

NOTES ON EIGHT PAPAGO SONGS

BY

E. G. STRICKLEN

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These melodies were transcribed from talking-machine records of their performance as unaccompanied solos by an Indian singer. Due to various difficulties connected with the transcription, it was thought best to use the simple key-signature of A minor for the first song, and to note down the others according to their pitch-relations to the notes of the first.

With the possible exception of nos. 2196 and 2197, however, none of these songs can be said to be in A minor, or indeed in any of the keys or modes of Caucasian music. If we assume the existence of a feeling for scales on the part of the Indian singer, we may determine the scales upon which these songs are based according to the following observations:

1. The series of notes included between the highest and lowest notes in the song.
2. The note in each song upon which the most important phrases end as a resting point.

This resting point is always on the last note in each of these songs, so that we can feel justified in calling it the "final," as in the study of the medieval modes.

According to such observations we may find three different scales employed here. No. 2193 makes use of the complete scale E F# G A B C D# E, with the lower E as the final. Some of the B's were sung slightly flat and one of the G's slightly sharp as indicated, but the writer is inclined to regard these apparent exceptions from the scale as being due more to the curious intonation of the singer than to the presence of genuine chromatic alterations. No. 2199 also seems to be built on this scale, although the last two notes of the series are not used. Both songs have a curious secondary resting point on the F#.

Nos. 2194 and 2198 seem to be built upon a fragmentary scale whose extreme notes are only a diminished fifth apart. Half-steps are found between the first and second, and the fourth and fifth, degrees of this scale. The first degree is the final. The second degree is missing in no. 2194.

No. 2200 seems to belong to this group also, as it has the same final, and makes use of the same characteristic intervals. The E may be regarded as an extension of the scale below the final.

Nos. 2195, 2196, and 2197 make use of the first six notes of the scale given for no. 2193, only now A is the final, so that we have here another scale. But for this use of the A, we might also regard no. 2195 as belonging to the same group as nos. 2194, 2198, and 2200.

Nos. 2196 and 2197 in their avoidance of the F# and G give a strong impression of A minor.

n: 2193

(Moderato)

While this entire set of songs can be referred to the scale given for no. 2193, the strong influences exerted by the relations of the notes to the different finals seem to justify the classification offered above.

The general rate of speed in delivery is marked by the customary Italian words. The slower songs were sung with considerable freedom of meter; the more rapid ones kept to the measure very evenly. While a majority of the songs kept to the same meter in which they started, some, like no. 2194, present an astonishing variety of metrical changes executed with an entire freedom from abruptness. The same smooth delivery characterizes the rhythms of three, five, and seven, found in nos. 2193 and 2195, where they are given against the prevailing two-four or four-four meter with a skill that conceals their difficulty. The other rhythmical figures are of the types generally familiar.

Each song is made of two strains, each strain being repeated. The ends of the two strains of each song are alike: a fact indicated by the lines drawn above the ends of each strain. These similarities are generally exact, but no. 2195 shows an interesting variation in this regard, as may be seen by comparing the corresponding measures.

No 2194

(Allegretto)

Most of the songs are very simply organized. The material of each second strain, before the entrance of repeated material, is easily derivable from the opening of the first strain when it is any more than a connecting link. Repetition within the strain gives more organization to nos. 2196 and 2197, as is partially indicated by the extra double bars. The same end is attained by the sequences in nos. 2195 and 2199 between the first two and second two measures, and between the first four and second four measures in no. 2200.

As a rule the melodic ideas occur in the usual two-measure or four-measure groups, although a six-measure group ends each strain of no. 2193, a seven-measure group does the same thing for no. 2194, a three-measure group for no. 2196, while no. 2197 begins with a repeated seven-measure group and has a five-measure group for the beginning of the second strain, and no. 2199 ends its strains with a five-measure group.

But just as the unusual metric and rhythmic combinations do not destroy the flow of melody, giving it an added charm, so these unusual measure-groups produce designs in musical form which are new to us and yet give a sense of symmetry.

No 2195

Moderato

No 2196

(tempo marcato) (The B's rather flat)

No 2197

Quasi marcia. A seven - measure phrase!

Musical score for No. 2197, 'Quasi marcia. A seven - measure phrase!'. The score is written in 2/4 time and consists of seven staves. The first staff begins with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The second staff contains a five-measure phrase. The third staff continues the melody. The fourth staff includes the instruction 'very light' and a first ending bracket labeled 'I'. The fifth staff starts with a second ending bracket labeled 'II' and includes the instruction 'a five - measure phrase'. The sixth staff has the instruction 'rests are shorter than written value'. The seventh staff concludes the piece with a double bar line and a fermata over the final note.

No 2198

Sostenuto molto ~ = glissando Very free in time, bars

Musical score for No. 2198, 'Sostenuto molto ~ = glissando Very free in time, bars'. The score is written in 2/4 time and consists of five staves. The first staff begins with a double bar line and a repeat sign, and includes the instruction 'approximate except at x where they are even.'. The second staff continues the melody with several 'x' marks above notes. The third staff continues with more 'x' marks. The fourth staff includes a 'v' (accendo) mark above a note. The fifth staff concludes the piece with a double bar line and a fermata over the final note.

No. 2199

Allegretto

No. 2200

Masstoso

2nd time