

**Lepanthes melpomene** Luer & Hirtz, sp. nov.

Fig. 152.

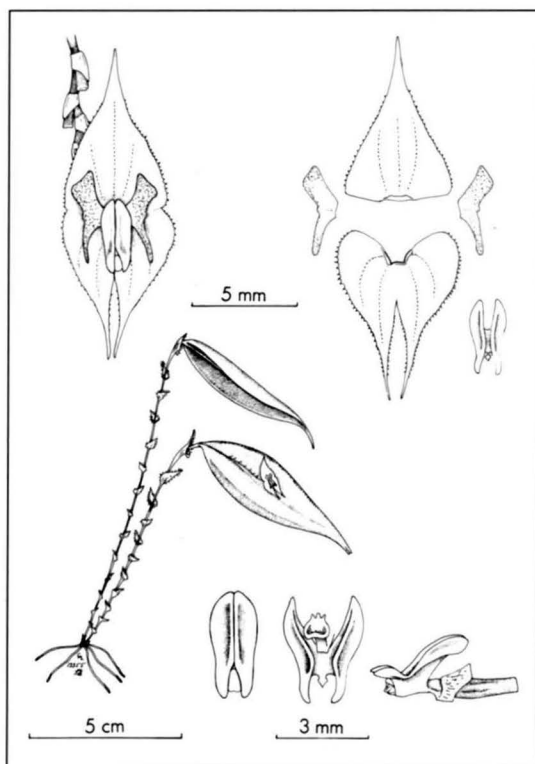
Ety.: Named for *Melpomene* the Muse of tragedy of Greek mythology.

Planta mediocris caespitosa, inflorescentia racemosa congesta secunda foliis patentibus sulcatis insidenti, sepalis ovatis acuminatis denticulatis, petalis transverse lobatis, lobo superiore oblongo truncato, lobo inferiore anguste oblongo obtuso, labelli laminis glabris anguste oblongis infra medium leviter inflexis, connectivis latis brevibus, appendice hastata.

**Plant** medium in size, epiphytic, caespitose; roots numerous, slender. Ramicauls suberect, slender, 4-7 cm long, enclosed by 10-15 long-ciliate, lepanthiform sheaths with markedly dilated ostia. **Leaf** spreading, suffused with purple, thickly coriaceous, elliptical-ovate, acute, 4-6 cm long, 1.5-2 cm wide expanded, sulcate medially with both halves convex, the base cuneate into a petiole 1-1.5 mm long. **Inflorescence** a congested, secund, successively many-flowered raceme up to 2 cm long, borne by a slender peduncle ca. 1 cm long, lying in the sulcus on top of the leaf; floral bracts 1.5 mm long; pedicels 1.5 mm long; ovary 1.25 mm long; **sepals** light yellow, denticulate, the dorsal sepal ovate, acuminate, acute, 8.5 mm long, 5 mm wide, connate to the lateral sepals for 1.5 mm, the lateral sepals ovate, oblique, acuminate, acute, 8 mm long, 2.75 mm wide, connate 1.5 mm; **petals** yellow, cellular-glandular, transversely bilobed, 1 mm long, 4.5 mm wide, the upper lobe oblong, obliquely truncate, the lower lobe narrowly oblong, obtuse; **lip** light rose on white medially, glabrous, bilaminar, the laminae narrowly oblong, narrowly obtuse, slightly concave, 3.5 mm long, lightly adherent over the column, the connectives broadly and shortly cuneate, the body broad, connate to the base of the column, the appendix in the sinus, hastate; **column** terete, 1.5 mm long, the anther apical, the stigma subapical.

**Morona-Santiago:** epiphytic in cloud forest east of Sigsig, alt. 2700 m, 15 May 1988, C. Luer, A. Hirtz, W. Flores, A. Andreetta & W. Teague 13355 (Holotype: MO); between Sigsig and Chiguinda, alt. 2600 m, 11 Aug. 1990, A. Hirtz 5056 (MO); between Limón and Cuenca, alt. 2200 m, 7 Jan. 1995, A. Hirtz, X. Hirtz & E. Sanchez 6105 (MO).

This species is similar in habit to *L. manabina* Luer and its relatives with the thick, heavy, dark green, more or less pendent leaves. The leaves are sulcate centrally wherein is borne the ghoulish-appearing flower. The denticulate sepals are acuminate; the upper lobes of the petals are obliquely truncate; the blades of the lip, adherent over the column, are narrowly oblong; and the minute appendix is arrow-shaped.

Fig. 152. *Lepanthes melpomene*