



Kimie Rhodes

My own project now, supported by a sabbatical from Schreiner University, has also given me the opportunity to see Kimie Rhodes, a woman who was an interview in my first oral history, *Telling Stories, Singing Songs: An Album of Texas Music*, UT Press, 2001. The oral history now is Hispanic heritage in Texas music, and as I was sitting at Carnitas Uruapan on Sunday afternoon, February 1, in walked Kimie and Deb Fleming. Seems they are also working on some history, dance halls in Texas and the stories around them. All of us were there to hear Santiago Jimenez, Jr. at his weekly Sunday gig. I will be returning too!

The scene became hilarious as we documented each other documenting the music. I watched Kimie show Santiago a Bajo Sexto that belonged to her late husband and producer, Joe Gracey. Then I watched Deb as she shared her many stories of this place. Seems she brought Marcia Ball down to a visit once. She is the manager for Marcia Ball, a woman who is in both my books on Texas music. A bridge between the oral history on songwriters and the oral history on women. The threads kept connecting as the afternoon wore on; we ended up with a tapestry of connections that contained a theme. Document the stories and songs!

Kimie Rhodes, hailing from that Lubbock space that produced Butch, Jimmie, Joe, and many more, is a force of nature. My first interview with her took place in Central Market in Austin in the mid-nineties. Her comments then support the path she is on now. Then we talked of her career in Europe, her interest in the heart and soul of music, her passion for the songs. Now she is heading back to Europe and has a new CD release on March 9. She and Deb were traveling and visiting Texas dance halls. They are exploring the roots of Americana music in the various ethnic groups that play in Texas. Deb told me some interesting things about Polish music.

“They did not record it, so it is not available like the conjunto.” Her family history is Polish so she has a special interest. The duo caused a flurry of activity in Carnitas Uruapan as Chumbe Salinas was also there, sporting her official THMF t-shirt and documenting with her video camera. Her film of Kimie singing “Volver, Volver” with Santiago is already up on Chumbe’s youtube channel. Check it out.

Here are some things Kimie said to me during our first interview so many years ago, things that stand today: “Artists record the human experience, just how it feels to be a human being in your own time. It’s a way other people can see the world through your eyes. I think human beings feel compelled to put that experience down. They may not even know why, but the end result is that people come along later. They’re able to learn from it and relate to it. It also ends up being the only record of what went on a lot of times.” She is speaking to my Lomax gene, for sure!

I was also thrilled to find that January 31st was the birthday of Alan Lomax, son of John Lomax who collected cowboy songs. I was at the Pan Am Plaza listening to Los Texmaniacs that night doing more research! Yes, the end of January and the beginning of February put me right in the middle of my own research.

Check out www.kimmierhodes.com for all the updates, photos, and current tour schedule that includes Ireland and England. We started out talking about her appeal in Europe back in the mid-nineties, and we talked again about that in 2015. Yes, her hair is now stunning white to frame her very young face. The passion that was shining in her eyes as she showed the Bajo Sexto to Santiago warmed up the room. And her joy at singing with Santiago was contagious. I remember playing her duet with Willie Nelson over and over in my house as I wrote the first book. Yes, Willie is still part of our lives too, at 81.

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