

# Foundations of flamenco

## Ray Mitchell

It took a long time to get hold of a picture of Melchor de Marchena, this one comes from his superb solo record 'Tesoros de Flamencas'. I have mentioned this guitarist frequently in my writing, and those aficionados in London, who, like me, are getting a trifle long in the tooth, will remember with affection the few old 78's of Melchor's.

These records formed the backbone, if not the entirety of one's collection! It still creates a special magic to listen to them now. I had hoped to interview him, but my recent illness postponed that; meanwhile here are a few details about him. He was born in Marchena in 1913 — hence the name — but moved to Madrid, like so many, to be near the centre of work. He shuns publicity, and has never been happy to play in the comparatively com-

merical atmosphere of a nightly stint in a Tablau, though he has been forced to by economic pressure. One wonders what problems he is finding just now, with the unemployment in Spain being as bad as it is.

Melchor de Marchena is simply the greatest, most sensitive, pure flamenco guitarist. The young flamenco can do no better than listen to Melchor, and guard against flashy virtuosity. His spontaneity, soul and depth of expression show best in his accompaniment to the cante, in which he excels. Perhaps this quotation from the singer Manolo Caracol sums it up. 'If the singer is capable of singing well he must sing well with Melchor de Marchena.' (Manolo Caracol used to run the Tablau Los Canasteros, in Madrid, where Melchor used to play for a while. It is now closed).



### CARACOL

Handwritten musical notation for the piece 'CARACOL'. The notation is arranged in five systems, each consisting of a treble clef staff with rhythmic patterns and a bass clef staff with fingerings. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings. The piece is written in 3/4 time. The notation is dense and characteristic of flamenco guitar tablature.

*RM*