

LA ENTREGA DE LOS NOVIOS

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*La Entrega de los Novios*¹ is the final part of the traditional wedding ceremony of the people of Southern Colorado and Northern New Mexico. It is a custom that has its roots originating during the Middle Ages in the royal courts of Spain. Historically, minstrels would sing verses to inform and to teach the bridal couple and their guests the values of the community. As a final act of the wedding rite, *La Entrega de los Novios* provides a system to give advice to the newlyweds regarding their obligations and responsibilities to each other and to serve as a reminder of the importance of the state of matrimony.

In Hispanic culture, there are many customs that are based on family values. The traditional wedding provides an opportunity for the expression of many of these customs. The principle parts of the wedding rite are the proposal (*El Pedimiento*), the engagement (*El Prendorio*), the wedding (*El Casorio*), the reception and dance (*El Baile*), and finally, the giving of the bride and groom (*La Entrega de los Novios*).

El Pedimiento is the beginning of the wedding rites. In more recent times, when a young man (*novio*) decided that he wanted to marry a *señorita* (*novia*), he expressed his intentions to his parents. In earlier times, a young man did not always have the opportunity to choose his partner because marriages were arranged. However, in most situations parents of the aspiring groom prepared a letter presenting the *novio's* intentions. During a social visit, the letter would be delivered to the *señorita's* parents. Many times, young people did not personally know each other. The only way that a young man could express his intentions to a young lady was through parents, friends or relatives. Brothers could not assume this role for a sister because they had the responsibility of

protecting family honor.² *Señoritas* carry the honor of the family. This value of the golden age of Spanish history still exists today. For this reason, the *señorita* never expressed her intentions directly because this would be shameful for the family honor. Therefore, in order to initiate the possibility of a wedding, a young man had to state his intentions by means of the traditional process.

Traditionally, the girl's parents had fifteen days to respond to the proposal.³ If the parents were not in agreement with the request, they would send a letter of rejection to the parents. This is called *dando calabazas* (giving pumpkins/squash). If the *novio*'s parents did not receive a pumpkin/squash or a letter of rejection, they could start planning the engagement party (*El Prendorio*).

The engagement party usually took place in the home of the *novia*. It took place eight days before the wedding.⁴ In contemporary culture, the engagement party takes place months before the wedding. At the *prendorio*, the families have the opportunity to formally meet one another and start to call one another *compadre*. A *compadre* is a member of extended family. At the appropriate time during the *prendorio*, the father of the *novio* says, "I would like you to meet the precious jewel (stating her name). This would often be the occasion when the *novio* would present the engagement ring to the *novia*.

At this moment, dressed up and in heels, the *novia* would come out to greet her new family. The act of uniting the two families was done by hugging or by formal reverence.⁵ The *señoritas* could not give a family embrace to the male members of her new family until after she curtsied with respect and grace.⁶ The *novia* would greet all of the new relatives, cousins, aunts, and

uncles and parents saying, "I am (name), your servant." In some families, it was the duty of the father to present his daughter saying, "Meet as your servant *Doña* (name)." At the same time, the *novio*, introduced himself saying, "I am (name), your servant" or else he was introduced by his father who said, "Meet your servant *Don* (name)." Then, the bridal couple would distribute gifts to each other. The *novia* would give the *novio* a rosary. The *novia* received shawls, fine cloths, hair combs, sets of jewelry, and gold. After the formal presentations, there was a dinner and sometimes music.

According to Campa, the wedding ceremony took place shortly after the engagement party because of the duty of the groom to give to the bride a daily subsistence until the day of the wedding. Daily subsistence consisted of the best vegetables, meats and chickens that the young man could obtain.⁷

The wedding day was a long day with much pomp and circumstance. During the mass, the groom gave the bride thirteen or fourteen coins (*arras*). In the Middle Ages (700 A.D. to 1400 A.D.), the *arras* were gold coins. Now, the *arras* are fourteen coins of silver, often equivalent to *dos reales* each. *Dos reales* are twenty-five cents. Campa reports that this custom still exists in Northern Spain. In this part of the ceremony, the groom gives thanks to the bride for the dowry that she presented to the groom and expresses his gratefulness for her virtues.⁸

After the wedding, there was a procession to the reception hall where the *balle* took place. The procession order consisted of the musicians (a violinist and guitarist), the *novios*, the wedding party (*padrinos*), and finally the guests. After the wedding, the *padrinos* became godparents to the newly married

couple.

Campa states that the procession is identical to the procession that took place when El Cid married Doña Ximena in the 11th century.⁹ Following the procession, a generous and ample dinner is served to the guests which included red chile caribe, flour tortillas, beans, potatoes, salad, roast beef, sugar cookies, bread pudding, wine, beer and other liquors.

After the dinner, there was a dance with traditional music of violin and guitar. The wedding dance always started with the wedding march (*Marcha de los Novios*). The traditional wedding march is danced to a melody that is unique to the people of Colorado and Northern New Mexico.

In contemporary wedding marches, many musicians play the melody known as *La Marcha de Zacatecas*. However, *La Marcha de Zacatecas* is march music from the revolutionary period of Mexico and is not the traditional music of Northern New Mexico settlers of the 1600's. The traditional *Marcha de los Novios* music is still played and marched at weddings in Colorado and New Mexico.

Marcha De Los Novios

Arrangement by Eva Nuanez and Lorenzo Trujillo
Transcription by Lorenzo F. Trujillo

Traditional

The musical score is written on a single treble clef staff in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. It consists of 32 measures. The first measure is marked with a '1' and a repeat sign. The piece features a rhythmic pattern of quarter and eighth notes, with some measures containing rests. The key signature remains G major throughout. The score ends with a double bar line and repeat dots in the final measure.

1

4

7

10

13

16

19

22

25

28

31

The wedding procession presented the bride and groom to the public. All of the invited guests participated in the march. Following the march, the guests danced to a chain waltz, *valse*.¹⁰ The people continued dancing folk dances, such as *Las Cuadrillas, La Camila, La Varsovillana, El Valse de los Paños, El Chotis-El Vaquero, La Cuna, El Talean, La Escoba, Polka Luz*, and many more.

Finally, it was time to *entregar* (give) the *novios* to each other. *La Entriega de los Novios* was the final act of separation of the parents from their children. It was also time to give the newly weds their blessings by the parents, godparents, and grandparents. *La Entriega de los Novios* is verse accompanied by music. The verse is traditional *romance*, written in stanzas of four line verses with eight syllables in each line and with rhyme occurring in the second and fourth line. Often, there are thirty or more stanzas of advice, blessings, and farewells. The role of the singer of the verses was a position that was very special in the community. According to tradition, the singer was a poet and wrote the poems especially for the occasion. They say that the good singers would improvise the verses at the moment of singing.

The following are some sample verses:

*Atención pido señores
y a todos los ilustrados
para explicarles un poco
tocante a los esposados*

Your attention I ask of you
and all of the learned
to explain to you a little
regarding the newlyweds

*En nombre de Dios comienzo
y de la Virgen María
para entregar estos novios
que se esposan este día*

In the name of God, I begin
and of the Virgin Mary
to hand over these newly weds
that were married this day

*Cuando Dios hizo a Adán
lo hizo que se durmiera
y le sacó una costilla
pa' hacerle su compañera*

When God made Adam
he made him fall asleep
and he took one of his ribs
to make him a companion

*Es una señal patente
que el matrimonio es legal
el padre les dió las arras
y el anillo pastoral*

It is an evident sign
that matrimony is official
the priest gave them the coins
and the pastoral ring

El estado no es por rato

The state of matrimony is not
for a while

*ni por un día ni dos
es por una eternidad
hasta darle cuenta a Dios¹¹*

nor for a day or two
it is for an eternity
until you give accounting to
God

The music for *La Entrega de los Novios* is a waltz melody.

LA ENTRIEGA DE LOS NOVIOS¹²

Arrangement by Eva Nuñez and Lorenzo A. Trujillo
Transcription by Lorenzo F. Trujillo

The image displays a musical score for the waltz melody 'La Entrega de los Novios'. It consists of four staves of music, each starting with a measure number: 1, 5, 9, and 13. The music is written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 3/4 time signature. The melody is simple and characteristic of a waltz, featuring a mix of quarter and eighth notes with some rests.

The ceremony of *La Entrega de los Novios* represents an ending and a beginning. It is the end of single life and the beginning of the married life. Also, it symbolizes the agreement between the newly weds that they made a

promise to be faithful to each other. According to Lamadrid, in colonial times there were not enough priests in the rural areas of New Mexico.¹³ That is why, if a pair wanted to enter into the state of matrimony, *La Entriega de los Novios* served as a matrimonial service.

Traditionally, *La Entriega de los Novios* took place at the home of the bride's parents. The *novios* kneeled on a white sheet surrounded by the guests. The singer sang the verses. If a verse impressed listeners, they would drop money on the sheet. Traditionally, the money was used to pay the singer. However, the custom has changed and the bridal couple keep the money and the parents pay the singer.

La Entriega de los Novios is a symbol of cultural continuity of the Hispanic people that settled in Colorado and New Mexico. These ancient verses are still sung at weddings and the ceremony provides *novios* with cultural understanding of the values of their families as developed over the past nine hundred years.¹⁴

Endnotes

¹ The use of *entriega* instead of *entrega* represents a linguistic archaism. This archaism is characteristic of the Spanish used in Colorado and New Mexico. In ancient Spanish, there are examples of this form of conjugation. For example, in *El Conde Lucanor*, 1330 A.D., the text provides, *Et despues, fallamos homnes en el camino que nos **dixieron** que non era bien.* *Dixieron* in modern Spanish is spelled *dijeron* like *entriega* in modern Spanish is spelled *entrega*.

² Campa, Arthur, *Hispanic Culture in the Southwest*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1979, p. 194.

³ Lucero-White, Aurora, *Casorios*, November 10, 1936, New Mexico

Historical Archives.

⁴ Martinez, Reyes N., *Rural Weddings*, May 13, 1936, New Mexico Historical Archives.

⁵ Lucero-White, Aurora, *Casorios*, 1936.

⁶ Duran-Gallegos, Rebecca (d.o.b. 01/06/1891). Interview. Arroyo Seco, New Mexico. 3 August 1988.

⁷ Campa, *Hispanic Culture*, p. 195.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ In Colorado and New Mexico Spanish an e sound is added to the word *vals*, making the word *valse*. Spanish linguists call this the *e paragojica*. For a more thorough treatment of the Spanish of the Southwest see *The Spanish of the San Luis Valley*, by Anthony Girard Lozano, in *The Hispanic Contribution to the State of Colorado*, edited by Jose de Onis, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1976; Ross, Ronald, *La lengua castellana en San Luis, Colorado*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Colorado, 1975; and Trujillo, Lorenzo A., *A Linguistic Study of a Living Dialect: The Spanish of the Southwest United States*; ERIC Document, 1974.

¹¹ These are sample verses from *La Entriega de los Novios* as sung by Eva Nuanez from Berwin, Colorado, (d.o.b. 1921).

¹² See also Robb, John Donald, *Hispanic Folk Music of New Mexico and the Southwest*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman Oklahoma, 1980.

¹³ Lamadrid, Enrique R., *Music Straight from the Heart*, *New Mexico Magazine*, July 1988, p. 62.

¹⁴ Dr. Lorenzo A. Trujillo, Ed.D., J.D., is an attorney, educator and musician. He has published numerous articles and books on Hispanic language, folklore and culture, music and traditions. Marie Oralia Trujillo is an avid genealogist and folklorist. She has directed a southwest Hispanic folkdance group for many years and has written a book on southwest history and genealogy, *My Tree of Life*.