

Music of the Revolution: Corridos

Revolutionary Mexico saw the rise of numerous hyper-patriotic ballads, called corridos. These stories-in-verse, narrating important events and activities of legendary characters in the classical quatrain form 8a 8b 8a 8b, became an important media for disseminating revolutionary themes to the masses in early twentieth century Mexico.

Other popular themes revolved around the worker's plight, romance, nostalgia for hearth & home. But the corrido gained significant momentum during the days of the dictator Porfirio Diaz and the ensuing resistance that led to the Mexican revolution (1910–1920). Popular heroes immortalized in song included Emiliano Zapata, Pascual Orozco, and Pancho Villa.

“La Cucaracha” is a song known by every American schoolchild. During this period it was altered to become a popular song of Mexico's revolution. In the modified corrido, the lyrics were changed to reflect the political rivalry battle between Venustiano Carranza and the troops of Zapata and Villa.

The corridista (singer) generally begins the song by describing the place, date, and lead character. The typical corrido then concisely and romantically details its story-in-verse, ending with a “friendly farewell.” The typical rhythm has been described as simple, polka-like or waltz-like, mocking the complex rhythms of the elite, and set to a single tune performed in major keys. The corrido is alive and well today. Revolutionary corridos remain well-known and are still performed in Mexico and in the southwestern United States. La Adelita, for instance, continues to celebrate the soldaderas of the Revolution, and retains enormous importance in the region. In *Photographing the Revolution*, the book associated with the exhibit that inspired this Educator's Guide, John Mraz suggests that every researcher of Mexican photography has heard of a little old lady living in a distant place who insists that she is “Adelita.” These viejita-adelitas typically offer as evidence a blurry, reproduced photo of a woman standing on the platform of a train.

Recently, modern counter-culture corridos have invaded YouTube, glorifying Mexico's most notorious smugglers, drug dealers, and cartel personalities, like Sinaloa's infamous drug lord, Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán Loera.

Corrido: el Mayor de los Dorados

I was the soldier of Francisco Villa
of the world famous general
who, even if sitting on a simple chair
did not envy that of the President.

Now I live on the seashore
remembering those immortal times
Ay... Ay... Now I live on the seashore
remembering Parral and Villa.

I was one of the dorados
made a Major by chance
and made crippled by the war
while defending the country and honor.

I remember of times past
how we fought against the invader
today I recall the times past
the dorados of whom I was a Major.

My horse, ridden so many times by me
died under me in Jiménez
a bullet intended to me
run across his body.

While dying, he neighed of pain
and gave his life for the country
Ay... Ay... while dying, he neighed of pain
how much I cried when he died!
Pancho Villa, I keep you in my memories and in
my heart
even if sometimes we were beaten
by the troops of Álvaro Obregón.

I was always your loyal soldier
until the end of the Revolution
Ay... Ay...
I was always your loyal soldier
fighting always in front of the cannons.

