move) to further investigation, then Miss Lazare’s notes are satisfying. My personal opinion is that she knows whereof she speaks, but for reasons of her own chooses to be presented on faith.

Her singing and guitar playing are pleasant, although after the first few songs her performance becomes trying and repetitious. She has a pleasant voice, but occasionally has difficulty keeping on pitch. It can be said that she belongs to that school of folksingers who were devotees in New York City in the mid-1950s. She has found some interesting material and presents it as historical fact with little commercial dramatization. With Mr. Hinton, she is of a past school of singers-of-folksongs; we can forgive the style in which she sings, but not her omissions in the scholarship she claims.

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Manitas de Plata—flamenco guitar. With Jose Reyes and Manero Ballardo, singers. Two 12" 33 1/3 rpm discs. Connoisseur Society CS 263, CS 965 (stereo). Cover notes by Nat Hentoff. $5.79 each.


The soul of flamenco. With the Cuadro Flamenco. One 12" 33 1/3 rpm disc. Nonesuch H 2002; HS 72002 (stereo). $2.50.

World of flamenco. The Romeros with jaleo. Two 12" 33 1/3 rpm discs. Mercury SR 2-9120. $11.58.

An honest review of any Manitas de Plata record must necessarily be something of an exposé, not only of Manitas’ playing, but of his promoters as well, who proclaim him “the world’s greatest flamenco guitarist” in one of the world’s most massive advertising campaigns. Perhaps these gentlemen are thoroughly ignorant of flamenco and believe their own literature, however they are bulldozing this belief into the minds of the music-loving public of several countries (the United States, England, and France among them) to the inevitable detriment of authentic flamenco.

As I wrote in my recently revised edition (1967) The Art of Flamenco:

Manitas de Plata, who has captured the world’s imagination with his gypsy looks and ways, has only one fault that I know of: his guitar playing. He is, incredibly enough in a man proclaimed ‘the greatest living flamenco guitarist,’ ignorant of many of flamenco’s basic precepts; the intrinsic feeling, aire (air), compás (rhythmic structures of the various forms), and tradition of flamenco largely escape him. In addition, he does not possess the virtuosity to disguise these flaws, as so many of today’s technicians do. But it could all be worked out with some years of study and experience about a thousand miles to the south of Manitas’ residence in southern France, for he does seem to possess one of the basic elements for great playing: the soul.
For verification of these statements one has but to search out a truly knowledgeable aficionado or flamenco artist and listen to Manitas' records in his presence. He is a comic figure among such aficionados who refer to him not as “Manitas de Plata” (Little Silver Hands) but as “Manitas de Plomo” (Little Lead Hands).

His followers make one argument that must be taken into consideration. They say that flamenco is an art of improvisation and that Manitas is a highly imaginative and spontaneous improviser. This may be true, but improvisation goes astray and becomes meaningless if it is not founded on a solid background of knowledge and tradition within the art. It is as if a musician playing traditional jazz constantly loses the rhythm, switches from one melody to another in midstream and at the most unwarranted moments, slips on virtuoso runs for which he is not prepared, and in general shows that he does not know what he is about, and then attempts to justify himself by the terms “improvisation” and “spontaneity.”

It is useless to select any one Manitas record for criticism. I have heard all of his releases, as well as hearing him in southern France under jam-session conditions. Unfortunately, the above critique applies in all cases.

His records also contain two singers—one his brother—who are on a par with Manitas. Their knowledge of flamenco singing, and even of the Spanish language, is rudimentary at best.

The Misa Flamenca is remarkable in many respects. It couples the Roman Catholic Mass and flamenco so well that it makes one understand by example a precept in the study of music: that much of folk music was derived from religious sources, and that more religious music than one might think was adapted from the folk. The belief has long been held among experts in flamenco that much of the music is based on the chants of various religions: Hindu, Buddhist, Moslem, Judaic, and certainly the Roman Catholic. At least in the latter, Misa Flamenca does much to substantiate this theory.

Apart from the choral singing, blended so beautifully with the flamenco, the pure flamenco itself is outstanding. All of the verses have appropriately religious themes, and the singers, particularly Rafael Romero, Pericón de Cádiz, el Chocolate, and Pepe el Culata, are among flamenco’s finest. In addition, the guitar playing of Serranito and Ramón de Algeciras is well above average.

The Mass begins with the KYRIE, which includes a fine flamenco caña sung by Rafael Romero, and continues into the GLORIA (cantes de Málaga), concluded by a moving malagueña del Mellizo by Pericón de Cádiz. In the CREDOM the rhythm is begun by beating on a table with knuckles and hands (this continues on and off throughout this band, blending ingeniously with both the flamenco and the choral singing), which leads into a martineté by Pepe el Culata, and then by perhaps the highpoint of the entire record: a spine-tingling siguiriya (flamenco’s most dire lament) by the young gypsy singer, el Chocolate, probably the most moving interpreter of this flamenco form today. the SANCTUS (cantes del campo) is composed of country songs sung entirely by the choral group. Side A is terminated with the AGNUS DEI, based on the alegriás and soleares of Cádiz, sung with a most exciting effect by both the choral group and flamenco singers with guitar accompaniment.

Misa Flamenca, which takes up on one complete side of this record, is an experiment in excellent taste which has without a doubt accomplished its
objective. On Side B, the Misa Mozárabe, a choral representation of the early Spanish Christian church music that was strongly influenced by centuries of Moorish rule in Spain, is not flamenco oriented and will thus be only of general interest.

A statement on the record jacket of The Soul of Flamenco states that "the Cuadro Flamenco in its bewitching youthful glory restores the magic" of flamenco. Unfortunately, this record is just another among many adequate efforts on the market. The guitarist, Juan García de la Mata, is a good performer, solidly grounded in his role of accompanist. However, in this day when most of flamenco's great guitarists, such as Sabicas, have multiple recordings available a merely good performance does not suffice (in his defense, García de la Mata has other far better recordings, both in the flamenco and classical idioms). This is even more true of Manolo Leiva, the record's sole singer who can be categorized only as passable. And as in all flamenco records, the invisible dance can hold little interest apart from the occasional sounds of footwork, castanets, and shouted encouragement.

The record, which does include a varied and interesting selection of flamenco's forms, can serve as a basic introduction to the art.

The two-record offering of the World of Flamenco, featuring father Celedonio Romero and his three sons, is in some ways tasteful and interesting. Son Pepe is the true flamenco of the group, and accordingly handles well most of the solo guitar work and the song and recital accompaniments. Angel is also improving in the flamenco idiom, as can be witnessed by his impressive virtuosity in the imitation of Sabicas' bulerías. The third son, Celín, appears only as the fourth guitar on the several guitar quartets. They are a nice change of pace in a basically guitar album. Father Celedonio plays two imaginative guitar solos marred only by the fact that they are completely classical in nature, bearing little relationship to flamenco.

María Victoria, not one of the family, sings passably a few of the lighter forms, but the same cannot be said for the reciting of Celedonio, who attempts to substitute several over-stated, melodramatic recitations for the cante jondo (deep song). They prove to be this album's main drawback. Another major fault is the album's size: two longplay records packed with eighteen numbers may well prove tedious to many ears.

Morón de la Frontera

Donn E. Pohren

Spain

Navajo sway songs. Recorded and edited by Tony Isaacs. One 12" 33 1/3 rpm disc. Indian House 1501. 1968. Cover notes by Tony Isaacs; cover photo by Laura Gilpin. $4.50.

Tony Isaacs' work represents an unusual blend of care and artistry in presenting the music of the American Indian. There are many different functions that can be served by a recording. In "ethnic" music the impulse is strong to include representative samples of as many different kinds of music as possible in order to introduce the listener to an unfamiliar musical tradition. All too often, record after record of this sort is published when there is no longer any need for it. The present collection, like Isaacs' two volumes of Taos Round Dance songs (see Brown 1968), provides a most welcome