

SILVA, CHELO (1922–1988)

"I learned to love my Puerto Rican roots even as I came to understand that I was very much east-coast American with an Irish-Catholic elementary schooling and a baccalaureate from a predominantly Jewish city college." Aura Sánchez Garfunkel

Born in 1922 in Brownsville, Texas, the talented Chelo Silva lived a life of accomplishment. As a teenager she sang with the Orquesta Tipica Mexicana and the local Tito Crixell Orchestra. In 1939, when her career was gaining momentum locally, she was invited to sing on a radio program hosted by the then-unknown poet and composer Américo Paredes. By 1952 she signed with Discos Falcón recording more than seventy titles with them; three years later Columbia Records offered her a contract that led to a long list of hits: "Imploración," "está sellado," "Sabes de qué tengo ganas," "Inolvidable," "Amor aventurero," and "Soy bohemia." Known as la Reina de los Boleros, by the 1970s Silva was one of the best-selling international artists.