

Journal Notes, Summer 1994.

Spain, Portugal, Morocco.

Judith Cohen

(From field notes kept by Cohen on a research/performance trip with her daughter, Tamar Cohen Adams)

Monday June 13. Arrived Madrid a.m., went down with Tamar to find D's friend Genady, who has a 7-year old daughter, in Plaza Dos de Mayo, a lively, cheerful working-class barrio, kids friendly, but rough. NB: learn rest of game the girls were playing:

Patalona (wave hand), Patalona (hands up, down, 3 claps)
fue a la tienda (3 claps)
a comprar (///) unas medias (///)
no había (///) se reían (///)
ja je ji jo ju
Patalona eres tu.
....ri fo...

June 14. Dropped by with Tamar to see Dino del Monte & Karin and the kids; Dino invited me to hear him. Diane babysat, and I went down to the cafe in one of the little alley-streets off Arenal to hear him with Paco Cruz on guitar and Fain (the regular, Indian percussionist being out on another gig). Dino calls it "Flamenco sin Fronteras." Faín, whom I hadn't seen in a couple of years, has moved back from Germany, and said his new group, Radio Tarifa, is at Casa Patas tomorrow. (Well, today by now.)

June 15. Casa Patas. The show didn't start till 1 a.m. Arrived at midnight; the place was jam-packed and smoky, nowhere to sit—till someone I'd met at the rabbi's house recognized me and squeezed me in at her table. Faín plays derbukka, Paco on guitar, a terrific Provençal guy on flutes, another flautist also, as well as an African percussionist, and Wafir, whom I'd been trying to locate, on oud, accordion, and tambourine. A sort of flamenco-Middle eastern pop-jazz fusion. First 2 or 3 fun, then monotonous, but the audience went quite wild.

June 16. Urueña. Paco picked us up from the bus stop at Tordesillas and drove us up to Urueña, in its splendid, walled, barren isolation on the hilltop. Joaquín Díaz, Director of the Ethnographic Museum, removed his gardening overalls, greeted us graciously, and found me obscure references in the library; in between, he carefully polished wooden counter-tops. Tamar spent some time with the kids in the village school (all 8 or so of them). Joaquín gave me his new monograph on the *castañet*, and I was quite charmed to see the latest issue of the Canadian Folk Music Bulletin on his desk.

June 24. Logroño/Moreda de Glava. Walked around the village in the evening before supper (10:30); up on the hill outside the church everyone sits around on benches and

discusses the day's events, in this case a dog with its head wrapped up in a sort of bonnet; apparently it had been severely bitten by a cat!

June 25. Tamar stayed with Adela and Yaël for the day while I took the bus up to Vitoria-Gasteiz to attend and sing for Julia León's Women for Peace in the Middle East conference, with Palestinians, Israelis, North Africans, Turks, Catalans, Basques, a sole Albanian, and Barbara Dane, who led us in "We Shall Overcome."

June 26. That evening there was a fiesta in neighbouring Alberite, with *gigantes* (giants), fake bulls, pigs, etc.; Tamar joined the village kids, running up and down the narrow streets and dodging the "giants."

June 27. Barcelona. Brief meeting at Musicology Institute with Josep Martí (a CFM Bulletin on his desk, too!); he's on his way to Japan for several months. Visit with Toni Rossell, who explained his project of a solo epic performance of El Cid.

June 29. Back to Girona in the evening, to meet Panchito and his group for their weekly night-time performance on the *Ramblas*—traditional and neo-traditional dance music which transformed the passing crowds, both local and tourist. I played percussion, while Tamar and the daughter of another musician took charge of Panchito's baby, Joan. Stayed over with him and Montsé in Arzelaguer, in the 350-year-old house they're renovating.

July 6. Madrid. Out to Aravacas to do the translation job at a World Music drum and dance workshop; my assignment was to translate from French to Spanish for Iranian percussionists. Meanwhile, someone called from the Ayuntamiento of Albacete wanting me to perform for a week-long children's camp with an "Indian" theme! (Shudder at the possibility of feathers and war whoops, but, then perhaps Tamar and I can—tactfully?—dispel some of those notions.)

July 7. The second day of the translation job, and last, as they realized—not incorrectly—that it wasn't really necessary; the musicians were doing a fine job of communicating!

July 11. Salamanca. Angel Carril met us in the Plaza Mayor for supper, around 10:30. We exchanged CDs, and Angel talked about his work directing the Cultural Department of the province of Salamanca; they gather and teach folklore, publish, act as a resource centre and more. We ended up

discussing honesty in presentation, how to present the changes one makes in a tradition to the public. After supper, walked around the dark, quiet old city, with occasional impromptu flamenco singing from hidden corners, then to the train station. Along with several other unfortunates, Tamar and I squeezed in some sleep on the floor (the benches were simply too awful) till the train came in and we crowded on.

July 12. The bus to Belmonte only took about half an hour, and A met us at the station. During our interview she was quite reluctant to talk about Crypto-Judaic ("Marrano") practices, saying they'd had quite enough with the film-makers, reporters, etc. She did let me record a few songs, eventually.

July 13. Lisbon. Met with Salwa El-Shawam Castelo-Branco at the university; discussed setting up a Canadian-Portuguese exchange membership for our two associations. She's working a lot with *fado* now, also folk revival groups.

July 14. Tomar. Found the medieval judería and tiny Gothic synagogue. No hills, for once!! Just a small grid: quiet, narrow, white-washed, flower-filled streets coming out on to the main square. Even the climb up to the Castle of the Templars was almost horizontal compared to some of the ascents we've been undertaking.

July 18. Left our packs at Pili's in Almuñecar, and took the bus up to Granada. Met with Reynaldo Fernández at the Centro de Documentación Musical de Andalucía—discussions about cooperation with them and CSTM/SCMT. The centre is in a historically protected old building, next to the Arab Baths and the Archeological Museum, right on the narrow Calle del Duero along the river opposite the Alhambra. They have their own recording studio, besides doing collecting, transcription, publications, etc.

July 21. Tetuan, Morocco. Took the city bus from Cueta (Africa, but still Spain) to the border; walking over it had its appeal, but standing in the broiling sun waiting for indolent, bored officials to dawdle over our passports was not so charming. Supper with Akiba and Sarita and their son—their daughter is still in Israel, married; Tía Dorna, who sang for me in '92, is there with her. Only about 80 families left in Tetuan now, they say.

July 22. Tangier, Morocco. Alegría, with whom we're staying, kindly set up a session for me at the Jewish Old Age Home; one woman in particular, from Tetuan, sang several songs, quite clearly, along with the administrator, who decided she'd rather sing than administrate for an hour.

Sonia was taking a group of French media people through the old Jewish quarter for a Delacroix exhibit they're preparing; we joined them, and Sonia led us through the Medina, to the various old, small synagogues, some restored, some definitely not.

July 23. At Luis's suggestion, spent the day in Azilah, poking around the Old Jewish Quarter. We saw many, many donkeys—women and children ride on them, load them up, even stand on the street to chat comfortably leaning against them. The women all wear the triangle-shaped hats with the thick dark blue woolen ties.

Later, back in Tangier, Luna described singing Judeo-Spanish ballads for Jimmy from Paris last year; he thought she was all choked up with emotion, when actually it was bronchitis. Visited with Sonia; she keeps a notebook with a few "emergency" songs for weddings and other occasions: "I really can't sing, but if no one else will sing, then I will. The young people *must* learn the songs."

July 27. Town Hall in Mijas eventually gave me contacts for the small new community of Bosnian Sephardic refugees there. We ended up having friends in common and spent the day with a family—swimming pool, traditional food (prepared by resident grandmother), discussions, and (mostly Macedonian) songs.

August 1. Burriana. Visiting here with my old friends from when this was "my town" in 1972. Swimming, fishing, and a big traditional paella cooked over orange tree wood. CSTM/SCMT's own Ramón Pelinski's hermitage is not far, up in the mountains, and Santiago and Maria-Dolores were fascinated by the idea of a Canadian musicologist living way up in the Maestrazgo, where we used to go on weekend picnics and pilgrimages. It's right at the top; the last 5 km a narrow, rather hair-raising dirt road, but the result is spectacular. Ramón has moved his piano and library in, and the renovations slowly continue. He played us the tape of the premiere performance, just last night, of his new work, at the festivities in nearby Morella.

August 4. Hervás. Entering the town, one passes a huge billboard sign for "Hotel Sinagoga," which leads one to suspect that the Old Jewish Quarter is not a pristine secret unknown to the Average Tourist. This suspicion reinforced by all the "Barrio Judío" signs, to say nothing of the "Taberna" sign decorated with Jewish stars. To get to the OJQ, one goes down one of a couple of very steep streets with some stairs, to river level and a rambling labyrinth of narrow, cobbled lanes: whitewashed houses covered with bright flowers trailing from pots nailed to their walls. Chatted with several residents sitting outside in the cooler dusk (each had a different answer to where the synagogue was, though there is an "official" location, on "Calle de la Sinagoga").

Came upon a wedding party in the OJQ—the bride dragged her resplendent lacy train down the dusty cobbles; the groom looked hot and miserable in his suit; then the crowd stood around on the narrow street outside the bride's house while her family and friends passed out *sangría*, orange pop, cookies and little packaged cakes and the bride leaned against the wall, chain-smoking.

M, the man we first chatted to in the OJQ, promised to

sing some "very old songs"; however, the old lady we'd been chatting with was astonished that we'd believed him. She said, "Oh, he's just an old drunk; he doesn't know any songs, much less sing them. He's having you on." In the end, *M* took us from one bar to another, till we protested definitively, and finally said to meet him at one more "in an hour," and then he and his friends would really sing. I wasn't too surprised when no one showed up. Fieldwork!

August 8. San Martín del Castañar. The bus was actually pulling out as ours got into Salamanca, almost an hour late, for no good reason. Several people kindly helped us, though it turned out not to be going to San Martín, and neither were any others. It was going close enough, though, and we easily got a ride with a family for the last 6 km. Settled into Diane's place just behind the 13th century church, and walked around in a very unlikely drizzle (the first time ever it had rained during fiesta time in anyone's memory). Visited the small, flowery, rather cheerful cemetery up behind the ruins of the castle. Mass was called in by the *gaita* (pipe) and *tamboril* (drum) player (*tamborilero*), Manolo; then there was a *convite* (treat) of *madalenas* (cupcakes) and *sangría* (imbibed by everyone from the same pitcher); then Manolo played another two hours in the small, stony main square for dancing. Some fancy footwork by the men, especially older ones; more sedate, but delightfully precise footwork by older women; a few good younger dancers and a handful of kids learning. One man played virtuoso *castañets* while dancing. Caught the kids' dance rehearsal in the little cultural centre, led by Manolo: each holding two sticks for the stick dance and a pair of *castañets* in each hand. A second *tamborilero*, seemingly much older, from another village, mostly hung around looking vaguely mournful.

Writing this around midnight, in the square. The night dance began an hour or so ago, a live band with psychedelic lights, mostly salsa and other Latin, some general pop and novelty. Mostly under 40 crowd and kids. People dancing in any combination: men with women, men with men, women with women, older with younger, etc.—Tamar is in the midst of it, dancing away with the village kids. Earlier, the two *tamborileros* marched down to the square playing their flutes and drums, right up to a literal musical bump into the band's sound check, then into the bar, still playing till drinks doused the sound. Later, the elderly village marching band, painfully out of tune, wheezing along on saxes and trumpets ("Beer Barrel Polka" and other classic Spanish hits) reeled into the bar as well.

August 9. La Alberca. At a café in the main square. The dance last night in San Martín went on and on; I hauled a protesting Tamar off to bed around 1:30 a.m. ("It's not late yet!") By 7:15 a.m., a different *tamborilero*, with other men on cymbals, triangle, *castañets* and glass bottle with spoon were playing through the streets, having come down from the hills, and headed for an early-morning (well, maybe late night) drink at the *bodega*. One was holding a huge bunch of oregano, which he told me was to protect houses from fires.



Judith and Tamar with the women singers of Liñares (Galicia), August 1994. Photo by Marcos.

The rag-tag brass band followed, with "Viva España"; then an ordinary morning (except for the surprising, continuing rain), bustling about for bread, papers, fruit; women sweeping sidewalks in the rain.

At noon a special Mass: a procession with the *tamborilero* and costumed dancers into the church, and a rather listless choir contrasting oddly with the tambourines and *castañets*. Later, in the square, two statue Virgins presided over the dancing: first, lines of 10-12 at a time solemnly marched up to make their offerings to the Virgins, accompanied by Manolo, then a series of dances, including the *palos* (only girls because, Manolo says, there aren't enough boys to learn it), and the *ramos*, a Maypole-type dance. *Dulces* and *sangría* for everyone.

Back to San Martín for the *tamborilero* competition, which involves the *tamborileros* from different villages, each with a group of dancers. Most of the dancers are young, though, a few kids learning, and some older people, including a very elegant woman dancing with a full wine glass on her head, and a man who seemed to be the Oldest Inhabitant, with a dark beret and a crooked smile.

Next day: The village woke up early to come and watch the bulls being unloaded from the trucks to the corral—San Martín has the only decent arena around the area; everyone else just uses the main square, so people come from far away.

August 10. Ribadavia. The Sephardic Festival (and our part in it!) was finally confirmed only a few weeks ago. Took the midnight bus from Salamanca to Orense. The bus had a hefty

surcharge which was supposed to be, according to advertising, for the on-board toilet. It didn't have one; it had a bar instead!, and they gave us all horrid little porcelain buses when we sleepily got off at 5 a.m. in Orense.

Tamar and I are staying with Ramón and Manuel, in the spare room of their new apartment. One room is Marcos's painting studio, and one, which I suppose will be a den/library, has a sign on the door, "Isla del tesoro," and isn't really unpacked yet—books, more books, papers, bagpipes, tambourines, more books...

Documents referred to the synagogue, Ramón explained later, as the *Casa de la Torah* (House of the Torah). Now there are bars on either side of the ground floor (shades of Hervas and Nerja; one is called *Bar O Xudio*—"Bar Jew"!). What was probably the *mikvé* (ritual bath) is still there, safely preserved under the floor. Rain water pipes come down, and rain mixed with the mikvé water—it's lower there. To see it at all, you have to go into the bar and order a drink and not look as if you're looking.

Lunch all together—the cook poked her head out through the beaded window curtain to say we weren't singing one song right—sang it, then came out and started to dance; so did everyone else. Betty already learning a Gallego song to put in her concert; Flory, too. (I'll use some of my Gallego repertoire from 1973...) We all went to a small folk festival concert in Carballiño, with Irish, Russian and Venezuelan groups; and, just with Flory and her family, to a slightly hallucinatory part of the fiestas in little Berán up in the mountains—mountains of grilled octopus and an invited concert band playing the Pink Panther theme.

All the Ribadavia concerts are outside, in the amphitheatre of the castle ruins. After the first 2 nights, Tamar was invited to stay with Maria Jose next door and accepted with alacrity. At Melisa's place on the beach near Vigo, had a traditional style tambourine lesson with María-Xosé; then we went to performance by a group that includes her and her husband, at a village fiesta near the Portuguese border.

Lugo. Drove there with Flory's family. Marcos, Melisa's brother, whom I'd originally met with Jordi at Playa America on that first trip, left his midday meal to come and meet us, and walk the Roman wall with us, explaining all the various bits—where it had fallen and been reconstructed, and how only the red-light district old quarter is still intact (no one wants to

go in and arrange to take it down!), and who was responsible for taking down or rebuilding what, etc. Then he drove us to Mini's parents—20 years after I recorded them, in the living room in the little apartment clean, shabby, full of songs, smiles and Señor Pepe's piercing, benevolent regard. He and Señora Maruxa have barely changed—neither, in fact, has Miguel, though he's gone from a small six to a very tall 26, a new father and studying to be a concert tenor; his face hasn't lost that mischievous look. Tamar and I sang for them one of the songs they'd taught me; then Tamar asked *him* for a song! Out of delicacy, I wasn't going to ask him if I could tape it but he began to sing, then said, "Well, aren't you going to tape?"

Sunday Ramón fulfilled his promise to take me to record some women in a village—arranged it with a priest, who apparently goes around all the mountain villages organizing the women into groups to keep their songs and tambourine playing alive, runs little festivals, prints up booklets, etc, etc. All without help. Ramón drove us up to Liñares de Avion, way up in the mountains, where the clear-eyed, fresh-faced women were all waiting for us, with their tambourines—and one on the "bass drum"—a huge olive oil tin with holes punched in the top for resonance.

"What did you use in the old days, before these were made?"

"Kerosene tins."

They did mostly loud dance songs—and both the visiting younger people home for the summer and the older people danced—for well over an hour; then toward the end I got them to sing some unaccompanied songs, even a few romances.

Our closing concert was that night—kind of an anticlimax, especially with most of the other singers gone—and was the only one with no sitting up late to sing after. Everyone was supposed to come back to Ramón and Manuel's but only a few did. (I *knew* doing Sunday night would be a mistake.) Never really went to bed, except for Tamar, as we had to get up at 5 for the plane back to Madrid.

Really didn't want to leave these new, wonderful friends. "*Xa sei o camiño, inda'he de volver*" was the Gallego song I used to end one concert: "Now I know the road, I'll have to return."

My airfare for this trip was covered by the travel portion of a Canada Council Artists' B grant, which I gratefully acknowledge.

By this time [1932], Turner Valley oilfields were booming, and the dances at Kew were large affairs and really wild and woolly. One 17th of March dance is really remembered. The oil workers hollered, "Let's clean out the bloody Hall." In half an hour, the hall was cleaned, people were in the rafters, out the closed windows and out the doors. One oil worker ended up in hospital for ten days. Everything calmed down, and the dance went on. But the ranchers showed this was their hall.

Nita Foster, Foothills Echoes (Millarville, Alberta)



The Library of the Centro Etnográfico "Joaquín Díaz." Uruña (Diputación Provincial, Valladolid, Spain). The Centre was established in 1985, in an 18th century mansion in the hilltop walled village of Uruña. Joaquín Díaz, noted singer and folklorist, donated his fine collection of instruments, books, broadsides, recordings, etc., and became the Director of the Centre. Joaquín lives in the Centre and has involved the people of Uruña in its daily life. Groups of adults and schoolchildren come from other cities to visit the Centre, consult the library, and learn from Joaquín. Joaquín and his staff also conduct fieldwork and continue to publish and lecture. The Centre is a member of the CSTM/SCMT, at the suggestion of Judith, who has been admirer of Joaquín since she first heard one of his recordings in the early 70s. (Photo by César)