

JOSÉ ALBERTO SARDINHA, *TRADIÇÕES MUSICAIS DA ESTREMADURA*, preâmbulo de Fernando Lopes-Graça, transcrição musical e notas musicográficas de Vítor Reino, coordenação editorial de José Moças, Vila Verde, Tradisom, 2000, 638 pp, 3 CD's

*Judith R. Cohen**

This monumental, hefty volume is the work of someone who passionately loves musical tradition, and believes in documenting and disseminating it; it is hard to believe that the author's full-time "official" profession has nothing to do with music or ethnography. The focus on Estremadura is an unusual and welcome one: while there is always more work to be done on Trás-os-Montes, the Beiras and other regions of mainland Portugal, little attention has been paid to Estremadura. Clearly, the author wanted to get "everything" in, and the result is a multi-faceted picture of musical traditions in this province, a book to return to often, to read, to look at, and CD's to listen to for pleasure and for study.

The songs and pieces discussed in the book are divided into three main chapters: (1) work of various sorts, especially agricultural but also street cries and lullabies, and the *romances*; (2) the religious and ritual repertoire, including Carnival; and (3) love and recreation, including dance music, and instruments. There is a thoughtful prologue by the eminent Lopes Graça, followed by an introduction, which includes methodology and quite detailed musico-historico-ethnographic notes on Estremadura. Useful appendices are the musical transcriptions, mostly corresponding to the items on the CD's: texts of *romances* and prayers; glossary and local terminology; a guide to the three CD's; indices, and a bibliography. The music is discussed in its daily life contexts, explaining the latter in some detail. Among the interesting discussions is a section on popular dance in Lisbon, and respectful attention is given to the wandering balladmongers, to whom scholars are finally paying more of the attention they deserve. More could be explained about why the *romances* come under work songs, and the remark that the music of the *romances* has been given far less scholarly attention than the words is valid indeed, but the deep study the author calls for (pp.110-111) does not really take place here.

The book includes a wealth of illustrations: colour photos taken by the author, old black and white photos, splendid post cards from the early 20th century, 17th century engravings, and more. Together, they attest to the indissoluble association of music with daily life: agricultural tasks, religious and ritual events. The layout makes full use of page space but avoids being cluttered. Full song texts are provided in smaller print and musical transcriptions are at the back; though one could argue for including them with the discussions which

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mention them, they are also effective as a section. Each contains full documentary information, with brief, to the point musicological notes and the delightful touch of a thumbnail photo of each artist.

The recordings are, as one would expect, a fascinating variety of *romances*, instrumental pieces, agricultural work songs, street cries and other genres. The sound is generally very clear and clean. The transcriptions are done carefully, though in the work songs which are semi-declamed, with many fleeting improvised ornaments, they sometimes do not adequately reflect the musical performance. Then again, in this type of singing, there are several ways to approach transcription, and none of them would enable someone to reconstruct the sound, the way a transcription of a more straightforward melody does. In these particular cases, the musical transcriptions serve more as a guide than anything else.

Sardinha's work is a feast for the mind, the eyes and the ears, for both academics and non-academics interested not only in Portuguese musical tradition, but in musical traditions and the roles they play in daily life.

