



# **Lydia Mendoza's Life in Music / La Historia de Lydia Mendoza: Norteño Tejano Legacies includes audio CD (American Musicspheres)**

*Yolanda Broyles-González*

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Yolanda Broyles-González

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Lydia Mendoza began her legendary musical career as a child in the 1920s, singing for pennies and nickels on the streets of downtown San Antonio. She lived most of her adult life in Houston, Texas, where she was born. The life story of this Chicana icon encompasses a 60-year singing career that began with the dawn of the recording industry in the 1920s and continued well into the 1980s, ceasing only after she suffered a devastating stroke. Her status as a working-class idol continues to this day, making her one of the most prominent and long-standing performers in the history of the recording industry and a champion of Chicana/o music. This bilingual edition presents Lydia Mendoza's historia in an interview between the artist and Yolanda Broyles-González: first is the English translation, then the Spanish original, as told by Mendoza herself. Broyles-González concludes the volume with an extended essay on the significance of Mendoza's career and her place in Tejana music and Chicana studies.

Known as a lone artist and performer, Lydia Mendoza's voice and twelve-string guitar-playing figure prominently in her ability to both nurture and transmit the vast oral tradition of popular Mexican song with beauty and integrity. She sang the songs of the people across generations in the old tradition; all are indigenous to the Americas, and many of them to Texas. It is the music that emerged from the experiences of native peoples (on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border) within the colonial context of the nineteenth century.

Mendoza's prominence and stature as a Chicana idol stems from her sustained presence and perpetual visibility within a complex network of social and cultural relations in the twentieth century. Along with being one of the earliest female recording and touring artists, she is loved as a voice of working-class *sentimiento*, sentiment and sentience, through song, which is one of the most cherished of Chicana/o cultural art forms. Through her vast repertoire and unmistakable interpretive skill in the shaping of songs she is a living embodiment of U.S.-Mexican culture and a participant in *raza* people's protracted struggles for survival.

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