APRIL IN PORTUGAL
MONITOR PRESENTS THE LEADING FADO SINGERS OF PORTUGAL
MARIA JOSÉ DA GUIA
VALENTINA FELIX
JOSE BORGES
ISABEL SILVA
ALFREDO DUARTE, JR.
ALICE MARIA CONCEIÇÃO
A SEVERA
MONITOR music of the world
MFS 374
MARIA JOSE DA GUIA — An established star, Maria José has been singing professionally for sixteen years. Both her recordings and personal appearances are extremely popular in Portugal. Maria José was born in Angola, Portuguese West Africa, but came to Lisbon when she was quite young. Aside from singing regularly in a “casa de fado”, Maria José also appears on television, radio and the stage. She has the traditional fado style.

VALENTINA FELIX — At 23, Valentina Felix is one of Lisbon’s youngest professional fadistas. This is her first recording. Despite her youth, however, Valentina is already well-known and widely admired in Portugal both for her sincere delivery and her engaging personality. Born in the southernmost province of Algarve, Valentina began her singing career at the age of 16 as a vocalist with a fado group. From vocalising popular songs she turned to the fado two years ago.

JOSE BORGES — A native of Lisbon, José Borges began singing as a hobby, then took part in a contest which he won. That event established him as both a singer and author-composer. Before turning professional José was a tailor. Today he is one of the best-known male fadistas in Lisbon. Possessor of an excellent tenor voice, José is best known for his renditions of the Coimbra style fado of which Rosas Brancas (Side 1, band 3) is an excellent example. The listener will find one of José’s own compositions on this recording (Side 2, band 4) Ola Vem do Mar.

ISABEL SILVA — Beginning her career at the age of 16, Isabel Silva is regarded today as one of Portugal’s leading exponents of folklore music. She has a big voice and a spirited delivery which makes her popular with audiences. Aside from singing in fado restaurants, Isabel has appeared in a number of stage productions and has made numerous recordings.

INTRODUCTION

This unique phonograph record provides the American phonograph public with six of Portugal’s most outstanding fadistas. It also provides the American listener with an opportunity to hear the rich variety of Portuguese popular music. Included are fados of the Coimbra style, fados of the Lisbon style, a march, a singing joust (or desgarrada), folk songs, and the popular fado cancão or song fado. This recording was produced in one continuous session at a typical fado restaurant, A Severa, in the old Bairro Alto district of Lisbon and it was made from 4:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. after each of the singers had completed a full evening’s work. For this reason it has somewhat the same quality that might be attained by a spontaneous jam session of American jazz musicians.

Though uniquely Portuguese, the fado springs from a number of sources, including the troubadours of the 12th century who came to Portugal from Provence via Aragon. Other influences are Moorish, African and Brazilian; the latter two brought to Lisbon by the intrepid Portuguese sailors who have roamed the seas since the Age of Discoveries in the 15th and 16th centuries. There are two distinct classes of fado. One is called “typical on restaurant”, of which there are twelve in Lisbon. These singers called fadistas (male or female) carry on the tradition and add their own style and interpretations. The “typical restaurant” are located in two of the oldest districts of the city of Lisbon — Alfama and Bairro Alto — and here, every night of the week, Portuguese and foreigners go for dinner and an evening of fado music.

The people of Lisbon themselves sing the fado at home and in neighborhood wine shops called “tavernas.” The fado pattern, however, is established by the professional singers who perform in what are called “typical on restaurant”, of which there are twelve in Lisbon. These singers called fadistas (male or female) carry on the tradition and add their own style and interpretations. The “typical on restaurant” are located in two of the oldest districts of the city of Lisbon — Alfama and Bairro Alto — and here, every night of the week, Portuguese and foreigners go for dinner and an evening of fado music.

Side One

1. FADO COIMBRA — Song of Coimbra (The music of this song was used a few years ago to make a great popular hit called “April in Portugal”. The original Portuguese fado, however, is a song about the ancient University City of Coimbra in central Portugal.) “Coimbra of the poplars, are you still the capital of love in Portugal?” Vocal: Maria José da Guia.

2. BARRETE VERDE — Green Cap “Green cap and jacket and black belt, all fringed.” Vocal: José Borges.

3. UMA CASA PORTUGUESA — A Portuguese House. “A Portuguese house suits you well with bread and wine on the table...” Vocal: Maria José da Guia.

4. CANTARES DO MINHO — Songs of Minho. “I have a love in Viana, another in Ponte de Lima, and another in Barcelos. Trala la la.” (Minho is a province in the north of Portugal, Viana, Ponte de Lima and Barcelos are towns in Minho.) Vocal: Isabel Silva.

5. ROSAS BRANCAS — White Roses. “When I die there will be nobody to cut white roses for me...” Vocal: José Borges.

6. MARCA DE A SEVERA — March of A Severa. “Already all the people know that in our beautiful Lisbon the most famous restaurant for food and fado is Severa, Severa...” Vocal: Maria José da Guia.

Side Two

1. BARCOS DO TEJO — Boats of the Tagus River. “From high in the castle, St. George keeps a watchful eye on the Tagus where the sails go to the sea...” Vocal: Valentina Felix.

2. FADO NOISSE — Our Song. “Don’t stop singing the fado with courage because our fado is very Portuguese...” Vocal: Alfredo Duarte, Jr.

3. MADRAGOA — Madragoa. (an old fishermen’s district of Lisbon near the river.) “The sea longs for its monument in Lisbon, gloomy and picturesque Madragoa...” Vocal: Alice Maria Conceição.

4. OLA VEM DO MAR — Ola Come to the Sea. “My love is a sailor who works at sea to earn money to marry me...” Vocal: Isabel Silva.

5. VARINAS, NOIVAS DO MAR — Fishwives, Brides of the Sea. “These fishwives, talkative, pretty and candid are brides of the Portuguese sea...” Vocal: Alfredo Duarte, Jr.

6. DESGARRADA — Singing Contest. The verses of this song are sung alternately by the different fadistas and speak of typical fado scenes such as bullfights, guitars, black shawls and the districts of the city of Lisbon. The desgarrada dates from the 12th century and was known in those days as a “continent”. It is usually a spontaneous, poetical joust in which the singers try to outdo each other in wit and rhyming, making up verses extemporaneously. The music for this desgarrada is that used for the typical fado Mouraria. Vocals in order of appearance: Maria José da Guia, Alfredo Duarte, Jr., Alice Maria Conceição, José Borges, Valentina Felix, Isabel Silva, Maria José da Guia, Chorus.

ABOUT THIS RECORD

This recording was made at the typical fado restaurant, A Severa, 55 Rua das Gavas, Bairro Alto, Lisbon. The A Severa takes its name from Maria Severa, a great fado singer of the last century. The daughter of a Portuguese mother and a Gypsy father, Maria Severa overwhelmed Lisbon with her singing and beauty. She won the love of the Count of Vimioso, but owing to their differences in station their love ended in tragedy. The story of Maria Severa is a recurring scene in fado poetry.

The restaurant A Severa is perhaps the most popular typical restaurant in Lisbon and is noted equally for the quality of its food, its top-flight roster of singers and its unique ambiance. Monitor wishes to express its thanks and appreciation to Mr. Julian Barros, the proprietor of A Severa, and to all of his staff for their enthusiastic assistance. Monitor also acknowledges with thanks the technical aid rendered by the Portuguese radio station Emissora Nacional. Finally, Monitor would like to express its appreciation to Mr. Emilio Mateus of Lisbon, the noted “fadophile”, and to Mr. John M. Reed of New York, whose assistance this recording would not have been possible. Mr. Reed also provided the program notes.

For complete catalog “Music of the World,” write: MONITOR RECORDS, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10010

Cover Photo of Maria Jose da Guia by William Stellings, courtesy George Peabody and Associates, Inc.

Cover Design: David Chaikman

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