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# LADINO MUSIC

By Roy Bernard

IN 1492, when the Sephardic Jews were expelled from Spain, they took with them the Judeo-Spanish dialect popularly called Ladino. This language had been developing among the Jews since the eleventh century, when they first settled in Spain. Many of the exiles scattered to the Balkan countries and the Near East, where to-day

Henry Rosenblatt, a New York Jewish composer, became interested in Ladino fourteen years ago. A graduate of the Juilliard Graduate School, he feels that Ladino deserves a hearing because it is musically worthwhile as an indication of one of the Jewish contributions to music. He believes that Ladino songs will be

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Readers in the two Rhodesias who hail from Rhodes Island may be familiar with the personality of Alberto Hemsi, the leading exponent of Ladino music.

Ladino is the language spoken by old Sephardic Jews. It has a literature of its own. The efforts to revive Ladino music are described in this article.

Ladino has its own identity and is spoken in Jewish communities, particularly in Greece, Turkey, Morocco and Palestine. It is also spoken in other parts of Europe and in many parts of Central and South America. In 1942 the colony speaking Ladino in New York City was estimated to be in excess of 50,000 persons. In the process of migration and assimilation, diverse elements entered the language. Those who settled in Turkey naturally have many Turkish words interspersed in their tongue. Cultural and trade contacts with Italy, France and Greece have also left their imprint.

songs and imparts an authenticity to the music which adds to its character.

received by modern audiences because the music contains the seeds of what is considered modern Spanish music in its Arabic and Moorish origins. The underlying current and throb of native harmonies permeate the songs, lending credence to this belief.

### Exciting Music

Rosenblatt considers Ladino the most exciting music in his repertoire because, although the music is old in years, it is so intellectually and artistically constructed that it sounds up-to-date to modern ears. This is not surprising, since the scales and modes are built up into harmonies as modern as we have to-day. Added to the musical structure, are beautiful melodic lines, and the total effect harmonizes into a satisfying whole.

The past fifteen years have seen a musical revival of all types of Jewish music centered primarily in Palestine. To-day the chairman of the Palestinian Composers' League is in the United States for the purpose of exchanging American and Palestinian music.

Although the present political situation leaves little time and thought for cultural ideas, it is to be fervently hoped that one day soon there will be peace in the Holy Land so that Palestinian Jews can once more enjoy their rich and extensive musical heritage. The revival of Ladino music is an important manifestation of the Jewish renaissance and will assume even greater significance when audiences can listen to it and thus become aware of its beauty and value as music of a long-neglected, almost forgotten, segment of Jewish culture.

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### Film Colony in Palestine

IT is reported in Hollywood that when the Jewish government take up office, plans will be evolved for the establishment of a film colony to be financed with other industrial projects which are now in the blueprint stage.

It is hoped that the services of Hollywood technicians, directors and writers will be secured for this work.

Ladino is written in Hebrew characters, and a distinct pronunciation and flavour of the old tongue is preserved in the folk