behavior that has maintained those cultural values that distinguish the Tejano. Indeed, in the rural setting, in the atmosphere of small towns, and in the emphasis on traditional celebrations, the culture has remained very strong.

The plantation is central to the Tejano: the ranch, the *charra* (cowboy) tradition and rodeo competitions are integral to Tejano existence. Peña notes the vital importance of folk music and the conjunto style in promoting the idea of *lo ranchero*. The music of the conjunto ensemble, the *ranchera*, is a symbol of the rural agricultural tradition to which working class Tejanos are tied. Born of this is a sense of romantic nationalism that links Texas-Mexicans, known as *mexicanismo* (Peña 10-1). Central to *mexicanismo* is the music.

The corrido creates a stable environment in song, rooted in tradition, to which Tejanos turn for a sense of community and identity in the midst of social and economic hardship. The role of the corridista is to supply this, whether consciously or not. What are the social forces influencing the corridista? What is the instinct that has been ingrained in him which enables him to earn his living from this activity?² How is this reflected in the nature of his songwriting?

The corridista represents popular sentiment. His songs reflect the concerns of the working classes. The popularity of the corrido as a form can be explained by its dual purpose: to educate and entertain. The corrido transmits information to those who are illiterate, a segment of the population that would not be able to acquire it from any

² He is usually a man, although famous women singers like Lydia Mendoza hold a strong place in the tradition (Marre).

other source. Simmons, in his study of the Mexican corrido, suggests that the corridista functions most importantly within the context of market towns with strong links to the rural population. He provides the following vivid scene:

Hard upon a church wall which bounds one side of the market place, a compact circle of sombreroed farmers congregate around a squat little man with an impressive drooping mustache who, guitar in hand, has taken his place behind a bank of tinted broadsides spread out on the ground before him. This man is a *corridista*, one of those rustic minstrels, also known as *trovadores* or *cantadores*, who travel from market to market singing their songs and selling cheaply printed copies of their lyrics to those who will buy. (3)

Broadsides, or *hojas sueltas*, with printed lyrics, represent the topical nature of the corrido and its role as a news source. Simmons warns, however, that corridos should be seen as a popular perception of historical events rather than an accurate account.

The corridista is a performer first, a chronicler second. It is a matter of self-interest that he not jeopardize his standing with the public by commenting on distasteful events or concentrating too much on bare political themes. In general what is required of the corridista is an entertaining narrative, and a strict adherence to fact deferred to a good story. The style of the corrido reflects this: "most corridos are without literary pretensions of any kind and their language is attuned to the simplicity and lack of sophistication which characterize its public" (Simmons 23). The link is apparent also in the frequent use of the more accessible first person narrative (Geijerstam

51). The skill of the corridista, then, lies in his ability to probe the currents of popular sentiment and develop them into song.

Historically people bought the broadsides and brought them home with them where they could be sung again and again. If the listener was not literate, he might give the words to a family member who was, or even seek out a neighbor able to sing the tale to a simple tune. In agricultural communities where workers were hungry for news, the corrido could be passed along from family to family, town to town. In this way large numbers of people heard a corrido throughout a region larger than the original composer might have been able to cover himself.

Today the recording industry functions in a similar way. Contemporary corridistas on the border tap into interethnic issues in order to sell their songs. Common themes involve illegal border crossings by Mexicans who want a better life. Ending up in the local county jail, they frequently (in the song) escape. The corridista then has a responsibility to continue certain myths of the folk consciousness. Solome Gutierrez is a corridista from San Antonio whose livelihood depends on recording music dealing with the border conflict; "Songs about smuggling sell the best" (Marre) he says of his song El Gato Negro (the black cat):

A mi me llaman el Gato Negro

todos los leyes me buscan ya...
 [they call me the black cat/all the law men are after me
 (Marre)]

In creating this tune, he not only recounts a common experience among the people, but elevates it to romantic proportions. He knows what Tejanos want to hear when they listen to the radio.

San Antonio is the hub of commercial Tex-Mex music. Radio stations run by Tejano disc jockeys emerge as purveyors of heritage, serving to keep the sense of community among the people alive. This is especially true for young people. Rico, a radio announcer in San Antonio, sees music as a way to reverse the negative stigma attached to Tejanos as a result of economic and social oppression. He sees his job as essential in educating young people about their language and culture. Because it chronicles the historical experience of the Tejano, contemporary Tex-Mex music develops a sense of pride in Mexican heritage and traditions.

Historical events are a major source for corridistas. The corridos offered in my performance have survived along the border for some time.³ They contain ideas and create images with which Tejanos have readily associated over the years. These are successful corridos because they evoke themes important to the way Texas-Mexicans perceive themselves as a group.

³ The following discussion of the corridos organizes the texts chronologically. I shaped my performance for stylistic reasons rather than historical expediency.

Conflict inspired corridistas more than anything else. Victories especially inspire faith and a strong community morale. A war hero then provides an idol to which the people look as defender of the group and its traditions. Although the first composition I discuss is not technically a corrido, it illustrates the importance of heroic narrative and emphasizes the need for a local hero. "A Zaragoza" honors a general of the French Mexican conflict of 1862. Ignacio Zaragoza, a native of South Texas, commanded the army which defended Puebla on May 5 and turned back the French (the defeat from which we get the Cinco de Mayo celebrations). Employing the first person, the narrator eulogizes Zaragoza as a hero of the border:

Dios te salve, valiente Zaragoza,
 invicto general de la frontera
 [God save thee, brave Zaragoza,
 unconquerable general of the border
 (Paredes 51)]

The fact that the melody echoes the Mexican national anthem suggests a strong tie with the culture to the South.

The Tejano lives in the margin between two countries. If 'Zaragoza' reflects a desire to be associated with Mexico, 'Rito García' illustrates the complications facing Tejanos; political decisions in the Mexican capital greatly influenced life on the border. Given the historical sensitivity of the area, Mexican government policy played an important role in the lives of Texas-Mexicans on both sides of the Rio Grande.

During the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz (1877-1910), Tejanos could no longer look to the South for support in cases of attacks often provoked by racism. 'Rito García' concerns a hero of another type, a kind of martyr in the constant fight of the Tejano for a home. As the story goes, in 1885 García fights back after Anglo police search his home without a warrant and beat members of his family. To escape he crosses the river into what he feels is his own territory.

Conociendo bien las leyes
del país americano,
me pasé a buscar abrigo
a mi suelo mexicano.
[knowing well how the law works in America,
I looked for shelter on my Mexican soil
(Paredes 58-9)].

But he is captured and given to the U.S. authorities by the governor of Tamaulipas (neighboring Mexican state), in keeping with an agreement between Mexico and Washington. García feels betrayed by what he thinks of as his homeland:

Yo nunca hubiera pensado
que mi país tirano fuera,
que Mainero me entregara
a la nación extranjera.
[I never would have thought that my country was
unjust, that Mainero would hand me over to a
foreign nation (Paredes 58-9)].

Paredes explains that "'Rito García' sounds a note of disenchantment with the Mexican's government's ability or willingness to defend the rights of Mexicans in the United States" (Paredes 27).

Tejano run-ins with American law provide a classic theme of border conflict. Perhaps the most famous example of the

corrido is "Gregorio Cortez". The actual account of the incident surrounding the pursuit of Cortez by American law enforcement differs dramatically from the lyric of the corrido, illustrating a penchant for coloring the facts for the sake of literary interest.

According to Paredes, the incident occurred in 1901. Cortez defends himself after his brother dies at the hands of Sheriff Morris who accused the pair of a crime they did not commit. He flees Karnes County (near San Antonio), and makes the "run for the border" over 500 miles of hostile terrain; he kills another law man (Glover) on the way and does not make it. In Laredo, just short of his goal, he is betrayed by a fellow Tejano and captured. The trial lasts three years and Cortez is finally acquitted of all counts of murder except for Glover's and for this he is sentenced for life. Eventually he is pardoned (N.P.R.). Cortez's acquittal and eventual pardon were viewed as major victories by the Mexican American community of the time. "Cortez and the corrido about him are a milestone in the Mexican American's emerging group consciousness" (Paredes 31). His release came as a result of a unified effort within the Tejano community.

Perhaps to strengthen the place of this hero, the corridista changes the nature of his arrest. Instead of being the victim of another Tejano, it is his moral character that leads him to give himself up:

--Dicen que por culpa mia
han matado mucha gente,
pues ya me voy a entregar

porque eso no es conveniente.-
 ["They say that because of me many people have died
 so now I will surrender because such things are not right"
 (Paredes 65-6)].

Cortez acquires a mystical aura in this song which elevates him to the status of a true folk hero. Much is made of his exploits. Outnumbered three hundred to one, he successfully springs a trap set by the scorned *rinches* (the Texas rangers). He shows no fear, in contrast to the American lawmen (described as "whiter than a poppy" [l. 26]) and eventually, in giving himself up, proves that he is the stronger:

Decía Gregorio Cortez
 decía en su voz divina:
 --Mis armas no las entrego
 hasta estar en bartolina.-
 [Then said Gregorio Cortez, speaking in his godlike voice,
 "I won't surrender my weapons until I'm in jail" (Paredes 66)].

Cortez's confidence is unshakeable. He is prepared to affirm his right to defend the honor of a fallen brother (l. 19-20, and l. 23-24) and to pay with his freedom:

Ya agarraron a Cortez,
 ya terminó la cuestión,
 la pobre de su familia
 lo lleva en el corazón.
 [Now they have taken Cortez, now the matter has ended;
 his poor family keeps him in their hearts
 (Paredes 66)].

An insistent theme in border relations has been migration. The North calls to the Tejano with hopes of economic opportunity. This is not only a matter of Mexicans crossing into the United States, but also a movement from South Texas to the northern states in order to escape the deepening economic rut of plantation life. "La Pensilvania"

tells of one Tejano's journey to the steel mills in Bethlehem Pennsylvania circa 1923. It is a song of farewell and expectation for a new and better life:

Adiós estado de Texas,
con toda su plantación;
ya me voy pa' Pensilvania
por no pizar algodón.

[Farewell, you state of Texas, with all your planted fields,
I'm going to Pennsylvania so I won't have to pick
cotton. (Paredes 56-7)].

The corrido is a folk tradition. Whether a corrido is performed at dances by conjunto musicians, or sung alone on the open road, it has an important function in the lives of Texas-Mexicans. If it has a long history and remains a vital source of identity for the Tejano, it is because the ballad text and music embody tradition. Corrido texts affirm the right of the Tejano to live with dignity and respect within the dominant Anglo culture. In providing a base from which people can develop a sense of what it means to be Tejano, corridos continue to be the foundation of the folk and popular culture along the border.

CHAPTER THREE

MY DISCOVERY OF A TEXAS-MEXICAN TRADITION

*Music is a universal phenomenon, but each culture does have its own, and learning to understand another culture's music is in many ways like learning a foreign language*¹

Initially the purpose of this project was to perform; the challenge--to take folk songs from the page and give them life. My motive was to present an evolution of the stylistic conventions used in performance of corridos, choosing ballads from the late 1800s to the early 1920s as examples which highlight different aspects of the border conflict, some dated, some more universal. As a performance the project provides an opportunity to interpret and implement techniques of playing and singing in a different style, based almost entirely on listening.

Much related to the performance lacks cohesion. I am singing songs from different periods in a seemingly random order. My efforts present a variety of performance options rather than an historical progression of technique or style. I do feel, however, that historical evolution may be mirrored by the relative sophistication and instrumentation available in different performance situations. A man walking down the road singing at the top of his voice is expressing an early rendering of a song; he has no recourse to

¹ Nettl, Folk and Traditional Music of the Western Continents 1965:6

technology, no instrument, only the words suggest a specific time frame.

My performance is an artificial recreation in almost every respect. I am not a Tejano and I have never been to South Texas. All the information that I am drawing from has come to me second hand. In that respect creating an authentic performance is not possible. Aside from my obvious visual presence and use of instrumentation, there are linguistic problems. Though I feel that my Spanish is fairly sound, there are American idiosyncrasies and pronunciation problems that will crop up.

Nevertheless I have tried to give a faithful rendering of the style as I understand it. I try to use a nasal vocal style; my guitar strums are based on the recordings I have listened to. Lizet Diaz-Perez, with whom I have been working, has told me that I have succeeded in part in my desire to read these corridos instinctively. She has given me invaluable guidance on diction and rhythm and has encouraged me to experiment with the endings of phrases in order to create more variety.

Researching this topic made me aware of a wealth of material on Mexican American folklore and music that I had not known about. It has broadened my musical perspective. It should be clear by now that this whole project would be nearly impossible without the work of Américo Paredes. Not only is A Texas-Mexican Cancionero a collection of full texts and melodies, but also a resource for understanding

the relationship between Texas Mexicans and this folk tradition.

The corrido recordings I do have relate to specific periods in Mexican history. Both collections on the Mexican Revolution (1910-20) as well as that dealing with the Cristera rebellion (1926-29) are excellent resources including extensive liner notes with lyrics. These collections provide me with basic information about vocal style, guitar technique, and characteristics of the music: rhythm and the shaping of melodic phrases to verse length.

The Rounder company's four volume series entitled Conjunto! is an important resource for my understanding of Texas Mexican albeit conjunto style. Aside from illustrating basic performance practices in the treatment of the music, it provides an idea of the instrumentation that may be used in a contemporary performance of traditional genre. Manuel Peña's work on the conjunto itself is an excellent source establishing the connections between the Tejano working class and its music.

The project has been easy in some respects. I am at home in music and have sung and played the guitar since I was a child. I have always had a passionate interest in music as a language. I have been able to feed that interest in doing this project.

Most importantly, doing this project has been fruitful because it made me ask questions about my own cultural identity and the role of music in my life. As an aspiring

musician, I have looked critically at the music industry in this country. I am more aware that music can and does mean something vital to humanity, wherever it is made and listened to.

AFTERWORD

My inspiration for this project was born out of the musical investigations of popular artists I admire. Those artists have challenged the commercial institution that is the music business. They have challenged the formulae of western popular music by researching the music of non-western cultures, what we might call world music.¹ There are those who object to the implementation of world music styles and their objections are easy to see. Those western artists who do borrow musical ideas are often seen by some as a new guise of western exploitation. Having raped third world nations of their natural resources and enslaved their peoples, we are finally looting their culture.² Yet music is not something to be controlled. If it is jealously guarded

¹ Dr. Paul Friedlander's course entitled "Popular Musics of the Non-western World" was the catalyst which propelled my interest in the analysis of world music. He provided me with a general frame in which to organize my project. His "rock window", as it is called, is a systematic method involving a close examination of music and lyrics, and the background of the artists. Of great importance is the social context within which the artist and music function and by which they are influenced.

² This is especially true of African music. As Ronnie Graham says, "We have seen how several western pop musicians have attempted to incorporate African rhythms and styles into their career development. While many observers consider these phenomena to be positive developments in the promotion of African music, we...argue that the efforts of Paul McCartney, Brian Eno, David Byrne, Peter Gabriel, and Paul Simon are largely meaningless (and often selfish) in terms of the overall development of African music" (15).

it loses its vitality. I believe in the fluidity of music as a form of communication and that hybridization is a natural and, generally, positive development.

This is a very important issue for me, primarily as a musician and a writer of songs in a popular style, but also as a product of a WASP background. My education has brought with it an acknowledgement of past atrocities committed by my forebears. But it has also brought a sense of responsibility and duty to ensure that the future my generation creates will continue to try to balance some of the inequities. For me this means working to understand the music of other cultures and promoting its validity as artistic expression. I viewed this project as an opportunity to increase my appreciation for the ethnic diversity of the United States. I approached it as the study of a particular folk genre in its own context, rather than as a probable resource for my own work.

My choice of the Texas Mexican community comes from my contact with Spanish and specifically Catalan culture as a child. While the connection is not obvious, I feel that there is a cultural similarity between the oppressed status of Mexican Americans within the U.S. hegemony and that of Catalans during the Franquist dictatorship. I experienced a strong bonding with these people, especially with certain families who adopted me as one of their own. My observations of life in the Catalan *barri* (neighborhood) and my

participation in festive days instilled in me a love for music as a living part of the community.

Although this experience would seem to provide an obvious choice of folklore, I avoided Catalan folk songs because I am an American. I was prompted to look to Mexican American culture as a source primarily out of a self-acknowledged ignorance regarding its life, values, and of course, its music. I must admit that there are obvious reasons for this; my time spent abroad, my ethnic background, and living in the Northwest. However, I have become more and more aware of the importance Hispanic culture has even in this part of the country. This is largely due to my study of Spanish which has made me more sensitive to issues affecting the Chicano community.

Folk songs and lore have always interested me. The myths passed down by oral tradition are an essential part of any group. In them are contained the essence of the values of that group. As I understand it, the oppressed social and cultural status of the Texas Mexican has been created by virtue of geographical and historical factors. Logically, perhaps, this has strengthened the commitment of its members to keep the old traditions alive in celebration, myth, and song, under the shadow of the Anglo hegemony.

My interest in cultures in which music is more important in daily activities is a reaction against U.S. culture. There has been a corresponding increase in the exaltation of the performing artist, what song-writer Joni Mitchell calls

the "star making machinery," as music itself has become marginalized. In promoting the image of an 'artist' what becomes important is the idealization of that artist. Similarly, there is a corresponding production of a music which promotes escapism more than it does a sense of community.

The thesis concept and the questions it asks about the function of music in culture are central to understanding the place of music in my life. I have often noticed that people in our society are uncomfortable in expressing themselves musically. We often squirm when someone raises their strong voice in song. We are used to having music exist in a particular context and to find it outside of this context is unnerving. The importance of doing this kind of project is not only that it brings me closer to the notion of music as a valid voice and vital in the way we look at ourselves, but to show how much we need it.

We are moving so rapidly in so many directions at once and there are so many of us that we cling to whatever fits our desires at that time. The industrial context of music has taken the people out of the music while allowing for tremendous advances in sound technology. Perhaps the reason we are so dependent on commercialization is that we are allowing the market to determine how we identify ourselves, rather than feeling any genuine sense of community.

Those of us who make music have our work cut out for us.

APPENDIX

Texts and Melodies of Performance Pieces*

* These melodies, as well as all the Spanish and English texts, have been taken from Américo Paredes' work A Texas-Mexican Cancionero.

La Pastora

A orillas de un sesteadero
una oveja me faltó,
y una blanca y bella
de un pastor se enamoró.

-Oye, pastor adorado,
aquí te habla una paloma,
arrímate aquí a mi lado
sin temor de que te coma.

-Yo te doy cuatro mil pesos,
y de pesos cuatro mil,
tan sólo porque te quedas
esta noche aquí a dormir.-

-No quiero cuatro mil pesos,
ni de pesos cuatro mil,
mi ganado está en la sierra
y con él voy a dormir.-

-Mira qué manitas tengo,
buenas para perfilar,
te las doy porque te quedas
esta noche a platicar.-

-Yo también tengo manitas,
buenas para trabajar,
mi ganado está en la sierra
y con él me voy a estar.-

-Mira qué piecito tengo,
para un zapato lucido,
te lo doy porque te quedas
esta noche aquí conmigo.-

-Yo también tengo piecitos
para un huarache lucido,
mi ganado está en la sierra,
ya me voy, pues no lo olvido.-

Close to where the sheep were
resting,
I could not find a ewe;
and a fair and pretty maiden
fell in love with a shepherd
boy.

"Hear me, beloved shepherd,
this dove is speaking to you;
come and sit close by my side,
do not fear that I will eat
you.

"I'll give you four thousand
pesos,
and of pesos thousands four,
if only you will stay
and sleep here tonight with
me."

"I don't want for thousand
pesos,
and of pesos thousands four;
my sheep are on the mountain,
and I must sleep with them."

"Just look at my little hands,
so good at making lace;
you can have them if you'll
stay and talk to me tonight."

"I also have little hands,
so good at doing hard work;
my sheep are on the mountain,
and I must go stay with them."

"Just look at my pretty foot,
fit for an elegant shoe;
you can have it if you'll stay
with me here tonight."

I also have pretty feet,
fit for an elegant huarache;
my sheep are on the mountain;
I'm going now for I cannot
forget them."

-Mira qué piernas tan blancas,
con sus venas tan azules,
te las doy porque te quedes
sábado, domingo y lunes.-

-Yo también tengo piernitas
con sus venas tan azules,
mi ganado está en la sierra,
ya me voy y no lo dudes.-

-Anda, pastor arrastrado,
no me quieres escuchar,
anda véte a tu ganado,
bien te puedes retirar.-

-Dispénsame jovencita,
tus palabras no entendí,
mi ganado está en la sierra
pero yo me quedo aquí.-

-No hay perdón para el que
yerra,
muchos menos para ti,
tu ganado está en la sierra,
bien te puedes ir de aquí.-

"Did you ever see such white
legs,
with such veins of blue?
You can have them if you'll
stay
Saturday, Sunday, and Monday."

"I also have pretty legs
with veins of blue;
my sheep are on the mountain;
I'm going now and don't you
doubt it."

"Get out, you low-down
shepherd,
you will not listen to me;
get along and join your sheep,
it is high time you left."

"I beg your pardon, young lady,
I did not understand your
words;
my sheep are on the mountain,
but as for me I will stay
here."

"He who blunders finds no
pardon,
you may expect less than that;
your sheep are on the mountain,
you had better go away."

La Pastora

Gregorio Cortez

En el condado de El Carmen
miren lo que ha sucedido,
murió el Cherife Mayor,
quedando Román herido.

En el condado de El Carmen
tal desgracia sucedió,
murió el Cherife Mayor,
no saben quién lo mató.

Se anduvieron informando
como media hora después,
supieron que el malhechor
era Gregorio Cortez.

Ya insortaron a Cortez
por toditito el estado,
que vivo o muerto se aprehenda
porque a varios ha matado.

Decía Gregorio Cortez
con su pistola en la mano:
--No siento haberlo matado,
lo que siento es a mi hermano.--

Decía Gregorio Cortez
con su alma muy encendida:
--No siento haberlo matado,
la defensa es permitida.--

Venían los americanos
más blancos que una amapola,
de miedo que le tenían
a Cortez con su pistola.

Decían los americanos,
decían con timidez:
--Vamos a seguir la huella
que el malhechor es Cortez.--

Soltaron los perros jaunes
pa' que siguieran la huella,
pero alcanzar a Cortez
era seguir a una estrella.

In the county of El Carmen,
look what has happened;
the Major Sheriff is dead,
leaving Román badly wounded.

In the county of El Carmen
such a tragedy took place:
the Major Sheriff is dead;
no one knows who killed him.

They went around asking
questions
about half an hour afterward;
they found out that the
wrongdoer
had been Gregorio Cortez

Now they have outlawed Cortez
throughout the whole of the
state;
let him be taken, dead or
alive,
for he has killed several men.

Then said Gregorio Cortez,
with his pistol in his hand,
"I don't regret having killed
him;
what I regret is my brother's
death."

Then said Gregorio Cortez,
with his soul aflame,
"I don't regret having killed
him;
self-defense is permitted."

The Americans were coming;
they were whiter than a poppy
from the fear they had
of Cortez and his pistol.

Then the Americans said,
and they said it fearfully,
"Come, let us follow the trail,
for the wrongdoer is Cortez."

They let loose the bloodhounds
so they could follow the trail,
but trying to overtake Cortez
was like following a star.

Tiró con rumbo a Gonzales
sin ninguna timidez:
--Siganme, rinches cobardes,
yo soy Gregorio Cortez.-

Se fue de Belmont al rancho,
lo alcanzaron a rodear,
poquitos más de trescientos,
y allí les brincó el corral.

Cuando les brincó el corral,
según lo que aquí se dice,
se agarraron a balazos
y les mató otro cherife.

Decía Gregorio Cortez
con su pistola en la mano:
--No corran, rinches cobardes,
con un solo mexicano.-

Salió Gregorio Cortez,
salió con rumbo a Laredo,
no lo quisieron seguir
porque le tuvieron miedo.

Decía Gregorio Cortez:
--?Pa' qué se valen de planes?
No me pueden agarrar
ni con esos perros jaunes.-

Decían los americanos:
--Si lo alcanzamos ?qué
hacemos?
Si le entramos por derecho
muy poquitos volveremos.-

Allá por El Encinal,
según lo que aquí se dice,
le formaron un corral
y les mató otro cherife.

Decía Gregorio Cortez
echando muchos balazos:
--Me he escapado de aguaceros,
continás de nublinazos.-

He struck out for Gonzales,
without showing any fear:
"Follow me, cowardly *rinches*;
I am Gregorio Cortez."

From Belmont he went to the
ranch,
where they succeeded in
surrounding him,
quite a few more than three
hundred,
but he jumped out of their
corral.

When he jumped out of the
corral,
according to what is said here,
they got into a gunfight,
and he killed them another
sheriff.
Then said Gregorio Cortez,
with his pistol in his hand,
"Don't run, you cowardly
rinches,
from a single Mexican."

Gregorio Cortez went out,
he went out toward Laredo;
they would not follow him
because they were afraid.

Then said Gregorio Cortez,
"What is the use of your
scheming?
You cannot catch me,
even with those bloodhounds."

Then said the Americans,
"If we catch him what shall we
do?
If we fight him man to man,
very few of us will return."

Way over near El Encinal,
according to what is said here,
they made him a corral,
and he killed them another
sheriff.

Then said Gregorio Cortez,
shooting out a lot of bullets,
"I have weathered
thunderstorms;
this little mist doesn't bother
me."

Ya se encontró a un mexicano,
le dice con altivez:
--Platícame qué hay de nuevo,
yo soy Gregorio Cortez.

--Dicen que por culpa mía
han matado mucha gente,
pues ya me voy a entregar
porque eso no es conveniente.-

Cortez le dice a Jesús:
--Ora sí lo vas a ver,
anda diles a los rinches
que me vengan a aprehender.-

Venían todos los rinches,
venían que hasta volaban,
porque se iban a ganar
diez mil pesos que les daban.

Cuando rodearon la casa
Cortez se les presentó:
--Por la buena sí me llevan
porque de otro modo no.-

Decía el Cherife Mayor
como queriendo llorar:
--Cortez, entrega tus armas,
no te vamos a matar.-

Decía Gregorio Cortez,
les gritaba en alta voz:
--Mis armas no las entrego
hasta estar en calaboz'.-

Decía Gregorio Cortez,
decía en su voz divina:
--Mis armas no las entrego
hasta estar en bartolina.-

Ya agarraron a Cortez,
ya terminó la cuestión,
la pobre de su familia
lo lleva en el corazón.

Now he has met a Mexican;
he says to him haughtily,
"Tell me the news;
I am Gregorio Cortez.

"They say that because of me
many people have been killed;
so now I will surrender,
because such things are not
right."

Cortez says to Jesús,
"At last you are going to see
it;
go and tell the *rinches*
that they can come and arrest
me."

All the *rinches* were coming,
so fast that they almost flew,
because they were going to get
the ten thousand dollars that
were offered

When they surrounded the house,
Cortez appeared before them:
"You will take me if I'm
willing
but not any other way."

Then said the Major Sheriff,
as if he was going to cry,
"Cortez, hand over your guns;
we do not want to kill you."

Then said Gregorio Cortez,
shouting to them in a loud
voice,
"I won't surrender my weapons
until I am in a cell."

Then said Gregorio Cortez,
speaking in his godlike voice,
"I won't surrender my weapons
until I'm inside a jail."

Now they have taken Cortez,
and now the matter has ended;
his poor family are
keeping him in their hearts.

Ya con ésta me despido
a la sombra de un ciprés,
aquí se acaba el corrido
de don Gregorio Cortez.

Now with this I say farewell
in the shade of a cypress;
this is the end of the ballad
of Don Gregorio Cortez.

Gregorio Cortez



La Pensilvania

El día veintiocho de abril
a las seis de la mañana
salimos en un enganche
para el estado de Pensilvania

Mi chinita me decía:
--Yo me voy en esa agencia
para lavarle su ropa,
para darle su asistencia.--

Y el enganchista nos dice
--No se lleven la familia,
para no pasar trabajos
en el estado de West Virginia.--

--Pa' que sepas que te quiero,
me dejas en Foro West;
cuando ya estés trabajando
me escribes de donde estés

--Cuando ya estés trabajando
me escribes, no seas ingrato;
de contestación te mando,
de recuerdo, mi retrato.--

Al llegar a West Kentockle
cambiamos de locomotora,
de allí salimos corriendo
ochenta millas por hora.

Adiós Foro West y Dalas,
pueblos de mucha importancia;
ya me voy pa' Pensilvania
por no andar en la vagancia.

Adiós estado de Texas,
con toda su plantación;
ya me voy pa' Pensilvania
por no pizar algodón.

On the twenty-eighth day of
April,
at six o'clock in the morning,
we left on a labor contract,
for the state of Pennsylvania

My beloved said to me,
"I want to go on that job,
so I can wash your clothes,
so I can cook your meals."

But the labor contractor told
us,
"Don't take your families
along,
so you won't have any trouble
in the state of West Virginia."

"Just to show you that I love
you,
leave me, then, in Fort Worth;
when you are settled and
working,
write me, wherever you are.

"When you are settled and
working,
please write me, don't be mean;
when I answer I will send you
my picture to remember me by."

When we got to West Kentucky,
we switched locomotives;
we went out of there
going at eighty miles per hour.

Farewell, Fort Worth and
Dallas,
you are very important towns,
I'm going to Pennsylvania
to avoid a vagrant's life.

Farewell, you state of Texas,
with all your planted fields,
I'm going to Pennsylvania
so I won't have to pick cotton.

Cuando llegamos allá,
que del tren ya nos bajamos,
nos dicen las italianas:
--?Di'onde vienen, mexicanos?--

Contestan los mexicanos,
los que ya sabían inglés:
--Venimos en un enganche
de la ciudad [sic] de Foro
West.-

Estos versos son compuestos
cuando ya venía en camino
poesías de un mexicano
de nombre de Constantino

Ya con ésta me despido,
con mi sombrero en las manos,
y mis fieles compañeros
son trescientos mexicanos.

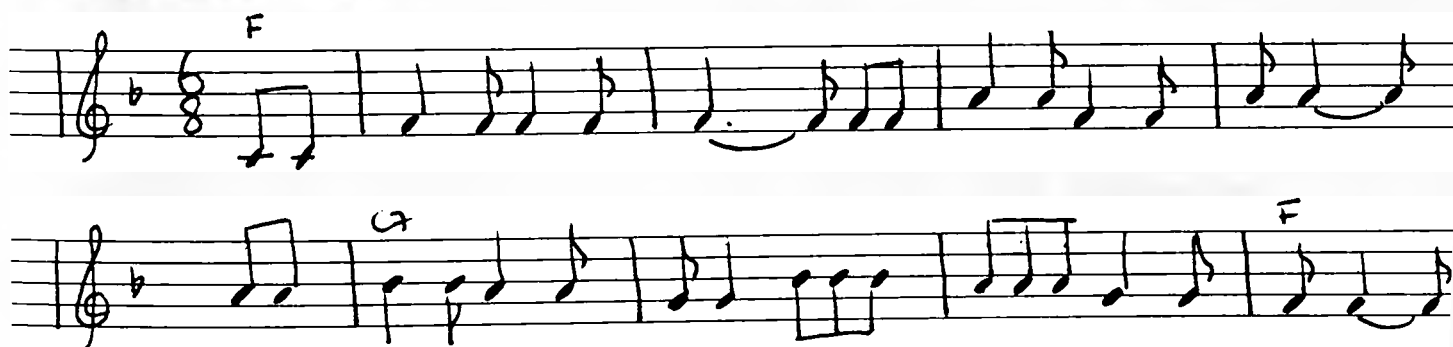
When we arrived there,
once we had got off the train,
the Italian girls asked us,
"Mexicans, where are you from?"

And the Mexicans answered,
those who already knew English,
"We have come on a labor
contract,
from the city of Fort Worth."

These stanzas were composed
while I was still on the way;
they're the verses of a Mexican
by the name of Constantino.

Now with this I say farewell,
with my hat in my hands,
and my faithful companions
are three hundred Mexicans.

La Pensilvania



A Zaragoza

Dios te salve, valiente
Zaragoza,
invicto general de la frontera,
yo con los libres saludo tu
bandera
que en Puebla tremoló sin
descansar.

Los hijos de la Patria te
saludan,
solemnizando tu triunfo en este
día,
los venideros también con
alegría
bendecirán tu nombre sin cesar

El pueblito y sus
autoridades
tu nombre ensalzan repetidas
veces
porque fuiste el terror de los
franceses
en Guadalupe, Loreto y en San
Juan.

La mañana del cinco de mayo
que con muy pocos soldados
mexicanos
un golpe rudo le diste a los
tiranos
que a Puebla se acercaban con
afán.

No olviden, mexicanos
que en el cinco de mayo
los zuavos como un rayo
corrieron...!para atrás!
Tirando cuanto traían,
los que a Puebla venían
apurados decían:
--!Pelear es por demás!

God save thee, brave
Zaragoza,
unconquerable general of the
Border;
I and all free men salute your
flag
that waved unceasingly in
Puebla.

The sons of the Fatherland
salute you,
celebrating your triumph on
this day;
those to come also joyfully
will bless your name
unceasingly.

This little town and its
authorities
exalt your name on numberless
occasions
because you were the terror of
the French
at Guadalupe, Loreto, and San
Juan.

The morning of the fifth of
May,
when with a handful of Mexican
soldiers
you dealt a rude blow to the
tyrants
who were eagerly approaching
Puebla.

Mexicans, don't forget
that on the fifth of May
the Zouaves, with lightening
speed,
ran...toward the rear!
Casting off all that they
carried
they who were coming to Puebla
exclaimed in their haste,
"It is useless to fight."

A Zaragoza

Handwritten musical score for 'A Zaragoza'. The score is written on eight staves, each with a treble clef and a common time signature (C). The music is composed of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together in groups. Chord symbols are written above the staves: C, G7, Dm, and Am. The score concludes with a double bar line on the eighth staff.

Chord symbols present in the score:

- C
- G7
- Dm
- Am

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