

FLAMENCO AS A SOURCE OF ART, CULTURE AND MOVEMENT.

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1 - INTRODUCTION

Dance, one form of body language and an integrated part of Mime, joins the most varied psychologically motivated elements with the art of movement, transforming the most spectacular skills into harmony and beauty.

All types dance reflect truthfully culture and society. The customs, the religion, the climatic characteristics, the economic and geographic conditions, the way of dressing, the history, the level of evolution etc. is represented in that society's dance (Ossona, 1984). Flamenco is no exception. Thus, in order to obtain an adequate level of comprehension it is necessary to study its origin, principal characteristics and goals.

2 - ORIGINS, MEANING AND AIMS OF FLAMENCO

Flamenco is considered a manifestation of the human form, of the culture and the language, etc. of the andalusian and gypsy populations (Ropero, 1995).

The superficial investigations and studies, that have been carried out, make it difficult to define precisely the true origins of Flamenco. Its birth goes back to, approximately two hundred years ago, although its proper roots could go back even further. The majority of the studies show that the main centers of origin, from which Flamenco spread, are Seville, Jerez de la Frontera, Cadiz and

its ports (Blas y Ríos, 1989). Granada has also been a pioneering force in the birth and development of the art of Flamenco (Navarro, 1993).

In order to learn the art of Flamenco you must live and penetrate the true meaning, because it is the demonstration of the state of mind and of a different way of life. Flamenco has always been similar to a form of protest. This is reflected in the intense emotions that exist in Flamenco (Caballero, 1988).

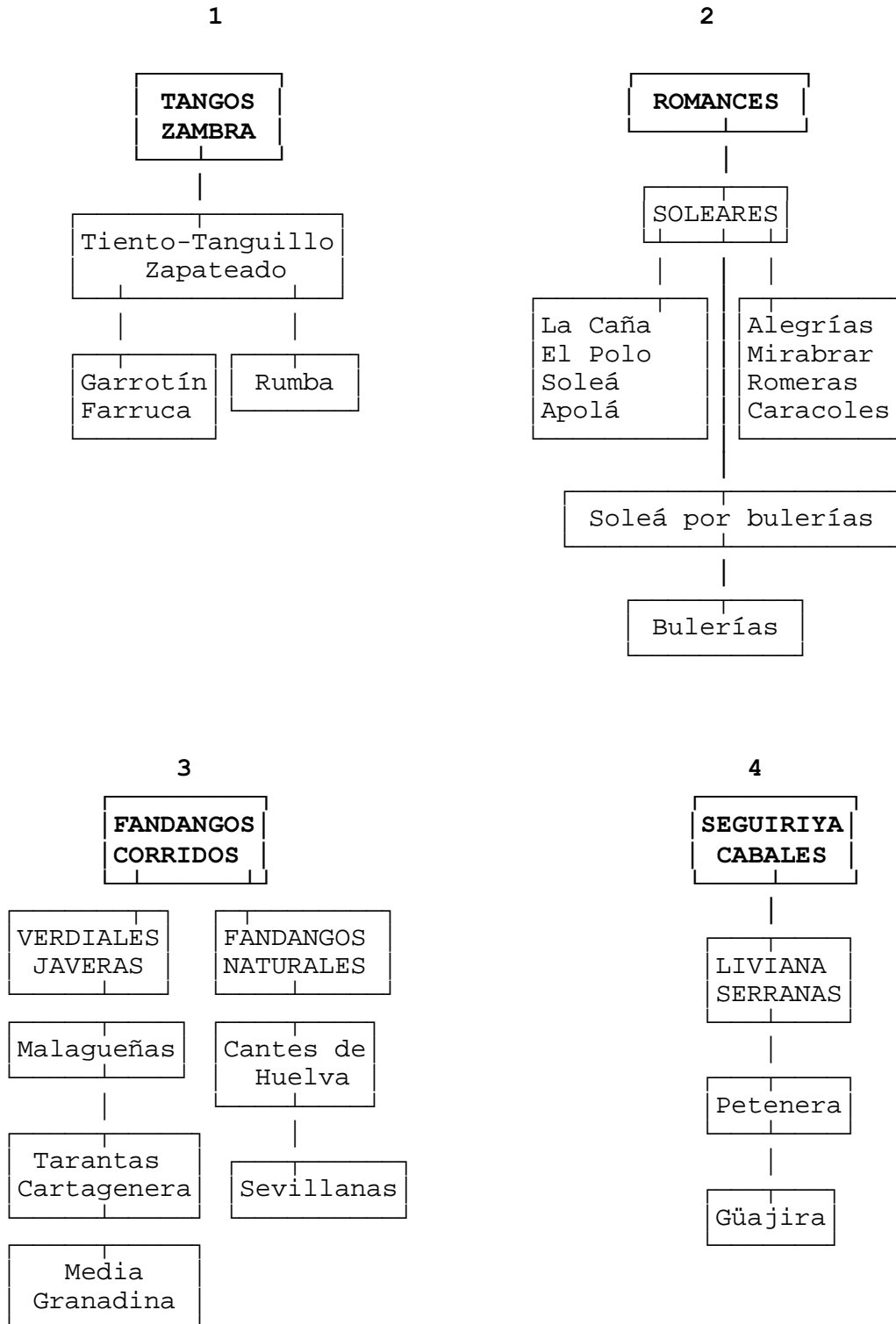
"*Cante o arte jondo*" comes from deep within the heart of the performer and it is essential to truly understand the significance in order to dance and sing well (Carretero, 1981). It is believed that this is the main problem facing many of the foreigners who visit Spain or who go to Flamenco classes in their own country.

Rhyme and mime are the two most important aspects of this type of dance. Following the rhythm and expressing the feelings awoken by this dance are two aspects which are absolutely necessary to a correct execution. It is essential to emphasise that this aspect of the performance refers also to the posture of the dancer and therefore, to the aesthetics and representation of the dance.

3 - TAXONOMY OF FLAMENCO

Flamenco has been divided into many branches or fields. Specific terminology defines "*palo*" as the "*cante*" (name given specifically to Flamenco songs) or dances which belong to one particular style (Dirección General de Renovación Pedagógica y Reforma, 1990). This way of classifying the various aspects within Flamenco is based on the evolution of the original terminology and the relationship between the new word and its predecessor.

Because of rhythm, there exists many versions of the Flamenco Tree. Amongst these numerous versions it is necessary to outline the one written by Manuel Cano Tamayo (1976) in his book "*Folklore: Iniciación al cante popular andaluz*".



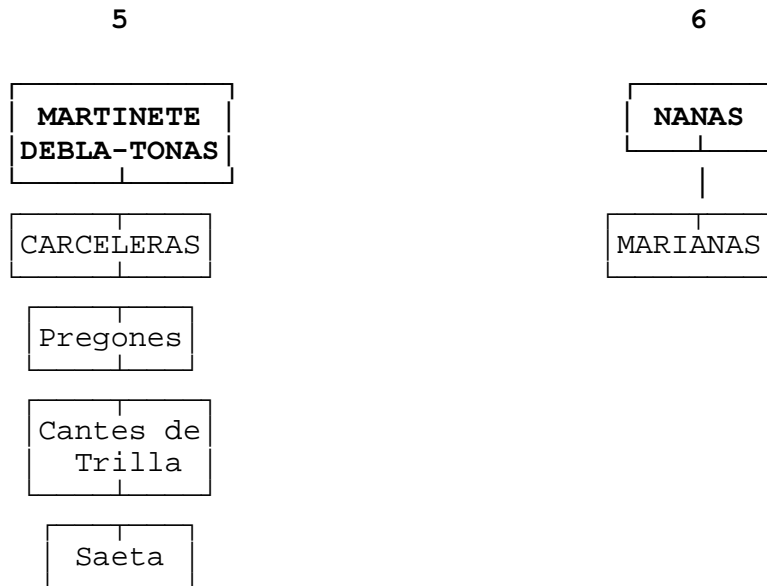


Fig. 1. Taxonomy of Flamenco.

Due to the fact that more confusion reigns within flamenco dancing than within the "*cante*" and due to immense variety within one particular style, it is impossible to show and explain them all. Thus, this investigation will begin by studying the "*básicos*", "*matrices*", "*jondos*" or "*grandes*" styles.

The mathematical and repetitive formula of Flamenco grows in importance with the improvisation and creativity of its artists. According to Philippe Donnier (1987), the "duende" (magician) of Flamenco is due to the symbiosis between the mathematics (its numerical and repetitive beat), the creativity and the possibility of improvisation which it offers to its interpreters.

4 - RHYTHMICAL AND CONCEPTUAL STUDY OF THE PRINCIPAL "PALOS" OF FLAMENCO

Flamenco's most characteristic rhythms can be divided into four groups: "*seguiriya*", "*soleá*", "*tango*" and "*bulería*". The rest of the versions revolve around these four groups (Caballero, 1988).

4.1 .- LA SOLEA

The name "*soleá*" seems to come from a "*cante*" created to accompany the dance. It dates from, approximately, the beginning of the 19th century (Dirección General de Renovación Pedagógica y Reforma, 1990). The modern forms of the "*soleá*" result from interpretations by specific artists and regional adaptations. In this way, there exists "*soleares*" from Cádiz, Seville, Jerez, Córdoba, etc. (Aguilera, 1988).

Like all the basic "*cantes*" and dances, "la *soleá*" is very important within Flamenco. The majestic nature, the melodic richness and the depth of the execution makes it a very popular choice with the artists.

It has a mixed beat which consists of two bars of three time and three bars of two time.

The rhythm is written in the following manner (the number underlined shows the accentuated beat):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Created for relaxation, the "*soleá*" should improve the development of the feelings for the dance. The topics dealt with are profound even though they vary greatly: drama, morality, happiness, love, sadness and thought provoking. The

dance requires a great deal of concentration and ability to interpretate well. A serious dance should not be performed with a smile on the face of the artist, it is essential to represent and to "live" it with all its integrity.

The role of the woman in the "soleá" is fundamental, due to the fact that its principal elements suit her very well: arm and hip movements and "quiebros" flexible movements where the "bailaor" (Flamenco dancer) appears to overextend him or herself.

4.2 .- EL TANGO

This is a "cante" from Cádiz. It was created to accompany the dance. Its flexibility allows its adaptation to the most varied "coplas" and melody (Manfredi 1988). A significant example of this can be found in the famous "Carnavales" in Cádiz.

Many people claim that the origins of the Tango are american, african, hindu or arabic (Aguilera, 1988). The music expert Manuel García Matos has shown that in reality it is an adaptation from the american tango (Leblon,1995).

The beat and the rhythmn is written in the following manner:

- 2 3 4 - 2 3 4

The lively rythmn composed of 4/4 time, and easy adaptation to dance allows very beautiful and expressive movements.

It is usually recommended along with "*sevillanas*", "*fandango*", "*tanguillos*" and "*verdiales*" in order to ease the introduction and initiation to Flamenco (Sánchez y Navarro, 1988).

4.3 .- LA SEGUIRIYA

"*La seguriya*" is a type of "*cante*" (a specific kind of Flamenco song) whose origins seem to come from the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries. The gypsies took it from the castilian spanish in the 17th century and they adapted it to their own particular way of life (Equipo de Cultura Andaluza, 1985). It's a dramatic, powerful "*cante*" with tragic lyrics.

In its mixed beat only the stress is marked:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

"*La seguriya*" is a somber, sentimental and emotional dance with a slow and calm beat. Its main step consists of a rhythmic walk based on sharp, rigid steps. The attitude of the "*bailaor*" is serious, serene and reflexive (Dirección General de Renovación Pedagógica y Reforma, 1990).

4.4 .- LA BULERIA

The "*bulería*" comes from increasing the tempo of the "*Soleá*". Its birth dates from the middle of the 20th century (Equipo de Cultura Andaluza, 1985).

The "*bulería*" is very flexible and very easily adapted to other dances and "*cantes*". Practically all the dances and "*cantes*" from Andalusia are readily

adaptable to the "*bulería*" style. Its flexibility means that it is usually danced and sung at the same time (Manfredi, 1988).

Its a festive "*cante*", with a happy rhythm, superficial lyrics and an energetic interpretation. Thus the "*bulería*" lends itself to much noise and many typical flamenco exclamations. Because of this, many of the flamenco performances end with "*bulerías*" (Dirección General de Renovación Pedagógica y Reforma, 1990).

As already stated, the tempo of the "*bulería*" is similar to that of the "*soleá*", but it is executed using a faster rhythm (almost twice as fast). More elaborate harmonies can be added to the beat but it always conserves the general structure of the basic rhythm (Donnier, 1987). The repetitive character of its tempo allows the development of improvisation and intuition of the artist, increasing the communication with the audience.

5 - PRINCIPAL CHARACTERISTICS OF FLAMENCO

Dance is an important instrument in the cognitive, social, aesthetic and movement development of the subject (Brightman, 1992). When correctly used in educational centres it is a way of obtaining a complete education of the subject (Robinson, 1993).

The educational necessities of contemporary society demand that it be considered from three points of view: procedural and conceptual levels and the level of attitude.

In order to better profit from and understand Flamenco it is essential to clarify its main characteristics. In this way alone is the "*bailaor*" able realize it correctly. The following list is intended to clarify several specific terms:

* "Zapatear": the action where the "bailaor" stamps on the floor following the rhythm of the music.

* "Braceos": the typical flamenco moves executed using the arms. This action varies depending on the sex of the "bailaor". The women moves the arms more slowly and smoothly than the man.

* "Torsiones": bending of the body.

* Hand Movements: the hands are moved in circular movements both forwards and backwards.

* Finger Movements: The moving of the fingers is different for each sex. In the woman's case they are separated when moved but, in the case of the man they are more closed.

In general the man's moves more arrogantly and in a masculine way whereas, the woman moves more naturally and sensitively.

* "Palmas": the sound obtained by clapping the fingers(usually only three) of one hand together with the palm of the other. These are called "naturales" . Another type is "sordas" where the palms are cupped together so that hardly any sound is heard.

* "Pitos": another method to obtain both rhythm and sound. It consists in clicking the middle finger and the thumb together or the middle two fingers and the thumb. It is usually the "bailaor" who carries out this action.

The following is a list of other characteristics of Flamenco which deserve mentionning: the freedom and pride of the posture, flirtatious movements of the

female, "*desplantes*" (arrogant movements), richness of bodily expression, sensitivity and the profoundness of the movements.

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