

Paco Peña

By IVOR MAIRANTS

PACO Peña is a young man with a cause. The cause is the furtherance of the guitar in flamenco music. By means of personal demonstration he has set out to prove that flamenco guitar playing is not simply a series of rasgueados, golpes and flashy rhythms. He desires to illustrate that flamenco music, which stems from its vocal expression, can be projected by the guitar. He hopes, by means of his playing, to create the atmosphere of the singing, playing and dancing essential to flamenco music; a rather difficult task.

As a major first step in this direction, his solo performance at the Wigmore Hall on Nov. 12th gave evidence of his capabilities through his clearly expressed melodic lines accompanied by well defined and exciting rhythm.

When listening to instrumentalists who have attained near technical perfection on their instruments, one is moved by their individual portrayal of the music they play and therefore one can enjoy the performances of a dozen different players with almost the same amount of pleasure.

I certainly enjoyed Paco Peña's performance.

GOOD SENSE

He plays with great precision, strong rhythm and a good sense of *silencios* and pauses. He projects by means of a clearly defined, spirited attack but without ostentation; strong finger and thumb *picatos*, clear tremolo and brilliant rasgueados.

The Wigmore Hall was full and the audience was enthusiastic, no matter what one may think about flamenco as a vehicle for the concert platform. The many guitarists in the audience were complimentary about the performance. The programme was well arranged and Paco was able to pull out an extra "stop" every now and again.

The first "set" consisted of Fandangos and included Malagueñas, Tarantas and a Fandango de Huelva, all played in traditional style with the addition of some introductions and individual ornamentation.

Actually, I found the inclusion of a diminished progression in the intro-

duction of the Malagueña out of keeping.

In the Alegrias in E I liked the transition between major and minor.

At this point, Paco made an interesting little explanatory speech about *cante grande* which was to follow.

The first of this group was an interesting Seguiria with one or two *falsestas* I had heard played previously by Andres Heredia. Both the Tientos and the Solea were well constructed and played with a good continuity of phrasing—rather sophisticated.

After the interval, the proceedings commenced with a Zambra Mora which lacked the Moorish pulse and feeling. The Solea por Bulerias and the Bulerias which followed, however, were very exciting. The Zapateado was reminiscent of some Sabicas *falsestas*



PACO PEÑA.

of tanguillos but I prefer to see the dance *accompanied* by the guitar.

The Granadina is a solo vehicle for flamenco guitar and permits (within limits, of course) the guitarist to use his imagination. Nevertheless, I like the Granadina to commence with the lead-in triplet as I think this produces a more dramatic start rather than with a long introduction.

The Granadina developed well and

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the Alegrias in A which completed the last number in the printed programme was excellent and Paco rose to the occasion and built up to an exciting finish.

The three encores, Bulerias, Farruca and Rhumba Flamenco, retained the tremendous excitement.

Paco Peña is a native of Cordoba, Spain, where he was born 25 years ago. He began by playing the l'aud in a school group which performed folk music and after two or three years was influenced by friends who played flamenco guitar. His brother taught him his first chords and the music teacher at school helped a good deal.

Paco left school at 15 and took an office job while working part time with a folk group but later, at the age of 19, turned professional, played in a Rondalla group and took some pupils.

RAPID PROGRESS

He first came to London in 1962, made rapid progress both in learning the English language and in playing flamenco, and after two years returned to Spain. He came back to England at the beginning of 1967 to work at Antonio's Restaurant in Long Acre, then to take on the featured spot in the Scala Theatre with La Camboria the flamenco dancer.

He has performed a solo spot at a recent package show in the Royal Festival Hall and at the Guildhall, Cambridge, which was described by a local paper as "virtuosity in flamenco".

Now, Paco's aim is to propogate flamenco music on guitar by means of performance and tuition. He recognises the limitations which face him without the addition of a singer and dancer but he thinks that with his ability to demonstrate what he wants to portray, he is halfway there.

I am always thankful for the determination shown by youth to fulfil their ideal but I will end by quoting what Sabicas says regarding the preparation of a flamenco guitarist for solo playing. His words are: "The first twenty years should be spent accompanying dancers; the second 20 years are spent accompanying singers; then, at the age of 60, the guitarist is ready to play *por derecho*"—by his own earned right. That is not the way Sabicas started although he says emphatically that this is the way it *should* be!