

Seating blocks view

By Mary Jane Doerr
special writer

The Malaguena, the Jota, the Furruca, and the Squidillas, done with flashing fans, castanets and tapping feet, are not exactly dances we see every day. But the influences of these Spanish styles have reached into our culture so predominantly that the rhythms and melodies we associate with them are thoroughly familiar even if we don't readily associate the composers with the famous melodies.

Local dance troupe Grupo Espana, led by soloist Maria Del Carmen, performed recently with the Oakway Symphony Orchestra at Madonna College in Livonia. A number of famous Spanish dances were choreographed to the music of Manuel de Falla ("Three Cornered Hat"), Marquina ("España Cani"), Granados ("Intermezzo from Goyescas"), and Lecuona ("Andaluca").

During the first half of the program I had the same problem many others seemed to be having in the audience. With only a view of the back of the trombone section of the orchestra, I saw nothing of the first two dances. I have no idea how they performed the "Miller's Dance" from de Falla's "Three Cornered Hat." The ballet is one that I have never seen and to miss this performance was disappointing.

The group is composed of Patricia Ermeta, Evangelina Guzman, Mari Montes, Teresa Perella, Mara Romero and Raquel Schreier. The two men are Larry Lopez and Gabriel El Jarra.

CARMEN, WHO leads the group, is of Spanish parentage but from New York. She has studied with famous dancers and toured in Canada, Puerto Rico, and Mexico. She is adept in flamenco as well as other types of Spanish dances. This year she is a recipient of a grant from the Michigan Council for the Arts for the expansion of Hispanic culture.

During the second half of the program Carmen performed an elegant solo to Granados' "Intermezzo from Goyescas." Dressed in a red dress topped with black lace and carrying a black fan and castanets, she developed a strong interplay with the rhythms of the orchestra and her feet and hands.

review

The troupe was brightly clad for the final number Lecuona's "Andaluca" in red, green, blue, yellow, pink, and aqua. Shawls were traditional with embroidered flowers. Carmen was costumed in purple making a strong visual impression on the stage.

Much of the appeal of Spanish dancing is subtleties of the feet movements and the mannerisms. None of this could be appreciated with the seating arrangement at Madonna College. Since I missed so much of the program, I cannot make any judgment as to the quality of "Grupo Espana."

THIS CONCERT was named "Spanish Spectacular" but it also could be termed as either "Spanish Influence on French Composers" or "French Influence on Spanish Composers." Music director and conductor Francesco Di Biasi selected mostly Spanish composers but he also included Bizet's Excerpts from "Carmen," the opera which actually took place in Seville; Paul Dukas' "Fanfare," and Chabrier's "España."

The Bizet had some fine solos from the flutes (Roger Welton was principal flute with principal flutist Pamela Hill playing piccolo) and from the oboe section.

The orchestra gave a spirited performance of Waldteufel's "España" and Chabrier's "España," but on the whole the orchestra has sounded better on many other occasions. But then, no orchestra concert should be critiqued from the bass section.

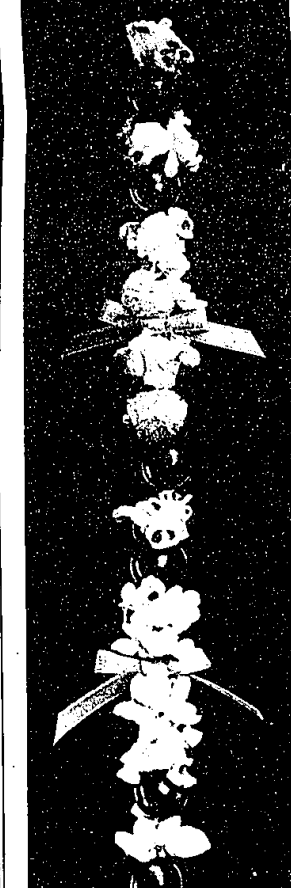
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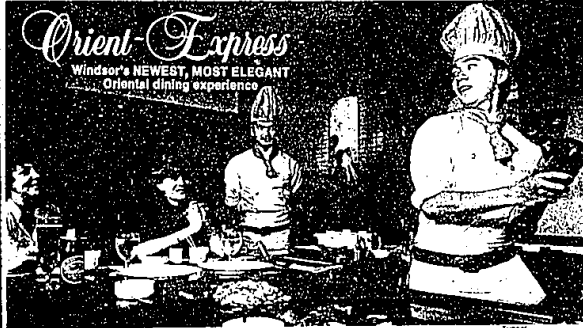
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