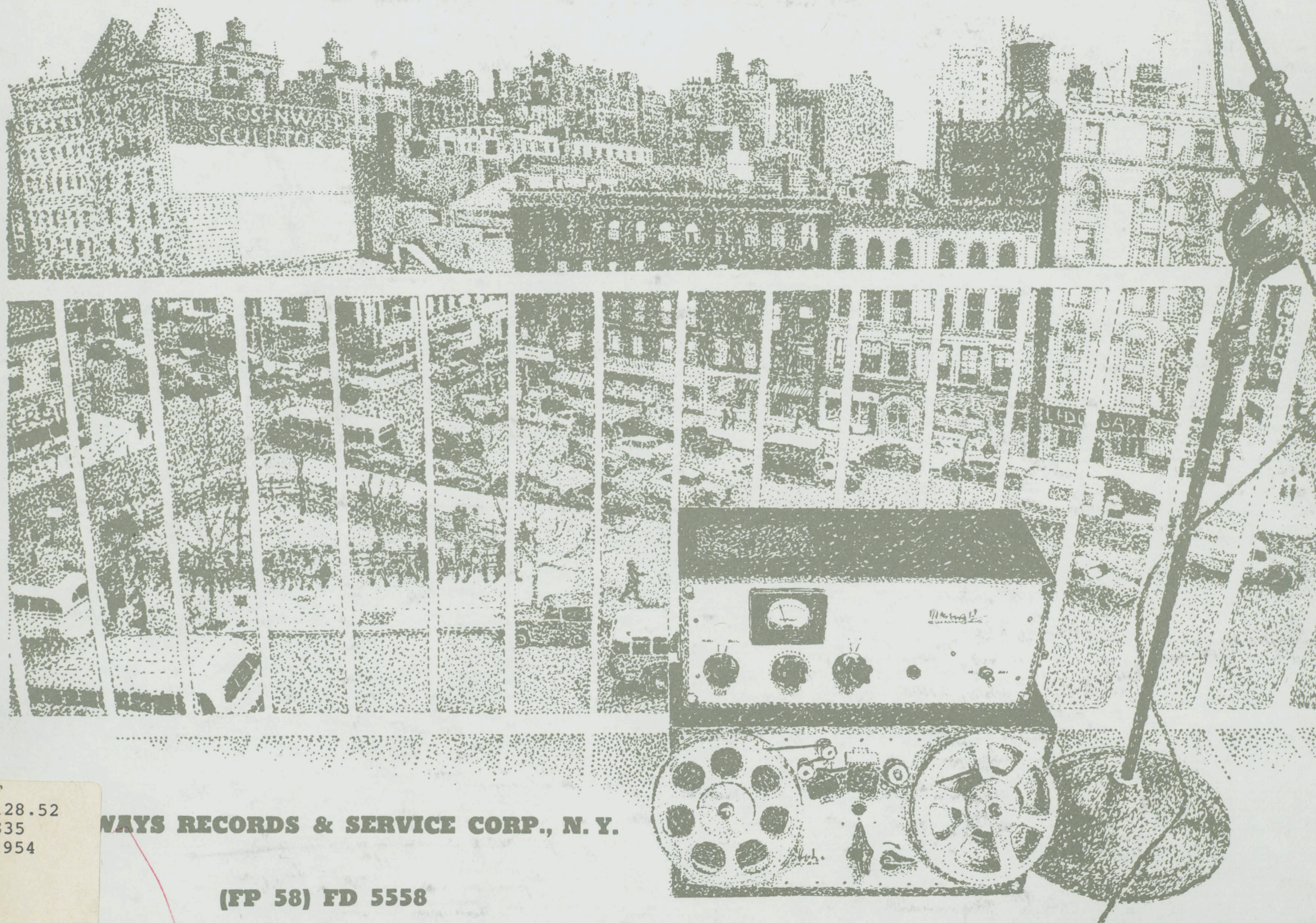


New York 19

Conceived, recorded, edited and narrated by **TONY SCHWARTZ**



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(FP 58) FD 5558

MUSIC LP

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43 W. 61st ST., N.Y.C., U.S.A.

Library of Congress Catalogue Card No. R55-54

NEW YORK 19

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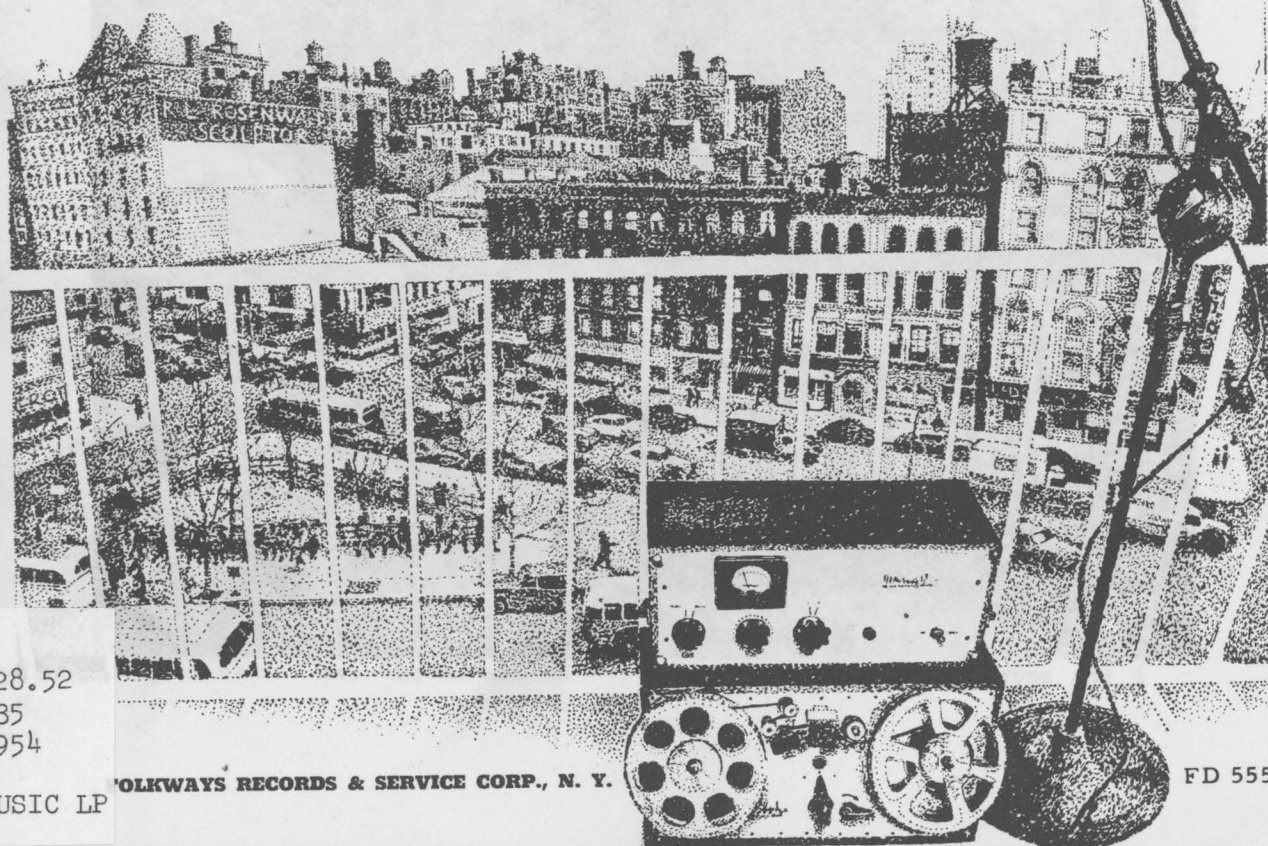
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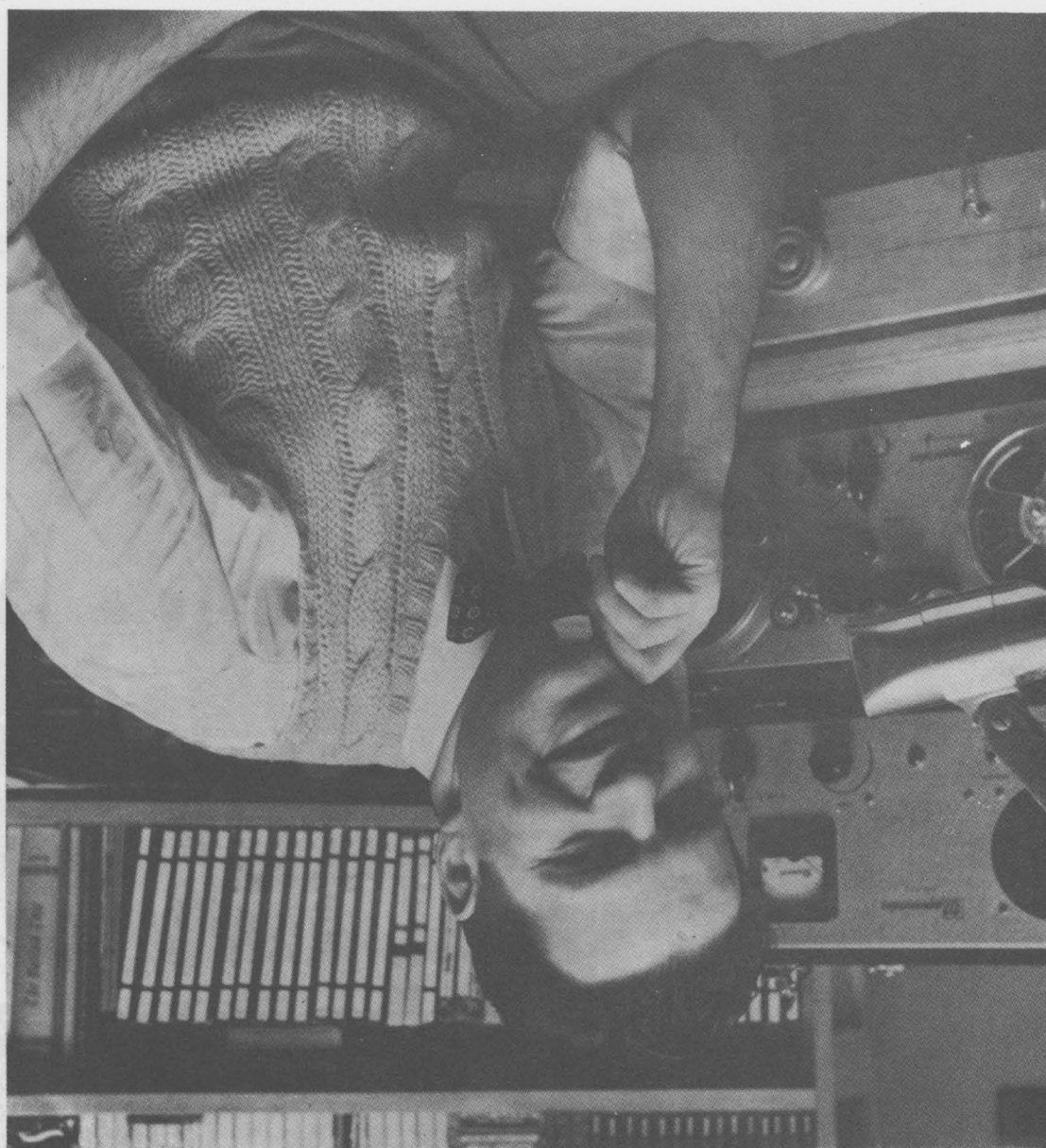


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"New York 19" grew out of my hobby of tape recording. I work professionally as a free lance commercial artist. Since 1947 when I first purchased a magnetic recorder, I have been exchanging recordings with people all over the world. In asking people to exchange with me I said I was interested in the music and folklore of their communities and that I would send them material of mine. In 1952 I decided to channelize my recording activities to a thorough study of the folklore of the community in which I live. The material on

this record was selected from the several thousand recordings made in this study.

My definition of folklore is broader than the traditional one. The dictionary defines folklore as "traditional customs, beliefs, tales, or sayings, preserved unreflectively among a people." In addition to this type of material I include the non-commercial musical expression of people now living and working in New York 19. Folklore starts somewhere and sometime and I

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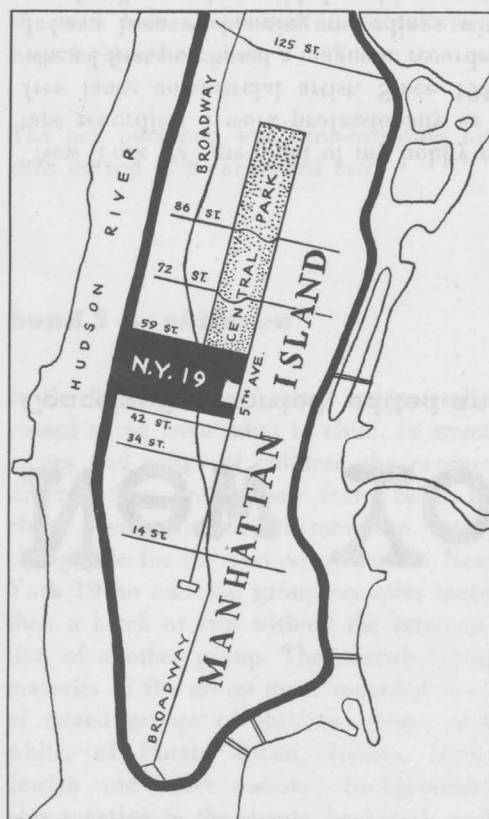
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wanted to show material of this type starting today.

New York 19 is located in the middle of Manhattan Island. It is bounded on the North by 60th Street, on the South by the



Times Square area, on the West by the Hudson River and on the East by Fifth Avenue with the exception of Radio City. During my work on this project the south-

ern boundary of New York 19 was raised a few blocks. All the material on this record was recorded in this area with the exception of an item or two which may have been recorded a few blocks away but which was related to life in the area. It is of interest to note that New York 19 is the commercial music center of the country. The largest record companies, music publishers, theatres, concert halls, symphony orchestras and churches are in or adjoining this area.

SIDE ONE

band 1 — why collect recordings

Music and speech cannot be fully written down. On sheet music in addition to notes and words one can find notations such as: "with flowing tones," "with strong feeling," "with enthusiasm and life," "lazily but steady." The first selection on this record, a version of the Mexican song, "El Vena-



dito," a cowboy's love song, was learned by Paul Bain from a book. He read the notes and words and followed the description as best he could. Several years later he was fortunate enough to take a trip to Mexico where he happened to hear "El Venadito" sung by a Mexican. He had to relearn the song. The second selection is how Paul Bain sang the song after his return to New York.

band 2 — exchange by mail

You live in a neighborhood and you want to collect folklore. Where can you go? What will you find? Your mailbox offers a world of opportunity. There are people like yourself in other parts of the world



who are just as interested in hearing the life of your neighborhood as you are in hearing theirs.

A little while after I started recording a friend told me he knew someone in California who might be interested in exchanging recordings with me. I prepared a tape with a few selections of material that I thought might interest my Californian contact. I sent him the reel of tape and soon received an enthusiastic reply. Since then I have exchanged tapes, wires and discs with people all over the world. By this method, from my mailbox in New York 19, I have collected well over 10,000 songs. The greetings and comments like the ones from South Dakota, Ireland, Greece and Africa add a great deal to the knowledge and pleasure gained through the exchange. The recording of "Mubube," known as "Wimoweh" in this country, was sent from Africa. It was the version Gordon Jenkins and the Weavers used as a source for their highly successful record.

One evening I took Pete Seeger, lead singer of the Jenkins-Weaver version of "Wimoweh," to a basement of a housing project where a group of teen-agers had outfitted a room as a social center. Every week or two these fellows would have a jam session, beating out the most complicated rhythms on boxes, wooden benches, a drum, folding chairs, sticks and an empty soda bottle or two. After listening a while I asked the fellows if they would like to

hear Pete sing a song. They did not know who he was but politely said yes. As soon as they realized he was introducing "Wimoweh," they started shouting, "Oh, we know that." "Wimoweh," through the Jenkins-Weaver pop record became part of New York 19.

band 3 — national groups, visitors, students, concert hall

In a little more than 300 years the population of New York City has grown from several hundred Indians to many millions. People came here from all over the world. New York 19 has people representing many national groups living and working in it. New arrivals to the city remember songs from their homelands. First and second generation New Yorkers often carry on songs their parents and grandparents sang.

This French song, a song of the Auvergne, and the comment by the singer show how the younger generation in a national group preserves a song. The accompaniment is supplied by the tapping of the leather-saddled feet of the singer.

Out-of-town visitors coming to the city for work or pleasure often bring songs of their hometowns with them. This young woman from Pittsburgh brought this Roumanian song, learned from her mother. She sang it at a neighbor's home. When I was re-playing the tape a 78-year-old housepainter,



painting my apartment, started to cry. I turned on the recorder and asked him why he was crying. His answer follows the song.



The many schools in New York City attract students from all over the world. These students bring the lore of their homelands with them. First, an Indian student at a house party singing a song about a monsoon. Then, a group of Nigerian students singing a song of home at a vacation time get-together in New York 19.

Night club and concert singers go to folklore and songs of other lands for their repertoire. And so this Israeli sang, "Lech Lamidbar," in a Mid-Manhattan concert hall. The singer, Martha Schlamme, sang in night clubs and concert halls in New York 19. Since this recording was made, the Israeli Music Foundation has issued an album, "Israeli Folk Dances, 2nd Series," containing "Lech Lamidbar" and other songs by Miss Schlamme.

band 4 — religion

Religious expression in a community contributes much to its folklore. There are churches large and small, with choirs that sing for the congregation and congregations that sing for themselves.

The first selection is a recording of a street preacher and his assistant who were appealing to lunch-hour crowds from a small speaker's stand on the sidewalk of 57th Street and Broadway.

Next is a prayer of a Jewish storekeeper who invited me into his home one Friday evening and allowed me to record his whole service.

One summer evening on the way home from dinner at a restaurant I heard some wonderful music. My friends and I stopped the car, got out and found a small storefront church where a group of Puerto Rican New Yorkers were conducting a service. The preacher, a middle-aged man, was leading the congregation in this song. The melody is very similar to that of the Negro spiritual, "Study War No More," sometimes known as "Down by the River Side."

"Joy to the World," the well-known Christmas carol, was recorded in a medium-sized Negro gospel church on a Sunday evening just before Christmas. It is a wonderful example of how people can take a traditional song and interpret it through their own musical idiom.

The marching band was recorded one summer night, the last night of an Italian Saints street festival. At 12 midnight this small band marched up and down the block with hundreds of children dancing around it in a huge circle.

band 5 — translations

With many national groups living in New York 19, much of the lore is in foreign

tongues. Not knowing any language other than English, I tried to find the meaning of this material. I looked for people who spoke English and the other language and who had a poetic feeling for translation. The first song, in Italian, was translated by a long woman who had a real love of Italian songs. Her parents and grandparents spoke and sang in Italian. The record, "My Little Donkey," was one she had since childhood. I put the record on the phonograph and asked her to translate it as it played. She had never translated the song before. What you hear was our first and only take.

Many restaurants, candy stores and bars in the neighborhood cater to New Yorkers who speak foreign languages. On their juke boxes one can find foreign language selections in addition to the pop selections in English. I wondered what these songs were about. I would ask someone if he



spoke the language of the record and could translate it into English. I would then have him stand alongside the juke box. I'd put in my nickel and stand in front of him with my portable recorder and record the translation. This man is translating a record played in places catering to Puerto Rican New Yorkers.

SIDE TWO

band 1 — street musicians

New York 19 has many street musicians who, for various reasons, cannot earn their livings in the standard musical channels. On the streets they have an audience and a source of income.

This blind accordionist has been playing up and down the Times Square area for years.

Professor Giuseppe Ravita has been playing on 57th Street for many years and is generally known as the "Carnegie Hall Fiddler." This recording was made one evening as Professor Ravita played in front of Carnegie Hall.

Moondog, one of the most unusual street musicians, conceives, builds, writes music for, and plays his own instruments. In this selection he plays his own composition on the Oo (a triangular wooden frame, each leg of the triangle about 18 inches long,



with piano wire strung across and struck with a 6-inch dowel), and two triangular shaped wooden drums. The drums are struck with the horizontal motion of a maracas. This recording was made one foggy night against the background of the boat whistles on the Hudson River. This selection was included in the album, "Moondog on the Streets of New York," which I produced for Mars Records.

band 2 — selling

The rhythmical and poetic use of words is very important in the calls and spiels of many vendors, barkers and pitchmen. Over the years, many of these people have developed the art of selling to a high level.

The theatre barker was recorded outside a movie house in the Times Square area. He was shouting his message to the large Saturday night crowds that constantly pass under his marquee.

The technique of the 52nd Street barker was different. As we passed his door he walked up to us, gave us his spiel in a more personal manner and returned to his door as we walked on.

The theatre-program seller spoke his message to the crowd as the usher asked to show the people to their seats.

These two newspaper venders shouted their story to the same Saturday night crowd the theatre barker shouted to a little while before.



The flower vendor came down 57th Street one sunny morning. Every few houses he would shout out his call as he led the horse pulling his plant-laden wagon.

The auctioneer was in one of the many stores in the Midtown area that conduct auctions. His comment about "taking out six people with you" was addressed to me after I had returned from rewinding my recorder.

The policy salesman is a door-to-door life insurance salesman.

The scissor sharpener and glasscutter salesman operates from a reconverted baby carriage. He says his spiel as he skillfully sharpens knives, scissors and cuts wierd hape in sheets of glass.

The pen pitchman was demonstrating his pens on top of a cardboard box.

band 3 — children

In the "folk process," songs are generally passed along from adult to child. In street games and songs of children the process differs: they are passed from child to child. Generally the rhymes are interchangeable for the various games. In New York 19 no national group occupies more than a block or two without the interruption of another group. The overwhelming majority of the group items recorded were of mixed groups of children. Negro and white, of Puerto Rican, Italian, Irish, Jewish and other national backgrounds, play together in the streets, backyards and play centers. Folkways Records has published "1, 2, 3 and a Zing, Zing, Zing, Street Games and Songs of the Children of New York City," a full album of children's material I recorded as part of my project, "New York 19."



First, a large ring game in a yard created by the demolition of a building on west 52nd Street.

Then, a little nine-year-old doing a jump rope game.

Next, an eight-year-old bouncing a large rubber ball.

A clapping game of a group of children on the street. This is one of the games that deals with a subject that is related to New York City.

This group of 10-to 12-year old children played their bongo drums on Broadway. They play after school for the crowds going home from work. The group plays in a semi-circle and one of their members danced in the center. The crowd watching threw coins on the pavement in front of the group.

The next rhythm section was recorded in the basement of a housing project apart-

ment building. These teen-agers were using one bongo drum, several chairs, a long wide wooden bench, metal waste baskets, several sticks and an empty Pepsi-Cola bottle. When the group finished, the others standing around started to applaud. I end the section of children's material with the comment of one of these teen-aged drummers.

band 4 — sounds of the city

Sounds become part of folklore.



The sound of the street drilled is a familiar and annoying one to anyone in any part of the city. The driller's problems with complaining people necessitated his "stock" answer.

There are many sounds that we will never hear again. The 9th Avenue "L" played an important part in the life of New York 19 for many years. Even though it was torn down around 1939, it is often mentioned in the neighborhood.

band 5 — music in speech

The music in the voices of people is a source that has hardly been tapped, and yet all you have to do is listen to the people around you.

The recording of the grocer making change is an example of the consideration people can develop in a city with a population of different backgrounds.

Many people have fond memories. This elderly woman remembered her cat.

There are aspects of city life that many people don't like. This plumber didn't like the rush of city life and compared it to work in Italy.

New York 19 ends with this same plumber's comment on music.

I would like to thank Ruth and Robert Rosenwald, Sophie Podell and Ernest Chanes for their help in making this record possible. Additional thanks to Robert Rosenwald for the cover drawing and to Don Silby for illustrating the notes.

Special appreciation to the Amplifier Corporation of America for the development of the Magnamite, a completely portable, lightweight tape recorder, which makes the world your recording studio and a little hand-held box your control room.