

ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4062



FACUNDO
GONZÁLES

NEW MEXICAN VIOLINISTA

Recorded by Kenneth M. Bilby in Chamisal, New Mexico



MR. & MRS. GONZALES

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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SIDE 1

1. Una Polka (3:05)
2. Valse (3:15)
3. La Cuna (3:20)
4. Dance (2:05)
5. Valse (2:55)
6. Valse (3:05)
7. Shotis (2:40)

SIDE 2

8. Gaviota (2:40)
9. Valse (2:55)
10. MATACHINES MUSIC:
 - A. La Procecion (2:00)
 - B. El Monarca (2:05)
 - C. El Toro (2:15)
 - D. La Malinche (2:30)

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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Facundo Gonzáles: New Mexican Violinista

Notes by Kenneth M. Bilby



Nestled in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo mountains northeast of Santa Fe lies the small village Chamisal, with a population of several hundred persons, primarily Hispanic-Americans. This quiet farming hamlet is the home of Facundo Gonzáles, a remarkable violinista.

Sr. Gonzáles, who was seventy-eight years old at the time of these recordings, has been playing the violin for over sixty

years. He learned to play many years ago, as one half of the traditional violin-guitar duo, at the "Spanish-Colonial" folk dances which were once very common in New Mexico. At one time this type of music was a regular feature at weddings, rural dances, and other social gatherings.

Although he has offered his services at many such events over the years, Sr. Gonzáles has always done most of his

playing unaccompanied and in private, for his own pleasure. Of recent, the old-style folk dances of this part of New Mexico have fallen into relative disuse, and so it is seldom that Sr. Gonzáles is called upon to perform publicly. Nevertheless, his private solo performances are a continuing source of solace and personal pleasure.

The selections heard on this record represent a rather unique and very old style of folk fiddling which has all but disappeared in northern New Mexico. This style appears to have very strong and very old European roots; exactly how old, it is impossible to say at this point. Particularly interesting is Sr. Gonzáles's almost drone-like use of double-stopping techniques --- a stylistic element which gives one the impression of great age when listening to the music. Whereas most of the few other violinistas remaining in the area have taken to electrically amplifying their instruments and play with a somewhat different feeling, Sr. Gonzáles retains the old style which he learned many years ago.

Sr. Gonzáles now lives in Chamisal, with his wife, Emma.

The Selections

I. Spanish-Colonial Dances

In the northern region of New Mexico there is a substantial population of individuals who consider themselves "Spanish-Americans," as opposed to Chicanos or Mexican-Americans. This distinction is made partially on the basis of their ancestry --- many persons claim that their ancestors can be traced back to the early colonizers of what is now New Mexico. These Spanish-Americans are differentiated from the Indians, Anglos, and persons of Old Mexican descent, all of whom live within the same general region.

The Spanish-Americans have developed their own social dance music based predominantly on earlier European styles. While much Old Mexican dance music has experienced a significant Indian input, the Spanish-Colonial dance music did not undergo such a mixture. Spanish-American folk dance music, for the most part, is very European in form and feeling, although there are regional variations for which this applies to a lesser extent.

It is uncertain exactly how the dances and music made their unlikely journey from their native soil to faraway New Mexico. It is possible that they traveled through both United States and Mexican channels, for during the nineteenth century, when at the height of their popularity in Europe, they were adopted to some extent by both of these countries. In any case, it is said that these dances were introduced into Mexico after the Polish Revolution, and that they moved north from there to New Mexico. Soon after their introduction, the Mexican government decreed that these foreign dances of European (largely Polish) origin were to be forbidden at all social gatherings. Even so, in New Mexico, far from the hub of the Mexican government, the law was ignored, for the new dances had already met with great

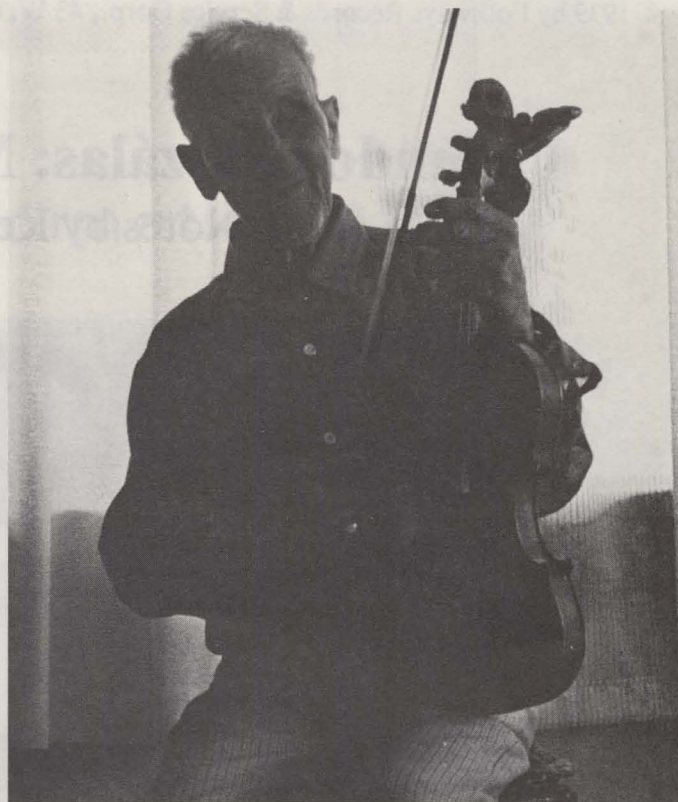
enthusiasm. And so they lived on to become the most popular of Hispanic New Mexican folk dances, long after their virtual demise in Old Mexico.

As previously mentioned, their popularity has greatly decreased in recent times; however, the tradition has been kept up in some rural communities, and some of the dances have been revived by urban performing troupes from Albuquerque and Santa Fe.

There may be heard on this record several vales (waltzes), a polka, a shotis, a gaviota, and la cuna (the cradle) --- an interesting array, as the polka originated in Bohemia, the shotis (or schottische) is from Scotland, and the gaviota (or gavotte) was originally a popular French dance. Thus we can glimpse the extent to which New Mexican folk dance and music preserves some of the qualities of the Europe of another era. Yet, the music has been indigenized. For Facundo Gonzáles, these dance-tunes are unquestionably New Mexican, part and parcel of the local countryside; perhaps because of their familiarity as such, they are able to serve him as a fine vehicle for personal musical expression.

II. Matachines Dances

Matachines is an ancient costumed dance found both in New Mexico, and parts of Mexico. The Matachines Dance of northern New Mexico is unique in that it is virtually the only folk dance of European origin which was adopted by the Indians of the Rio Grande pueblos, who still dance it today, at Christmas time. Traditionally, both Indian and Spanish dancers took part in the roles of the dance, and up until the present, the music has always been



provided by Hispanic musicians, usually on violin and guitar.

The dance is thought to have been introduced into Mexico from Spain around the time of the Spanish conquest, and then to have traveled north to New Mexico. It is said to go back to medieval times, and some versions depict the battle of the Moors against the Christians. The Indians have their own legend concerning its origin among the Aztecs of Mexico, as an indigenous, pre-contact dance.

Sr. González's renditions of Matachines dance tunes are very interesting; the use

in some examples of very short repetitive motifs contrasts interestingly with the Spanish-Colonial dance tunes on this record. The halting effect present in some of the selections is intentional, being meant as accompaniment to the dramatic action at particular points.

The selections on this record include the music for the opening procession, as well as dances named after three of the costumed characters in this folk play: El Monarca (Montezuma), El Toro (The Bull), and La Malinche (a young girl in a white communion dress and veil).

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Taos Matachines Music, Taos Recordings and Publications.

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