A la Una
Tres de la noche
Quando vejo hija hermosa
Dame la mano
Arvolicos d'almendra
Fel sharah canet betet masha
Morenica
Barmeenan
Arvole yoran por lluvias
Durme hermosa donzeya
Galanca
En este mundo
La vida do por el raki
Diz y ocho anos tengo
Ven hermosa
Minush
Yo se un mansevo del dor
Fidancico de yasimin
Pastora
Esta montana
A tan alta
SINGING FOLKSONGS

GLORIA LEVY

Sung by Gloria Levy
Notes by Professor M. J. Benardete

Gloria Levy grew up in New York City in a trilingual household -- Ladino, French and English were spoken simultaneously and interchangeably. In time-honored tradition, she learned these songs from her mother who was born in Alexandria, Egypt. Her father comes from Iznin (Sinai), Turkey, where the family lived for many generations after being expelled from Spain during the Spanish Inquisition.

"In spite of the revival of interest in Jewish studies, Sephardic culture remains almost unknown. Ladino is no longer being spoken except by elderly Sephardim. I like to think that this record will help preserve some of the beauties of the language and the music."

Under the name Gloria Krichheimer, she writes fiction which has appeared in various literary magazines. She is married to Manny Krichheimer, the filmmaker. They have two sons.

This record being a family affair, her mother plays the mandolin and tambourine accompaniment and her husband -- although Anshelm -- plays the drum.

Professor H. J. Benardete

Born in the town of Dardanelles in Asia Minor; came to the United States in 1910; studied in the schools of Cincinnati, Ohio; graduated from the University of Cincinnati in 1922. Received his M. A. and Ph.D. degrees from Columbia University. Did graduate work in Madrid. Has been a college teacher in the Colleges of the City of New York for the past thirty-five years. Today considered the "Dean of Spanish Teachers" in this country. His specialty in scholarly work is in the field of Sephardic Studies. His book "Hispanic Culture and Character of the Sephardic Jews" (Hispanic Institute, Columbia University) is the standard work in this field. Everywhere he is ranked as the foremost authority in Sephardic scholarship. He has lectured on all the phases of the Iberian Jews, their history, their culture, their literature, their mysticism, etc.

* Now a professor of the Spanish Language and its Culture.

THE SEPARDIC SONG

by

Professor H. J. Benardete

1492 is the key-year to Spanish and Latin American history. Needless to say, it is also the focal point in time for the United States and seen from our own times it is the date that has changed World History. A date that has no significant implications could not help being also important in the little-known path of culture. Spain is the mother of the folkways of the Spanish-speaking people. From immemorial epochs the Iberian Peninsula has been the cradle of fascinating peoples and cultures. It is the land where the folk in all its significance has created for itself the constituent elements that are associated always with the folk music, songs, dances, the popular crafts, ceremonies both secular and religious. Perhaps Spain is the only European country that has had always a folk though the words of folk, folkways, folklore, are difficult to define with precision. Yet we can say a few things about these words that would be approximately meaningful.

Jose Ortega y Gasset, the brilliant Spanish philosopher and essayist, has stated somewhere that the folk does only preserve but does not create. On the other hand, Don Ramon Hernandez Pcal, the indispensible great Spanish scholar, who knows more than anyone else about the folk literature of his country, has corrected Ortega's cavalierly facile definition by pointing out that the folk through its selectivity, taste and willingness to suppress the superfluous, contributes enormously in the process of time, to the folkways to meet aesthetic standards that instinctively are felt to satisfy the demands of the momentary rhythm and eternal human values. A folk song and folk dance might borrow in cultivated circles, but in their transmission they suffer mutations that make of the song and the dance new products. Culture and instinct, learning and rhythm, elaboration and simplicity -- these are traits of all art, nonetheless in the surviving and always satisfying folk products, the anonymous collaborators do follow patterns of excellence. It is no wonder then that when we enter historical periods of sophistication art, composers, poets, seers, from all over the west go to Spain for inspiration and rejuvenations.

The above general remarks are equally applicable to the folkways of the Spanish-speaking Jew. The first phonograph record of the traditional songs of the Sephardic Jews, in the repertory of the Folkways Records is another contribution that enriches our knowledge and enjoyment of the Spanish Song. We must give here a very brief account of the Sephardim or Seferides as they are known in Spanish. 1492 is again a focal date for it was in that miraculous year that Spain became, ideologically speaking, a Christian State. For more than seven centuries (711-1492) Spain was the only European country that exercised religious tolerance. Under Islamic and Christian sovereignties, Jews, Moslems, and Catholics lived side by side developing for themselves highly original cultures. The Jews of Spain called the Iberian Peninsula Sephardim and because they were capable to evolve a culture in Hebrew, Arabic, Latin and in the Romance Languages of their land, so rich and all-embracing, that they have deserved to be considered a people apart. The Spanish Middle Ages gave Europe and the world new ideas and new forms of art.

Early in the ninth century, a blind Moorish poet of Cabra, in Southern Spain, invented a poetical pattern called in Arabic, mu w washaha or Girdle Song. The mu w washaha begins usually with a rhythmic couplet, the rest of the poem is made of quatrains. The first three lines of each quatrains have the same rhyme -- for example, using English words, we would have man - man - that and the fourth line of each quatrains would have different words that would rhyme with the refrain-couplet. Here is an illustration: the poem has two different rhymes in the lines which contain rhyme, then the fourth line would naturally rhyme with the first line, such as thin - thin - thin - thin, etc. With a little imagination the reader could project on a piece of paper this song-form and he readily would see how the refrain-rhyme is composed at the fourth line. The binding rhyme is then the Girdle Song.

Learned poets wrote in the middle age mu w washaha in Arabic, Hebrew, Spanish, Italian, German, etc. It just happened that the greatest of the Sephardim poets, Judah Halevy, Ibn Gabirol, Moses ben Ezra wrote enduring mu w washaha. Unlike the other Peninsular traditions, the Sephardic Jews have preserved for a thousand years these Girdle Songs for their religious and secular ceremonies. In all the synagogues a haunting mystical song in honor of the Sabbath, the Leha Dodi is sung with ecstasy. Few people suspect that its poetical form is no other than the poem-song form of the Andalusian poet from Cabra in the province of Cordova. We see then that a poem-song is transmitted into a semi-popular folk song and is treasured by the folk for centuries on end.

In their exiles the Spanish-speaking Jews who established themselves in North Africa and in the countries and lands that were under the rule of the Ottoman Empire stubbornly adhered to their Iberian cultural patrimony. The Sephardim from North Africa because they were not so very far from Spain have to this day the richest collection of ballads, dancesongs, death-songs, laments, in all types of festivity occasions. Melodically this rich repertory has innumerable affinities with the Iberian tradition. But the Spanish-Jewish of the Mediterranean basin who still express their medieval Spanish have been influenced considerably by the Levantine dialectics, languages and folkways.

Gloria Levy's repertory comes almost exclusively from the Levantine countries. Philologists use the Greek word Koine for the almost uniform lingua franca that developed in these countries ever since 1492. Among these oriental Jews, idioms, words, phrases, taken from Turkish, Greek, the Slavonic languages, Hebrew, Italian, French, have entered into the Judeo-Spanish spoken by the Hasidim - Levantins. The lyrics of this record, linguistically speaking have some words that come from the languages mentioned above.

Let us take at random a few verses from these songs:

A. Yo es un mancebo del dor  
B. Ven hermosa, Ven consúmi  
C. La vida doy por el zaki  
D. Una hija tengo, Barmitan  
E. Me la llaman tenegre, "Ellos"  
F. Me la saca a la brisa  
G. Me la hacen Kepaza

Now dor, is Hebrew and it means, generations and here its meaning is up-to-date, fashionable.

Kepaza, is a word of Turkish origin meaning fast food. Razi is Turkish also for the white-coloured brandy known under the Spanish name of aze. The refrain of the fast-moving song, Barmitan is talmudic Hebrew, meaning a ghost but in the Judeo-Spanish song in question it is equivalent to God forbid! and finally tenegre and Kepaza are Turkish words signifying a cooking pot and shame.

But what is the most astonishing factor in these songs is the purity of the Spanish remaining in their grammar and vocabulary. Any Spaniard or Latin American would accept as traditional folk songs the following samples:

A. Duerme, duerme, hermosa doceilla,  
B. Duerme, duerme sin apañar y color,  
C. Dios de los cielos,  
D. En la mar hay una torre,  
E. En la torre hay una ventana  
F. Y de las alturas  
G. Hasta Conocer muy presto  
H. La mi ventura.
LA VIDA DO POR EL RAM - I'D GIVE MY LIFE FOR RAM

Raki is a powerful liquor made in the Near East.

CHORUS:
Pufo give my life for raki
I can't leave it alone
I never have enough of it because I love it so.

When it's in the barrel
It doesn't say a word
When I get drunk
I even roll in the mud.

(Chorus)

It makes you want a divorce
From the happiest marriage
It helps you pass your life away
With laughter and tears.

You're a coal miner

(Chorus)

I feel like a nobleman
I feel superior to all
Without a lady in the drawer
I feel like a millionaire.

(Chorus)

LA VIDA DO ... etc.

EN ESTE MUNDO - IN THIS WORLD

In this world
I had one desire
But it was never fulfilled
I have been patient for so long
But now I am weary.

Of the heavens
And of the universe
Revel to me
What my future will be.

While going down the stairs
I saw some blood flowing
It is the blood of my beloved
Who is sweeter than honey,

En este mundo
Tuve un deseo
No lo alcanzé
De tanto amarlo
Yo ya me cansé.

Dio de los cielos
Patrio del mundo
Ye de las alturas
Aeme conoser muy presto
La mi ventura.

En shahando
De la 'escalera
Vido una sangre correr
Esa sangre de mi morena
Que mas dulce que la miel.

DAME LA MANO - GIVE ME YOUR HAND

A sailor's song; probably very old. There are more verses to it.

Give me your hand, my love
That I may climb up to your seat
It is a pity that you sleep alone
I come to keep you company.

In the sea there is a tower
In the tower there is a window
In the window there is a girl
Who calls to the sailors.

Don't look at the dock
For there is nothing to see
Before, there was a lady
But hoisted sail and drifted away.

Dame la mano tu paloma
Para arriar al tu nido
Maldicha que diermes sola
Vengo a dermir con tigo.

En la mar hay una torre
En la torre hay una ventana
En la ventana hay una Nina
Que a los marineros yama.

No t'apares al ala mía
Que no al volar mi ave
Una barbita muy aya
Travo la ve la y se fue.

FEL SHARAH CANET BETET MASHA - WALKING DOWN THE STREET

To the tune of the Turkish "Uskadar." This version has five languages in it, French, Spanish, Italian, Arabic and English. It was sung only in Egypt. There is another version in Ladino, that was sung in Salonika.

The girl with the beautiful dark eyes
Was walking down the street
As lovely as the moon was her face
Which lit up the boulevard.

I wanted to speak to her, but she insulted me
Because her father was nearby, at the station
And she hit me with her umbrella
In answer to my greeting.

Why do you hit me my dear
When I love you so much?
And if you want to show me your love,
We needn't stand on ceremony.

All night I'll wait for you,
Even until the dawn,
And every morning after
For the sake of our love.

Fel sharah canet betet masha
La signora es a muy buena
Come la luna está la sus fachas
Qué esclavat le boulevard.

DAME LA MANO - GIVE ME YOUR HAND

A sailor's song; probably very old. There are more verses to it.

Give me your hand, my love
That I may climb up to your seat
It is a pity that you sleep alone
I come to keep you company.

In the sea there is a tower
In the tower there is a window
In the window there is a girl
Who calls to the sailors.

Don't look at the dock
For there is nothing to see
Before, there was a lady
But hoisted sail and drifted away.

Dame la mano tu paloma
Para arriar al tu nido
Maldicha que diermes sola
Vengo a dermir con tigo.

En la mar hay una torre
En la torre hay una ventana
En la ventana hay una Nina
Que a los marineros yama.

No t'apares al ala mía
Que no al volar mi ave
Una barbita muy aya
Travo la ve la y se fue.
A TAN ALTA VA LA LUNA - THE MOON CLIMBS HIGH

The moon climbs high
Just before the dawn
A beautiful girl with bad luck
Deserves never to be born.

My eyes are dizzy
From staring at the sea
Chips come and go
But there are no letters for me.

MORENICA - DARK BEAUTY

To be "Morenica" - dark eyes, dark hair was the ideal of beauty. Sung at weddings - guests sang it dancing around the bride. Those weddings lasted a week. There are more verses.

They call me dark beauty
I was born fair
The summer sun
Made me this way.

CHORUS:
You are a dark-haired and graceful beauty.
Ask the dark-eyed beauty
If she wants to come
The ship has hoisted sail
And is ready to embark.

(CHORUS)

The sailor
Call me dark-eyes beauty
If they call me again
I will go away with them.

(CHORUS)
The dark-haired beauty
Is dressed in yellow
Just like the year
And the quince.

(CHORUS)

A LA UNA - AT ONE O'CLOCK

Probably one of the oldest songs
At one o'clock I was born
At two I grew up
At three I was befuddled
At four I was married.

Tell me where you come from, young girl
Tell me if you have a lover
If so, I will keep him from you.

A la una yo nací
A la dos me engendraste
A la tres tomi amante
A la cuatro me casi.

Di me nina doros vienes
Que se quere conoser
Di me si tiames amante
Te La are defender.

BARMEENAN - HEAVEN FORBID

Sung only in Salamina
Full of Greek & Turkish words.

I have a foolish daughter, HEAVEN FORBID!
They call her dumb-bell, HEAVEN FORBID!
When she walks down the street HEAVEN FORBID!
They make fun of her.

For your sake, Mr. Laschi, HEAVEN FORBID!
As well as for mine, HEAVEN FORBID!
Find me a wife HEAVEN FORBID!
Who will please me.

The girls from Rivington Street HEAVEN FORBID!
Have brought us a new style HEAVEN FORBID!
When they walk down the street HEAVEN FORBID!
They wiggle and shake their hips.

(CHORUS)

Una haja bova tengo
Marie la yama gege
Sangue a la place
Marie la yama seipa.

Anthea Hambletchi
Anthea yo con el
Que me topes una navta
Que me saa mi plator.

Moda, moe a la mesa, a los hijos de Rivington
Quando salio a la place
Se les menos el digiton.

MINUSH - MINUSH (A Girl's Name in Turkish)

Probably very old.
Note the use of the mystical numbers of 7, 3, 1, and 0.

Three carnations in a basket
One is white and one is pink
The middle one is red
The beginning of my love.

CHORUS:
Please Minush, please Minush
I will throw myself into the sea
And catch a fish
From it, I'll take seven maidens
But I'll choose only you.

(CHORUS)

I will climb up to the heavens
To the seventh level
A golden arrow I will shoot
Wherever it lands will be my destiny.

(CHORUS)

VEN HERMOZA - COME, PRETTY GIRL

Also sung to another tune
Pretty girl come with me
For my father's a textile merchant
I will make you a dress of silk.

Pretty girl come with me
For my father's a jeweler
I will give you a wedding ring.

LA PASTORA - THE SHEPHERDESS

Probably very old.
I loved a shepherdess
A beautiful girl
From my childhood I adored her
And no one else did I love.

One day while we were sitting
By the doorway
I said to her, "My flower,
I am dying of love for you."

She embraced me
And kissed me tenderly
She asked me, "You are too young for love."

I grew up and searched for her
She found another and I lost her
She forgot and abandoned me
But I still love her.

I am 18 years old
In the flower of my youth
You burned me like a fire
For the first time.
ARVOLICOS D'ALMENDRA - ALMOND TREES
The greatest compliment on a woman's eyes - like almonds
Your green eyes are like the almonds
Of the tree that I planted
Give me your hand
For I am dying of love for you.
The doorway of my darling's house is open
It is filled with tears
The beautiful girl I love
Has stepped out, looking like the springtime.
You are very beautiful, my dear
I yearn to reach out to you
If I don't succeed
I will renounce living.

Arvolicos d'almandera que yo planti
Por los tus ojos verdes
Dame la mano mía
Que yo por ti
Quiero por ti
Yo te quiero.
La puerta de mi querida ya se avizo
De lágrimas ya se inco
Conto la primavera
Que lima salio
La Beba nina que amo yo.

HERMOSA, soguerra en cantidad
A ti deseado alcanzate
Se yo no te alcanzaste
Mi querida
La vida yo a emprestar.

ESTA MONTANA - THIS MOUNTAIN
Also sung to two other tunes - Tres de la noche and
Fidanisco
The mountain I see before me
Rhymes and emonders
There I lost my love
And I sit here and weep.
I need the sky for paper
The sea for ink
And the trees for pens
To write down my tears.

FIDANISCO DE YASMIN - LITTLE JASMINE
BLOSSOM
Also sung to tune of Tres de la noche
Little jasmine blossom
I brought you up in my arms
And others are delighting in you.
Come to the door and let me see you
Come to the window
Speak to me and reveal
The secrets of your heart.

(above verse in Tres de la noche)
If I begin to reveal
The secrets of my life
I will need the sky for paper
And the sea for ink.
(These last two lines and the next verse with the exception of the last word are also part of another song, Esta montana.)

I need the sky for paper
The sea for ink
And the trees for pens
To write down my tears.
I don't want you to speak to me
Or pass my door any more
You need to love me
But now you're grown cold.

(above verse also in Tres de la noche)
Fidanisco de yasmin
T'engranedes en mis brazos
Tengranedes, t'engranedes
Otras te stan gosande.
Sal a la puerta te vere
Sal a la ventana
Aviame y descubre
Secretos de tu alma.

No quiero mas que me estes
Ni por mi puerta pases
Mas antes me querías bien
Angora te yerates.

ARVOLES YORAN POR LUVIAS - TREES CRY FOR RAIN
Sung by some people without the chorus.
Probably very old.

Trees cry for rain
And mountains for the wind
So my eyes cry
For you my love.

CHORUS:
I ask myself
What will become of me
I cannot live
In foreign lands.
I see before me an angel
Looking at me with your eyes
I want to cry but I cannot
My heart is too heavy.

(chorus)

GALANICA - PRETTY ONE
Probably very old

Open the door my pretty one
To soon the dawn will break.
I will open the door for you
My hands come love.
I do not sleep at night
Thinking of you.

My father is inside, writing
He will hear us
Tip his inkwell over
And he'll go to bed.
Blow out his candle
And he'll fall asleep.

Avirimsh galanica
Que ya va'manecer
Avir ya vos avro
Mi lindo amor
La noche son dormo
Pensando en vos.

Mi padre'sta escribiendo
Mie scietiera
Vasaydail tinterico
Si sechara
Amatable la candela
Si se dormira.

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MASTERED BY DAVID HANCOCK
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LITHO IN U.S.A.