Spanish & Mexican Folk Music of New Mexico

Recorded and with notes by J. D. Robb

Ethnic Folkways Library FE 4426
SPANISH MEXICAN FOLK MUSIC OF NEW MEXICO

JACOBO MESTAS

INTRODUCTION AND NOTER ON THE RECORDINGS BY J. J. ROSS

The Hispanic folk music of the Southwest is a channel through which diverse musical influences are flowing naturally into the musical culture of America. There is nothing new under the sun but there are new combinations, the blending together in a new synthesis of diverse musical elements never before combined creates the condition for a new development of music. Elements are heard in this music which preveniently at least, are derived from such remote and diverse sources as the courtly Spanish romances, Moorish ornamentation, Flamenco singing, Gregorian plain-song and Hebrew psalm tones are found already acclimated and living and mixing with the Anglo-American ballads and the pentatonic melodies of the southwestern Indians. A new natural synthesis is in the making.

While we listen to the Hispanic folk music of the Southwest, if we are musicians, we are amazed at subtleties of rhythm and the occurrence of medival scales and medival practices such as true modulation and musica ficta.

The medival practice of synele (singing in things) which has been forgotten by all but scholars is commonplace to the troubadours of New Mexico. I have a feeling that here in the mountains of the Southwest we have preserved the fundamental elements of one of the great periods of the history of the art of music. Some of the great moralists of the 16th century grew out of folk songs such as these.

If there are valuable inherent in folk music, the collection and study of folk music and the consequent preservation of some of these values in an enterprise to be encouraged. Of course this enterprise, in a sense, does violence to the very nature of folk music which is thereby frozen into something static and, hence, very different from its rather unconscious and constantly changing character.

On the other hand, unless the effort is made, the forms which characterize a particular epoch will be relegated to the limbo of things forgotten. Such forms are the decline in New Mexico. For instance, are quite clearly dying out and the time to rescue them from oblivion is now. As the old men who know the boner dixie, the boner dixie with them, with rare exceptions, the younger people are no longer singing the old songs.

The recordings in this album have been selected from several hundred which comprise the J. J. Ross Collection of Southwestern Popular and Folk Music. Most of these were collected in New Mexico.

It is obvious that an album of this sort cannot do more than present specimens of this music.

Furthermore, the editor has selected only examples of which the recording was at least reasonably accurate. This ruled out many types of folk music which present characteristics of great interest and resulted in the elimination of a number of examples of popular and folk music from old Mexico as adopted and sung in New Mexico.

The inclusion of a few recordings which must be classified as popular rather than folk music is, I think, justified by two considerations:

In the first place, it is difficult to draw a line between popular music and folk music and that line is constantly shifting. As the writer has pointed out in the introduction to an album of Cowboy Ballads recently released by Folkways (PP 22), popular music is usually distinguished from folk music chiefly by the fact that it has not circulated long enough to have acquired the impersonal characteristics of folk music.

In the second place, the popular tunes from old Mexico sung in New Mexico illustrate the continuing cultural influence of the Hispanic-Mexican tradition in the Southwest. That tradition is one of the indispensable traits of the unique recipe which has made the folk music of the Southwest something different from that encountered in any other part of the United States.

Of the examples included, eleven may be said, by reason of origin or assimilation, to be New Mexican. The remaining five are folk on popular music from old Mexico.

Of the eleven mentioned above, nine bear the earmarks of true folk music. These are the two Matachines Dances, the "Entrada de Novio," the Polka, the "Cancion Inolvidable," the "Misa de Despartura," the "Corrido de Elena," the "Corto del Viejito Villano," and the Guara.

The dance dances, recorded at San Antonio, Bernalillo County, N. M., June 13, 1960, the dance of Los Matachines is an ancient religious ritual. It is danced in various Spanish settlements of New Mexico on the Feast Day of the Patron Saint. It is also danced in various Indian Pueblos. A strange version is danced at the Jemez Pueblo (New Mexico) in which two cells of Matachines dance. The other group bears the true Matachines costume and dances to the music of Fiddle and Guitar played by two Spanish Musicians from neighboring Jemez Pueblo. While the other group bears Indian Ceremonial costumes and dances to Indian music furnished by a group of Indians accompanied by a Drummer. The Matachines dances are danced also among the Pueblos of New Mexico and others similar to the Matachines dances are danced in Tucson, Mexico.

The two dances included in this album were selected from a group of six such dances recorded on the occasion of the Fiesta in honor of Saint Anthony in San Antonio, New Mexico.

A young man who has been born in this hamlet, told me the following legend, he said that he had been told of this by his mother.

In the early days there was a battle at San Antonio, in the midst of the fighting the settlers saw a little boy in blue fighting on their side. They knew at once that it was their patron saint, San Antonio, come to aid them. Then and there they vowed that if victory was vindicated to them, they would erect a church in honor of San Antonio, and would dance the Matachines dances in his honor every year on June 17, his feast day. The settlers were victorious and accordingly built the church and instituted the custom of dancing the Matachines dance as promised.

The dances at San Antonio are danced not only in the plaza but in the church and during the procession which leaves the church proceeding to a spring in the mountains (the village's source of water), returning thence to the church. During the procession the dancers dance backward facing toward the effigy of San Antonio which is borne forward toward them on a litter festooned with bright colored paper streamers.

One year, however, the Matachines dances were omitted. The village spring dried up, realising the error of their ways, the villagers reinstalled the custom of dancing the Matachines dances and the spring resumed its steady flow of water.

Each of the dancer has a name such as "La Carenera" (the little runt), the leading dancer is known as Monarca, or monarch, and a little girl dressed in white companion dress who usually dances with the Monarca is known as La Malinchita (apparently a reference to the Indian mistress of Hernando Cortez). There are also some comic figures who lend relief to the solemnity of the occasion. One is El Toro, the Bull, at San Antonio another is El Hombre dressed as a woman who is pursued by the Bull while the crowd roars with laughter. There is still a third clown who armed with a whip chases the bull. This portion of the dance occurs in the plaza but I have not been in it in the church. Besides there there are about a dozen other dancers.

In the church the dancers, after prayers and hymns, dance toward the altar where the major domo (the villainger who for the past year has had custody of the saints) sits with his wife holding the image of the saint and facing the congregation, the dancers dance and then pause while one of the dancers kneels before the Saint and kisses the hem of his garment, then the dance is resumed, during the next pause another of the dancers simi
LARLY PAYS HIS RESPECTS TO THE BAIN, THIS CONTINUES UNTIL THEY HAVE NO MORE. THEN FOLLOWS THE INVENTORY OF THE NEW MAJOR DOMO WHO WITH HIS WIFE TAKES OVER THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BAIN'S HOUSE.

POLKA, RECORDED AT LEBA, NEW MEXICO, ON APRIL 22, 1950. THE POLKA IS ONE OF A VERY LARGE NUMBERS OF DANCE MUSIC OF GERMAN ORIGIN, WHICH HAVE BEEN USED IN THE PAST AND ARE STILL TO SOME EXTENT USED IN COUNTRY DANCES IN NEW MEXICO, DESPITE THE FACT THAT IT IS A VERSION OF AMERICAN POPULAR MUSIC AND JAZZ. THE ORCHESTRA AT THIS DANCE HAS TunED INSTRUMENTS OF VIOLIN AND VIOLIN AND SECULARLY OTHER INSTRUMENTS SUCH AS THE ACCORDION OR EVEN A TRUMPET OR DRUM. THE INSTRUMENTS OF ORCHESTRA DO NOT HAVE TO BE MADE OF WOOD, ANY, HEARDAY IN NEW MEXICO, THE MUSICIAN IN JUAREZ AND THE OTHER TOWNS ON THE MEXICAN SIDE OF THE BORDER MARIACHI BANDS WITH THEIR VIOLIN, TRUMPET, VIOLIN AND GUITARISTS PLAY EVERY NIGHT IN THE BAS.


"LA LUNA SE VA METIENDO" IS A POPULAR SONG OF CONSIDERABLE CHARM. ITS BEAUTY, HOWEVER, IS OF A MORE SPECIFIC TYPE THAN THAT WHICH IS FOUND IN FOLK MUSIC. IT IS MORE PERSONAL AND INTRINSIC FOR IT IS CLOSER TO ITS ORIGIN IN THE HEART OF THE PEOPLE. IT IS MORE CERTAIN TO BE MORE UPON COMPLEX ELEMENTS SUCH AS THE FINE TWO GUITAR ACCOMPANIMENTS.

CIALTO CHINAS, RECORDED ON FEBRUARY 18, 1951, AT ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO. IT IS A RHYTHMIC OR INSTRUMENTAL SONG. IT IS A NARRATIVE OF A SONG AND THE FUTURE SONGS OF FOLK MUSIC OF NEW MEXICO AND MEXICO.


GRASSHOPPER MATE, RECORDED AT ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO, APRIL 9, 1957. (RECORD AND PLAYED ON GUITAR BY DANIEL LOPEZ). LOPES AGREED THAT BOTH COMPOSED THIS PIECE WHICH IS A RHYTHMIC SONG. THE INTER- INTERPOLATION OF English WORDS A DEEPLY SAD SONG, BUT THE ENGLISH WORDS OF "THE SONG OF THE GRASSHOPPER" IS NOT TO BE UNDERSTOOD AS A SONG. THE SONG IS TO BE UNDERSTOOD AS A SONG WHICH IS NOT TO BE SINGED DURING THE DANCE.


LIKE MANY VERY OLD FOLK TUNES, THE FIRST OF THESE DANCES CONVENE THE CENTER OF THE DANCE. THE ACCOMPANIMENT A FOUR MEASURE PHRASE, THE SECOND, ALONGSIDE SIMILARLY MARKED BY SOMEWHAT MONOTONOUS REPETITION,


(2) SPANISH FOLK-POETRY IN NEW MEXICO Spanish Folklore in the Southwest, Spanish Religious Goliath Folklore in the Southwest, CYCLES ONE AND TWO, MEXICO, 1950, 1951.

(3) SEE CAMPBELL, SPANISH FOLK-POETRY IN NEW MEXICO, 1950, 1951.

(4) SEE CAMPBELL, SPANISH FOLK-POETRY IN NEW MEXICO, 1950, 1951.

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(12) SEE CAMPBELL, SPANISH FOLK-POETRY IN NEW MEXICO, 1950, 1951.

(13) SEE CAMPBELL, SPANISH FOLK-POETRY IN NEW MEXICO, 1950, 1951.

(14) SEE CAMPBELL, SPANISH FOLK-POETRY IN NEW MEXICO, 1950, 1951.

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I. El corcho

Después de un largo y estresante día de trabajo, me sentí tan fatigado que decidí tomar un momento para mí mismo. Invité a mi amigo a un café para que nos tomáramos un descanso y compartiéramos una conversación.

II. Canción

1. Oye, amigo, si te he visto
2. Y hace mucho tiempo
3. Que estamos a punto de
4. Dejando a un lado nuestras rivalidades

III. Conclusión

Yo soy un desilusionado,
No he encontrado la forma adecuada
De comunicarme para el éxito.
No he podido encontrar el camino
De hacer que el mundo entienda
La belleza y la importancia de mi obra.

IV. Interesante

Cuando llegué a casa, me senté en mi sillón
Y comencé a leer el libro
Que había comprado la semana pasada.

V. Entrevista

Entrevistador: ¿Cuál es tu opinión sobre el tema en cuestión?
Participante: Creo que es un tema muy importante.
Entrevistador: ¿Has tenido alguna experiencia personal con el tema?
Participante: Sí, una vez...
11. Gracia

Gracias a la gracia de su señoría, ha sido capaz de realizar tantos éxitos que, de ahí, se puede afirmar que es uno de los más grandes maestros de la escena.

12. Viejo

Viejo es un nombre que se asigna a quien ha vivido una vida larga y que ha pasado por muchas experiencias. Es un personaje que ha conocido a muchos y ha visto muchas cosas.

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