



Jeronimo Maya has played for King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia.

Flamenco prodigy does juggling act

MADRID (AP) — Jeronimo Maya can't accept all the offers he receives to play his guitar in flamenco concerts. Sometimes he has to stay home to do his homework.

At 10, the guitar prodigy is already a veteran of three years of flamenco shows, and his audiences have included Spain's King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia. Last August, he was invited to Jordan by King Hussein and Queen Noor to play at a royal wedding in Aqaba, Jordan.

"It's always nice to play for kings and queens," the youngster said during a recent interview. "They're nice people to meet."

Jeronimo has been studying since he was five with his father, the noted flamenco guitarist Felipe Maya. He also studies classical guitar at a Madrid conservatory.

Maya says his son's talent and success stem from hard work, not some God-given gift.

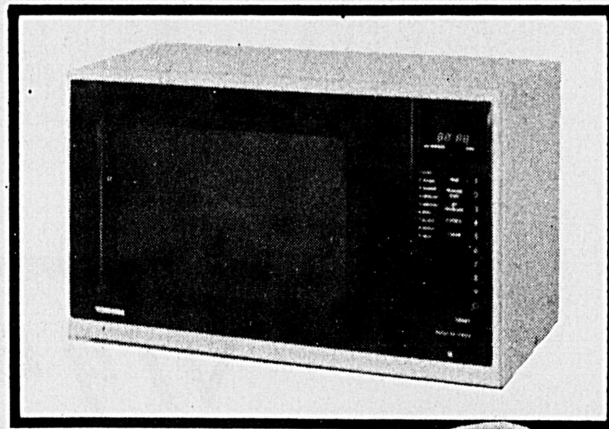
Flamenco, which encompasses singing, guitar-playing, dancing and hand-clapping, traces its roots to 16th-century southern Spain where it emerged as the artistic response of Gypsies to widespread repression.

Sometimes, his father lets Jeronimo play in a 3 a.m. "juerga" — a sort of flamenco jam session — at Candela, Madrid's hangout for flamenco artists and aficionados where he wows the late-night crowd.

Professional flamenco guitarists call him a young maestro who plays at a level far advanced for his age. World-famous guitarist Sabicas says he has never heard a youngster play so well.

Jeronimo has already appeared twice in the annual Flamenco Summit in Madrid, on a youth program in 1985 and as a featured soloist last year, a spot usually reserved for such talents as Paco de Lucia.

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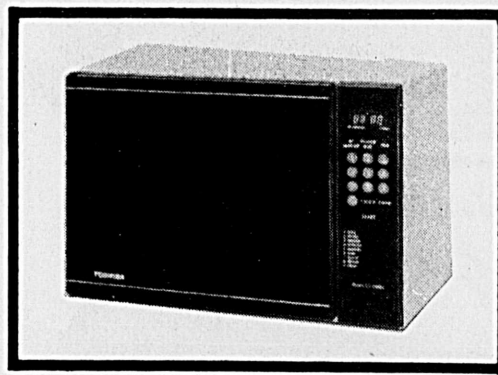
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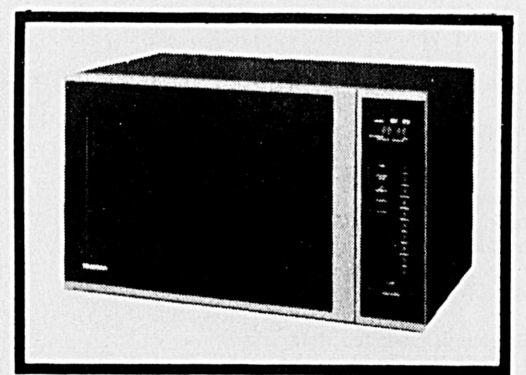
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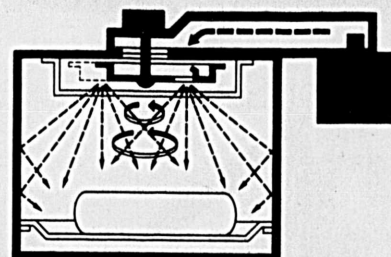
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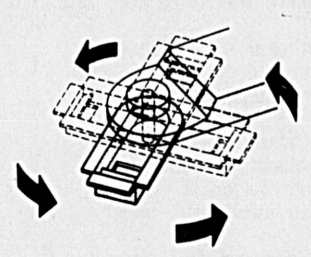
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