

“LA ARGENTINITA”, GARCÍA LORCA AND EARLY POPULAR SONGS

By PEDRO VAQUERO

ENCARNACION LÓPEZ JÚLVEZ, LA ARGENTINITA

Encarnación López Júlvez was born in the year 1895, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. A daughter of Spaniards and professionals in the theatre on tour around Latin America; from this fortuitous birth she would inherit nothing more than her artistic name: La Argentinita.

She began her career in San Sebastian and immediately went on to Madrid where it did not take her long to succeed. A very complete artist, although her main activity was dance she also received great recognition as a singer and actress.

She became highly interested in popular Spanish dance which she studied thoroughl compiling traditional dances from different areas of Spain in order to further adapt and recreate them.

With a base in traditional song and dance, she created a new show, both personal and modern, with an art so purified as universal but at the same time deeply rooted in Spanish popular art as well. The theatre of variety reached with La Argentinita levels of dignity and quality never seen until then in our country. From Spanish theatres she went on to succeed equally in Europa and America.

La Argentinita had met Federico García Lorca as soon as he had arrived in Madrid in 1919. Soon after in March of 1920 already being herself a highly successful well known dancer, collaborated in

Lorca's first theatrical début: *EL MALEFICIO DE LA MARIPOSA*. The opening night was a complete fiasco and not even alleviated by the dance of the butterfly interpreted by La Argentinita, however, the newborn friendship between both artists would become definitive. Years later in 1931, La Argentinita recorded in gramophone plates for His Masters Voice, ten songs from the Colección de Canciones Populares Españolas, compiled and harmonized by the poet and accompanied by himself on the piano. Previously, remembers La Argentinita's sister, Pilar López; Federico Garcia Lorca and her sister had rehearsed the songs in the living room of the sisters home, the same in which the poet and playwright would read in private some of his works. The recording were a great success on behalf of both the public and the critics. From thereon La Argentinita interpreted these songs in most of her shows and this contributed to their popularization.

The staging of dances based on music of popular roots from the most celebrated Spanish authors, like Albéniz, Falla, Granados or Bretón would become the basis of the repertoire in La Argentinita's shows in the most important theatres all around the world and always with great success.

United sentimentally with Ignacio Sánchez Mejías, the dancer once again meets with the poet in sharing the pain and sorrow for the tragical death of the bullfighter on August 13 of 1934. Months later, when García Lorca writes his “Lament for Sánchez Mejías” the inscription could not be addressed to any other than “To my dear friend Encarnación López Júlves”.

In the autumn of 1936, with a war that was destined to last long, Encarnación decides to abandon Madrid along with her sister. According to Pilar, they left by Alicante on way to Algiers where they made their living by doing what they only knew how: to dance. Casablanca, Paris and New York, always working, would be stopovers on a trip of no return for La Argentinita. On December 24 of 1945, dies in New York under complete artistic faculties where she was performing *EL AMOR BRUJO*, one of her most successful works.

FEDERICO GARCIA LORCA

Federico García Lorca was born in 1898, in Fuente Vaqueros, a small town on the fertile Granadian land by the Genil river. All of his literary work will be impregnated by the popular culture of the rural world in which he was brought up, and particularly by traditional music.

Already during his infancy one can observe a clear assimilation of traditional musical and poetic elements, more even through children's songs and games. His mother was a great lover of classical music and instilled this passion in all her children. "My childhood is to learn words and songs with my mother, be a rich kid in town, a bossy child" would remember Lorca himself many years later.

With the coming of adolescence, the influence of popular music give way to those of cultivated and refined music. The family has moved to Granada and all the brothers study music and piano systematically with several teachers. One of these, Antonio Segura will become a great influence over Federico and once confirmed his musical abilities recommends his parents to send him to Paris to expand his studies. The death of his teacher in 1917 extinguished this project, otherwise, Federico could have been initiated

into a musical career that would have perhaps separated him definitively from literature.

Finally his period of maturity, marked by his relationship with Manuel de Falla. Established in Granada since the year 1920, Don Manuel would become at no delay an idol and teacher of young Garcia Lorca: "Falla is a saint...a mystic... I do not worship anyone like Falla.." Manuel de Falla is the link between cult and popular music for Garcia Lorca. In 1922, the both organized in Granada the "Contest of Cante Jondo" of extensive repercussions. The approach towards musical nationalism in general and to the work of Falla in particular, so deeply rooted in popular Spanish music, as well as the works of Felipe Pedrell, whom he also recognizes as a teacher, marked the definite attitude that Lorca had toward music. Popular art will center his attention again and will have a definite influence on both his literary and musical creation. With the arrival of his creative maturity. It is clear that he will be far from counting with the ideal training in the musical field and therefore this will no longer be the fundamental purpose of his art, although Spanish musical folklore will be an essential complement to his literary creations.

From here on, with the perspective of a good knowledge of cult music and the rudiments of musical technique and theory, popular music will attain a value that it did not have before. Memories of popular granadian surroundings reappear, and he gathers songs and romances directly from the oral tradition, but he also studies everything he can find published about folklore. The *CANCIONERO POPULAR ESPAÑOL* by Felipe Pedrell; *CANCIONERO DE SALAMANCA* by Damaso Ledesma; *CANCIONERO DE BURGOS* by Federico Olmeda; *CANCIONERO DE ASTURIAS*, by Eduardo Martínez Torner; *CANCIONERO ANDALUZ* by

Eduardo Ocón; *CANCIONERO DE PALACIO* and *CANCIONERO DE UPASALA* Will keep no secrets from García Lorca. To this we must add his experience at the Residencia de Estudiantes in Madrid; his direct contact with residents from different areas of Spain where, in an ambience of high esteem for all things popular, do not cease to furnish García Lorca with a better knowledge of traditional songs from diverse sources. This joined by a prodigious memory, makes of García Lorca a real archive of popular songs from all around Spain, which will be one of the basis of his creative art and of his fascinating personality, so profusely evoked by those who had the privilege of his treat.

THE POET-MUSICIAN:

The musical abilities of García Lorca are only too well known. Specially gifted for music, it is known that before he could speak, he already hummed popular tunes or could even follow the rhythm of a song. As an adult he played the guitar and above all the piano. He barely played in public, however, between his intimates, frequently he would sit at the piano to accompany other voices better endowed than his own or even more rarely, to sing by himself. It is also known that he frequently used the piano, at the Residencia de Estudiantes as well as for preparing stagings of his plays or for tours with La Barraca.

His conferences on the subject of musical folklore were normally accompanied by performances on the piano. There was also one occasion in which García Lorca played on stage. It was at the Teatro Español in Madrid on May 6 of 1933. Rafael Alberti was giving a conference about "Popular Poetry in Lyrical Spanish Poetry" and asked his friend and La Argentinita to accompany him by interpreting the "Popular Songs"

Among García Lorca's conferences, musical themes are equally abundant. "El cante jondo", Primitivo canto andaluz, Arquitectura del cante jondo, Canciones de cuna españolas, Juego y teoría del duende, Como canta una ciudad de noviembre a noviembre" were all conferences that were normally accompanied by musical performances.

MUSIC IN THE WORK OF GARCÍA LORCA

All of García Lorca's work is impregnated in music. A simple look at the titles of his poems is evidence enough that this work is fundamentally musical. No other term is repeated so frequently as "canción", but other terms abound as musical as: madrigal, villancico, suite, concierto, nocturno, serenata or danza.

Following a tradition that dates back to the Golden Age of Spanish theatre, García Lorca made use of popular music in his work and frequently included popular songs and romances in his plays.

However, in accordance to his well known opinion that it was difficult to fit all the richness in popular music inside one stave, García Lorca barely left any written scores. If his musical work is now known, it is thanks to the recordings and direct testimony of those who knew and performed his musical repertoire while the poet was living; those who have made possible these musical transcriptions, most of them all posthumous.

POPULAR EARLY SONGS

Originating from the different "cancioneros" or manuscripts that he knew or compiled himself, García Lorca had arranged for piano several popular Spanish songs which he would play on different occasions. Ten of these songs were recorded for the

label His Masters Voice and released in gramophone plates. García Lorca himself played the piano in these recordings accompanied by La Argentinita who sang and played the castanets. The instrumental accompaniment is reduced to the piano and castanets plus a bit of tapping with the exception of *Anda Jaleo* which is accompanied by an orchestra. This recording, of which there is no other document left other than the plates due to the fact that they were done prior to the era of the tape recorder, is the most personal sound document preserved today of the brilliant granadian poet.

The gramophone plates, with a diameter of 25 cm. And 78 revolutions per minute, contained a song on each side with a result of five plates and a total of ten songs; *Zorongo gitano*, *Los cuatro muleros*, *Anda jaleo*, *en el Café de Chinitas*, *las tres hojas*, *Los mozos de Monleón*, *Romance de los Pelegrinitos*, *Nana de Sevilla*, *Sevillanas del Siglo XVII* and *Las morillas de Jaén*.

In 1931 the records were out on sale and were received with great acceptance. The songs, which were all of traditional origin attained an extraordinary popularity with this release. From this moment on, La Argentinita turned these songs into a basic part of her repertoire and performed them not only throughout Spain but also all over Europe and America. García Lorca also included them in his plays and performed them both in private and in public whether accompanying La Argentinita or other singers.

The versions recorded by La Argentinita are not only the ones we can consider genuine of these two unique artists but were also the ones to become so popular to the point of becoming key elements of the collection of popular Spanish songs during the Republic and the Civil War. Specially on the republican side where some melodies like *Anda Jaleo*

and *Los cuatro muleros* were used with allusive texts to the struggle.

During the post-war, with all of García Lorca's work banned, these recordings practically disappeared from circulation. The victors in this war would demonstrate that with the murder of Viznar, one of the most significant and brutal crimes that has been committed against the personal liberty and artistic creation of any individual, they were not only looking for the physical disappearance of the poet but the total annihilation of his work as well.

In the fifties, replacing the gramophone plate for the new long playing record. His Master Voice released in L.P. of 19 cm. And 45 r.p.m. four songs taken from the original plates: *En El Café de Chinitas*, *Zorongo gitano*, *Sevillanas del siglo XVII* and *Los cuatro muleros*.

These L.P.s have been unobtainable for the past few decades, however, there are a huge number of versions of these songs from all kinds of instrumental and vocal artists and groups. Segundo Pastor, Paco de Lucía, Narciso Yepes, Teresa Berganza, Talegón de Córdoba, Joaquín Díaz or La Niña de los Peines are some of the artists that have performed these songs in their own different styles. All of them together, in their original version and extracted from the plates, have never been compiled until the first release in LP by Sonifolk, in 1989.

Notes:

- 1.- *Obras Completas*, III, p. 546
- 2.- Letter to Adolfo Salazar, August 2, 1921 *Obras Completas*, III, p.776.

English translation:
Fernando Casas

GIPSY ZORONGO

My eyes are blue,
My eyes are blue,
And my heart is
Just like the crest of a flame.

At night I go out to the backyard
And weep my hear out
Because I love you so much
And you don't love me at all

This gipsy woman is crazy.
She's as mad as a hatter:
Everything she dreams at night
She wants it to be real.

ANDA JALEO

I drew near a green pine tree
To see if I could have a glimpse of her
But I could only see the dust
Raised by the car she travelled in

Let's all be cheering and clapping,
We have all kicked up a racket.
Now it's the time for the shooting.

Don't come out to the fields, my dove,
Bear in mind I am a hunter
And I shoot you and kill you
I will be the one distressed.

Let's all be cheering and clapping.
We have all kicked up a racket.
Now it's the time for the shooting

Down Muros Street
A dove has been killed
My own hands will pluck
The flowers for her wreath.

Let's all be cheering and clapping.

We have all kicked up a racket,
Now it's the time for the shooting.

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY SEVILLANAS

Long live Seville;
All Seville girls
Wear a mantilla
With a sign that reads:
"Long live Seville"

Long live Triana;
Long live the Triana people,
The Triana people;
Long live Seville men
And Seville women;

I have been everywhere,
Even to the Macarena church
I have been everywhere,
I have been everywhere
But I have found
No face like yours
Even to the Macarena church
I have been everywhere

Oh, river of Seville,
How beautiful you look
When you are full of white sails
And green posies;

THE FOUR MULETEERS

Of the four muleteers
Who are going to the water,
The one with the gray mule
Is stealing my soul from me.

Of the four muleteers
Who are going to the river,
The one with the gray mule
Is my husband.

Why do you walk down the road
Asking for a light
If your face is aglow
With live embers?

LULLABY FROM SEVILLE

This little turtle
Has no mother,
A gipsy woman bore it
And abandoned it in the street

This small child
Has no cradle.
His father is a carpenter
And will fashion one for him

EASTER BALLAD OF THE LITTLE PILGRIMS

Two pilgrims are walking
On the way to Rome
They want the Pope to wed them,
Because they are cousins.

The lad is wearing
An oilskin cap
And the pilgrim girl
Wears a velvet hat

When they were crossing
The Bridge of Victory,
The godmother stumbled
And the bride fell down

They arrived in the Palace,
They went upstairs
And in the Pope's hall
They were examined

The Pope asks them
For their names
He says his name is Pedro
She says her name is Ana.

The Pope asks them
How old they are
She says she's fifteen
He says he's seventeen

The Pope asks them
Where they come from
She says she's from Cabra
He says he's from Antequera

The Pope asks them
If they have sinned
He confesses to having
Given her a kiss.

And the little pilgrim girl,
Who is very shy
Blushes
Like a rose.

And the Pope answers
From his room:
"Who would be a pilgrim
to do likewise"

The bells of Rome
Have now ceased to ring
Because the pilgrims
Are already married.

AT THE CAFÉ DE CHINITAS

At the Café de Chinitas (a flamenco stage)
Paquiro told his brother:
"I'm more courageous, more gipsy
and more of a bullfighter than you are"

Paquiro took out his watch
And said these words:
"This bull must be dead
by half pas four"

The clock outside stroke four
When they left the café
In the street, Paquiro
Was a renowned bullfighter

THE MOORISH GIRLS OF JAEN **(fifteenth century folk song)**

Three little Moorish girls entice me
In Jaén:
Axa, Fátima and Marién

Three pretty little Moorish girls
Were going to pick some olives
But they found they'd already been picked
In Jaén:
Axa, Fátima and Marién

And they found they'd already been picked
And they returned weeping,
Pale and wan
In Jaén:
Axa, Fátima and Marién

Three little Moorish girls so vigorous,
Three little Moorish girls so vigorous,
Were going to pick some apples
In Jaén:
Axa, Fátima and Marién
I told them "Who are you, oh, ladies
That steal my life from me?"
We are Christian girls who were Moorish
In Jaén:

Axa, Fátima and Marién
Three little Moorish girls entice me
In Jaén:
Axa, Fátima and Marién

BALLAD OF THE LADS FROM MONLEÓN

The lads from Monleón

Went to plough early
To have plenty of time to change clothes
Before going to the bullfight
The scowling woman's son
Did not get a change of clothes
"I must go to the bullfight
Even if it is with loaned clothes".

"I wish to God that, if you find clothes,
you will be brought home on a cart,
with your shoes and you hat
hanging from your left side".
The picadors start on their way
And go down the plain.
They were asking where the bull was
But the bull was already locked up.

In the middle of their way
They met the bull farm overseer.
"Boys if you're looking for the bull,
be careful, for it's an evil animal
that suckled his milk
from my very own hands".
Four gallant lads
Arrive in the bullring
Manuel Sanchez, beckoned the bull.
He should never have done so.
The bull's horn got stuck in one of his shoes
And dragged him all around the ring
When the bull stopped,
He left him bleeding.

"My friends, I am dying.
My friends, I am very sick
I have three handkerchiefs in my wound
And with this one there are four".
"Call the priest
to give him confession".
But when the priest arrived
Manuel Sanchez was died.

They ask the rich man in Monleón
For his oxen and his cart

To carry Manuel Sanchez home.
Because the bull has killed him.
They stopped the cart in front
Of the frowning woman's door.
"Here is your son,
just as you had demanded"

THE THREE LEAVES

Under the
Vervain leaf
My lover is ill
Oh, God, what a pity;

Under the
Lettuce leaf
My lover is ill
With fever

Under the
Parsley leaf
My lover is ill
And I can't come.

TUNES FROM ASTURIAS

I must fell an oak
That grows in Cabroñada
For its branches are courting
The love of my soul.

The priest always tell us
He has no children,
But I saw them through the keyhole
And they were very small.

The priest doesn't want to dance
Because he says he's tonsured.
Dance, Mr. Priest, dance,
For God forgives everything.
The cowherds are leaving now,
The pastures get dark.
There will be no more talking
And courting the moon.

TUNES FROM CASTILLE

The girl was reaping
And tying
And she rested
After mowing each handful of grass

They tell me you don't love me
Because I have no
Cows in the herd
And no oxen around

Reaper, don't you reap
So fast,
Because the tying girl
Is very young

With my yoke of cows
I plough my land.
Nobody gives me more gold
Than they do

You passed by my door
And gave a moan.
Why did you have to say anything,
You candid one?

Oh, brown-haired girl,
You smell as good
As mint.

English translation:
José Antonio Torres Almodóvar