

Flamenco 101

Flamenco music can trace its lineage at least as far back as the 15th. Century, when Moorish, Jewish, Indian, Christian, Byzantine and regional Spanish music blended into the regional art form of the Andalusian gypsies (*Gitanos*) in southern Spain. In its early days flamenco served as the private expression of a long-suffering outlawed people, but by the mid 19th century flamenco had emerged as an international cultural phenomenon.

The music, song and dance ranges from the mournful heart felt laments of *Seguiriyas*; the driving pulse pounding rhythms of the *Bulerías*; the lively, festive sound of the *Alegrías*.

Flamenco Elements

Compás is the rhythm each flamenco style contains, with which the rhythmic tapping of cante, baile and toque is marked. There are different compases, that of twelve or three times four, which can be for soleá, bulerías, alegrías...; that of four, which is that of tientos, tangos...; and that of a combination, which can be for the siguriya or martinete. It is said that compás is the heartbeat of flamencos.

Cante (Song) – during its genesis, flamenco centered entirely on the song which was offered with only simple rhythmic accompaniment of non at all. Guitar & dance were not added until the 19th Century. The song provided the cantaor (singer) with and outlet for a wide range of emotions.

Toque (Guitar) -- The guitarist must provide a compelling and solid accompaniment to the dancers and singers and be able to respond quickly to cues from these performers. The flamenco guitar differs from the classical guitar in several ways: 1) a smaller box resulting in a more earthy tone, 2) the body is made of cypress, 3) the tuning is traditionally done by wooden pegs, and 4) a lower bridge than the classical guitar.

Baile (Dance) -- When dancing was first added to flamenco performances, a clear distinction existed between male and female styles. The man concentrated on complex, percussive footwork. The woman emphasized graceful movements of the arms, hands, hips, and upper body. Today the exciting sound of complex footwork by both man and women has become and expected part of flamenco performances.

Palmas (Rhythmic hand clapping) reinforces the rhythms to support the dancers and singers it is important to understand that palmas is not simply clapping in time with the music is a true art form all it's own.

Cajon (Box) has been added in recent years to flamenco performances. It is a large wooden box with a sound hole in the back and a smooth surface in the front it adds another exciting percussive element to a performance as well as important rhythmic reinforcement for the singers and dancers.

Castanuelas (Castanets) -- A relative newcomer to flamenco, castanets have now been widely integrated into modern flamenco performances and are used most appropriately with folk song and dance such as Sevillanas or Fandangos de Huelva.

Jaleo -- The shouts of approval and encouragement from performers and audience.

Examples:

Ole: shout of approval, as in bull fighting.

Asi se toca: that's playing

Eso es: That's it

Toma que toma: Take it

Asi se baila: That's dancing

Asi se canta: that's singing

Hassa: Great

Vamos alla: Go there