The voice of Mexico

from Monterrey
three voices singing lovers' legends from the provinces of Mexico

don't poll from Mexico City

the classical guitar of Gustavo Zapoll

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The Voice of Mexico

Our search began in a noisy border town; it ended in the quiet seclusion of a private patio.

For weeks had come rumors of a classical guitarist "somewhere in Monterrey," whose skill and artistry were prodigious, and about whom there was a strange aura of both anonymity and fame.

Seeking him, we wandered through the narrow one-way streets of the old part of Monterrey; we were told "dirrecho para val!" then, "Padre Mier," his street; finally, in English, "four doors down." And so, on a night in February, a cool and beautiful time of year in Monterrey, we found ourselves recording Gustavo Zepoll.

Behind the high stone walls, ancient brick and plaster two feet thick, there was privacy and quiet. Two little girls stood outside the iron grill door to keep visitors from ringing. And away from the street, beyond the house, the patio and garden was our studio; a sloping terra cotta roof and the sky, walls of Madonna blue and brick pink; cool and decorative tiles, and winter grass. The only movement: the waving of the elephant plant in an imperceptible breeze, and his fingers so swift they appeared a blur.

Gustavo Zepoll

The name Zepoll brought forth smiles and friendly cooperation even to our most casual inquiries on the street. In contrast, when we finally met, it was ironic to hear him say he considered his serious studies didn't begin until he was 25 (he is only 34 now). Actually he was formally studying the guitar at the age of 9, in Mexico City, with Maestro Daniel Garrity. His first public appearance was at 11 on the radio. He has given several concerts at the Palacio de Bellas Artes, the cultural hub of Mexico City.

Zepoll's consuming loves are... Bach, Scarlatti Sonatas, and his five children. He "reads every instrument" to transcribe to the guitar the fullest musical intent of the original.

Zepoll currently plays at the Kasino in Monterrey, and teaches. This is probably his first recording.

Mexican Music of Today:

SERENADE—Ramon Noble: born 1921, city of Pachuca (Hidalgo, Mexico). Noble studied at the National Conservatory of Music in Mexico City, later becoming Director of Music for the Colegio-Mexico. In 1953 he composed a Mass, dedicated to Saint Cecilia who is the Mexican patron Saint of music. It is a major work scored for chorus, orchestra and organ.

ZAPATEADA CRIOLLO—Ramon Noble

MINUETTO in A Major—Miguel Prado: born 1907, city of Tiguindiu, Michoacan, Mexico. He studied music by himself (!)... then started playing in a seminary school in Mexico City at the age of nine. He is a prolific composer of Mexican songs, many of which have been used in Mexican films.

THREE MEXICAN FOLK SONGS—arr. Manuel M. Ponce: born 1886 in Fresuillo (Zacatecas, Mexico). Died in Mexico City, 1948:

Pajarera
Por ti mi Corazon
La Valentina

The Classical Guitar

DOUBLET in B minor—J. S. Bach
PRELUDE No. 1 in C major (Well Tempered Clavichord)—J. S. Bach
ROMANCE (anonymous song)—arr. Daniel Fortea
SIXTEENTH CENTURY PAVANE (Pavana Vibuela)—Gaspard Sanz
SIXTEENTH CENTURY PAVANE (Pavana)—Luis Milan
LEYENDA—Albeniz, transcribed by Segovia

Trio Leones of Cabrito

As you savor the goat's meat, the fish and tortillas, drink the fine Mexican beer,—for a few pesos, they will sing for you.

We stumbled into the Trio Leones at a late-night restaurant on Reforma in Mexico City. Three guitars, three voices, part Indian, part Spanish, singing as one through years of practice.

Just as in all the other teeming metropolitan cities of the world, most of those to be found there gravitated from other regions. Pedro Fernandez and Antonio Soto the leader (requinto guitar) are from Yucatan; Louis Zarate from the province of Jalisco. They sing here from the oldest of Mexican songs they can remember.

The Trio Leones

ANTONIO SOTO

The Trio Leones

Lovers' Legends from the Provinces of Mexico

LA MALAGUEÑA from the Huasteca is one of the oldest songs of Vera Cruz.

... La Malagueña has beautiful black eyes; she makes her lover suffer; she hides from him...

An anonymous song, arranged by the Tariacuri Trio; the shockingly beautiful solo voice, at times falsello, belongs to Antonio Soto.

EL CASCABEL, a soubasseco from the coast of Vera Cruz, is all about a cat who has a bell around its neck.

... pretty bell, who gave it to you?

... nobody gave it to me; I paid for it myself.

LA NORTENA (Northern Girl), comes from the north country.

... my girl has beautiful green eyes; my beloved northern girl,—makes me think I am looking into her eyes...

ADIOS MI CHAPARITA (Goodbye, My Little One) is the young man saying goodbye to his sweetheart, says he will be back again very soon and bring her gifts from the city; he gives her a kiss.

YUKALPETEN—form the land of the Maya, Yukatan, is about the Indians from Yucatan, the whole land, its Mayan customs. Tapping on the guitar symbolizes the tuncal, an Indian drum.

... everything is over, the Indian cries sadly "Yukalpeten" — and his tears go into the earth because the times are hard.

LA LLORONA, an Indian legend from the south, in Oaxaca, is "The Weeping Woman."

... everybody calls me the Negro Llorona; Negro but very kind. I am just like the Chilerever; I am very hot (like a hot pepper), but lovingly. He sings to the crying woman, and the legend has it that alone at night along the banks of the river, one still hears her weeping.

LA PAJARERA (bird cage), a Mexico City song about a young girl who comes to the city to sell birds. This is her song as she wanders through the streets.

LA VALENTINA is a very old song born in the Mexican revolution, of a courageous woman who went into battle, healing the wounded. One curious aspect of this battle song is its light-hearted happy melodic nature. Many of the authentic Hawaiian war chants were the same way.

"Zepoll's technical ability is absolutely amazing. This record gives an astonishing example of what can be achieved on a guitar."

The Gramophone Record Review, London

"Trio Leones... all the warmth and charm of old Mexico."

Morristown Daily Record

"Zepoll, a living legend in Mexico... an extraordinarily sensitive artist."

Mason Sargent, Downbeat

An on-the-scene recording at Monterrey and Mexico City, Mexico.