

Ray Mitchell

Foundations of Flamenco

I must apologise for the lack of an article last month, I have been seriously ill, but am pleased to say that I am steadily making a good recovery. May I also express thanks to those of my correspondents who are patiently waiting for answers, I am catching up on my work now. The music used last month was of course the traditional Seguidillas Sevillanas known as Reverte not, as printed, 'Reverie'!. This music will give you the full structure of most Sevillanas, apart from non-traditional solo arrangements. It is merely a matter of fitting in your particular choice of tune, and using the appropriate part of the melody as a Silida, or opening call. This informs the dancer that the dance is beginning. When you aquire new flamenco records you may find some names that are not too familiar. Here are some thoughts about one or two of them. Guitarist Manolo de Brenes has recorded with most of the major singers, etc, and is a highly respected artist. His technical ability is excellent, and he is well able to handle any difficult toque required of him. A most interesting point about this guitarist, who is about 50 by the way, is that he was once a singer better than many of the singers that he finds himself asked to accompany! This ability would inevitably give him an advantage in the art of accompaniment, and prevent him falling into the trap of playing bits of flowery solos in between the gaps, instead of giving full attention to the singer. Certainly an artist to have in your collection. Another guitarist that you will discover is Pedro Pena, a gypsy from Lebrija in the province of Seville. He has a very jondo style, and has a brother Juan who sings.

Pedro Pena is perhaps rare amongst gypsies, because he is a college graduate, and head of the education committee of Lebrija.

Those who are found of the pure style of jondo playing of Diego del Gastor, say that they can hear his influence in the playing of Pedro Pena.

Finally, to a singer, Manuel Gerena, one who arouses controversy. Many who love the pure unadulterated style have considerable reservations about this artist. You see, the political craze is here! He sells big amongst university left wing politics, because his lyrics are all political and far to the left. To be fair, this is inevitable, after all flamenco has come from the joys and suffering and passions of the Spanish people, and if a man or woman is inflamed by such causes it is natural enough that he expresses that in his art. It should not, I believe be at the expense of the timeless, beautiful structure of the art. Political points of view are a matter for each individual, so that is enough said on that! Personally, the passion and beauty in art itself is enough for me, I need no words or images, and I think that you will find that most exponents of pure flamenco think along similar lines.

For my article in June, I presented you with an opening section of Rondena, in the style of Ramon Montoya. This hauntingly beautiful toque offers any creative artist enormous possibilities. It is free, and perhaps one could imagine Debussy or Ravel creating something like it, for one thing, it offers greater harmonic scope than many toques. I, in company with the above illustrious names, have composed a great deal recently, mostly flamenco, and here is a snippet from my own Rondena. Do not forget to alter the tuning of your instrument, and take careful note of the position markings.

RONDENA

2P
55555 44444 22222 0
320 320 3 0235320 420 4

TP (TREMOLLO)
101010 101010 101010 101010 101010 101010

5P
7777 7775 3P 5555 5555 5555 5555

2P
5555 5555 3333 3333 3333 3333

2222 2222 2222 2222

2222 2222 45420 320 320 2 464-2420

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Ray Mitchell
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