

Flamenco guitarist fascinates rural audience in project that brings the arts to the boondocks

Culture Takes To the Hills

by Karen Feld



Ronald Radford explains workings of guitar to group of young listeners.



Many in audience have never previously attended a live concert, but they sit raptly as Radford makes music.

A flamenco guitarist does not entertain every day in Patrick County, Va. But this rainy Saturday was different. Farmers, somewhat skeptical, traveled with wives, children and grandchildren down country roads to the local Ruritan (rural Rotary) hall in the tiny mountain community of Ararat (pop. 400).

At one end of the small, rundown, barnlike building, 75 people sat on folding chairs in a semicircle around a makeshift stage. "I want to see what it's all about," said one man who has lived all of his 70 years in the county. He had never seen an opera, a ballet—any live performer, for that matter, except the local fiddlers. The only entertainment in this area is television. The closest movie theater is 60 miles away.

Patrick County, with 15,300 inhabitants, is one of the initial communities in the southeast United States participating in the CART (Community Artist Residency Training) program, launched last fall to encourage the development and support of the arts at the community level. Other participating communities include Winston-Salem, N.C.; Tallahassee, Fla.; and Port Allen, La. The program brings the professional performing artist out of the concert hall and into the community.

Guitarist Ronald Radford spent a week recently in Patrick County. He lived with a family in the community and gave "informances," complimentary performances which include entertainment, discussion and audience participation. The idea is to break

down the traditional barriers between the performer and the audience. The informances are held in places like factories, supermarkets, bowling alleys and community centers. "We want the community to hear the arts and feel the arts," says Alfred Stites, director of CART.

Radford began the one-hour informance by relating his flamenco music to music that his audience was familiar with. "Flamenco is folk music. Folks all over enjoy it. It had its roots in regions of southern Spain, an area very similar to Ararat," he told them.

Afterwards, Radford shared punch and cookies with the audience as they chatted informally. "I've never heard anything like it. It's real fine," said Moir Delionback, who has been a farmer for half a century. The reactions were equally favorable throughout Patrick County. "The CART program provides people here with a glimpse of the type of cultural advantages that people in other parts of the country have. At the same time it makes them feel proud that they live where they do," says Mary Sue Terry, a delegate to the State House who was in the audience.

CART, headquartered in Atlanta, is one of several residency programs for classical artists sponsored by Affiliate Artists, Inc., a New York-based nonprofit organization dedicated to bringing people and performers together. The CART program is designed to assist communities in developing art awareness and support. It is a training program in which the artist acts as a catalyst in the community to provide a climate for future arts development.

CART is based upon the conviction that public support for the performing arts must develop at the community level. In 1962, there were fewer than 100 community arts councils in the country. Now there are over 4000.

Eighty percent of the CART program is underwritten by the Ford Foundation, with contributions from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Southern Arts Federation. The total three-year investment is \$1.8 million. This provides for 31 CART communities the first year; 54 new communities in 1979-80; and 72 in the third year of the program. The cost breaks down to \$4400 per community from outside sources. In addition, each CART community contributes an additional \$2145 raised by CART techniques. This covers artists' fees (\$900 a week) plus other expenses. Each community has two visiting artists for one week each.

continued

CULTURE

The CART program trains a residency director in each community, most of them volunteers who are uninitiated in the arts. They range from a 23-year-old prom queen to a 70-year-old retired high school principal. The residency directors meet in Atlanta for a seminar and then work closely with Alfred Stites to develop the programs in their communities.

Susan Masters, a 30-year-old mother and wife of a pharmacist, was residency director for the CART program presented in her community by the Patrick County-Stuart Chamber of Commerce. "We need the performing arts in our lives," she says. "We selected a guitarist for the second CART week because the guitar is a folk instrument native to this area." Dan Sullivan, a baritone, participated in the first CART week in the same community last fall. Each artist provides eight free informances during the week and a final public performance where a \$2 admission is charged.

Participating artists are selected by audition not only for their talent, but for their ability to communicate. They include vocalists, dancers, actors and instrumentalists. Affiliate Artists provides opportunities for professional performers and creates a demand for them by uncovering new audiences. "This single project will result in 324 weeks of employment for artists in the South," says Richard Clark, president of Affiliate Artists.

Guitarist Radford, like the other 28 Affiliate Artists participating in CART, is a full-time performer who does week-long residencies in communities. "It's exciting for me to see a folk music that's developed from folk tra-

ditions to international concert proportions and then to see it be so well-received and appreciated back down on the rural folk level that it came from," he says. "No matter where I go with this flamenco music, people can feel it because it's folk music."

Patrick County and seven other CART communities have formed art councils to develop local talent, as well as to bring in nearby talent. Columbus, Ga., formed a local opera company as a result of a CART residency. About 12 percent of the people in Patrick County were reached by CART in a week. "That's phenomenal," says Stites. "You can't do that in New York City with all the arts combined at once."

The growth of the arts in these communities has doubled in one year, according to Stites. "We're not asking for anything back from the community in exchange for developing the arts there, except, 'Go have a good time.'"

Stites eventually hopes to see CART in every state. The South was selected initially because it is more homogeneous than any other 10-state area of the country and because the arts are burgeoning there, he says. The 31 initial communities are in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas and Louisiana. After having two successful CART weeks, many have requested a third, although it will not be subsidized. These communities plan to implement their CART training and foot the bill themselves.

"The arts are ready to happen in small communities. People want them. We're making that possible," says Stites. "The rewards are there—human, not financial." **P**



Dancer-choreographer Henry Smith carries his art to Monroe, La.