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**FLAMENKO DANCE**

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## **ФЛАМЕНКО DANCE**

### *Annotation*

*This article is devoted to describing Flamenco dance. The aim of the article is to provide the reader some material on history of this dance, famous dancers, guitar-players, and singers.*

*The article focuses on the theoretical researches of the history and development of Flamenco dancing. The authors have considered analysis in different aspects of Flamenco dance development in the world culture, Spanish culture and Gypsy culture.*

**Key words:** Flamenco dance, Spanish culture, Gypsy culture, world culture, Flamenco dancers, singers, guitar players, Flamenco techniques, duende.

**I. Introduction.** Flamenco Festival London, Sadler's Wells' (Dance House, Rosebery Avenue, London) renowned annual season of flamenco dance and music returns for its eleventh year, having celebrated its hugely successful tenth anniversary in 2013. This year's festival features six shows from some of the biggest names of the flamenco world. The international superstar Sara Baras made her first appearance at the festival since 2008, and there were returns for Miguel Poveda [21; 22], Farruquito and Belén Maya.

Spain is unique; a country where death is a national spectacle, where death sounds great bugle blasts on the arrival of Spring, and its art is always ruled by a shrewd duende which creates its different and inventive quality [14]. Though a lot of people visiting Spain want to see "flamenco dancing", flamenco is actually not "a dance". Flamenco is a folk dance of Spain, accompanied, as a general rule, by guitar. The movements are very characteristic. The dances tend to be spirited, and the demeanor of the dancers is self-assured, almost haughty. The word "flamenco" is derived from the same root as the English word "flaming".

Flamenco is a musical form that *sometimes has dancing in it*. Flamenco is a Spanish art form made up of three parts: guitar playing ("guitarra"), song ("cante") and dance ("baile"). Flamenco originated in the southern regions of Spain, but it's thought to be influenced by many world cultures, including Latin American, Cuban

and Jewish traditions [30]. Mass media have brought Flamenco to the world stage, but deeply it has always been and will remain an intimate kind of music.

The great Spanish poet García Lorca wrote: “It’s no accident that all Spanish art is rooted in our soil, full of thistles and sharp stones: it’s no isolated example that lamentation of Pleberio’s, or the dances of that maestro Josef María de Valdivielso: it isn’t chance that among all the ballads of Europe this Spanish one stands out:

If you’re my pretty lover,  
why don’t you gaze at me?

The eyes I gazed at you with  
I’ve given to the dark.

If you’re my pretty lover  
why aren’t you kissing me?

The lips I kissed you with  
I’ve given to earth below.

If you’re my pretty lover,  
why aren’t you hugging me?

The arms I hugged you with  
Are covered with worms, you see [14].

**II. The aim of work** is to describe Flamenco dance as one of the most characteristic elements of Spanish culture, especially throughout the southern region of Andalucía. **To achieve the aim we have defined such tasks:**

1. To analyze and to learn the history of Flamenco dance and its representatives.
2. To describe the technique of Flamenco dancing and give some examples.
3. To study culture of Flamenco dance

**III. The Results.** Flamenco is a Classic Art and a Folk Art, which emerged officially in the 19th century as the musical tradition of Andalucía, in the South of Spain, a tradition forged by Gitanos (Gypsies, today correctly called Romanies) and non-Gypsies representing a diversity of cultures. But for the Romanies who settled in the Iberian Peninsula, in the 15th century.

The three basic elements of Flamenco are: song (*cante*), dance (*baile*) and guitar (*guitarra*) [12].

For Flamenco dance we need: dance shoes, silk shawls, small shawls-fringes, castanets, dance skirts [2; 3], fans [4], dance costumes, tops, blouses, shirts, dance accessories [8].

No one really knows the origin of the word Flamenco (the best theory is that it comes from the defiant Flemish soldiers who had a certain posture and attitude. In fact, Flamenco literally means Flemish. Flamenco is both Spanish and Gypsy, but despite the denial of many Spaniards, the Spanish Romanies are at its core. Even when Non-Gypsies were revising Flamenco forms, they took the image of the Gypsy as a central theme or claimed to be Gypsies themselves.

Why do the flamenco gypsies claim precedence in flamenco? Quite simply they had to survive. In the past they were persecuted as a minority, so had to struggle more for their own existence and recognition. The state wants to organise all our lives and document us, but gypsies somehow did not fit into the system. *Them and us* almost created the mystery. But there is much more. Their way of life is so appealing... just feel the freedom of wandering with minimal responsibilities! Live off the land and under the stars and sing your heart out in flamenco song. Or was it more down to earth, a cry in the dark about their hard life, their poverty and where to feed their child next? Such human struggle does allow the soul to throw up musical and poetic inspiration (compare the blues to the flamenco, both the music of an oppressed people). It also allows the gypsy to suggest that he is more in touch with his ancestors on a spiritual level, thereby enabling a personal communication of his soul through the flamenco art form which in turn creates the concept of purity in Flamenco [17].

But, Flamenco is also the merging of two melting pots with the Gypsies at the helm. Before the Gypsies landed in Spain in the 15th century, Andalucía had a rich culture of Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Visigoths and 700 years of Moorish rule. In fact, the deep wailing of the *cante jondo* is probably a combination of Indian and Arab, Hebrew and Gregorian chanting. The word “ole”, comes from Allah. So Andalusian folk music and dance created the environment to which the Gypsies brought their own melting pot (since the Gypsies came originally from India, through Egypt, Turkey etc) [12].

Flamenco's origins are a subject of much debate because it has only been documented for the past two hundred years, and the word Flamenco, which applies to the song, the dance and the guitar, did not come into use until the 18th century. Although many of the details of the development of flamenco are lost in history, it is certain that it originated in Andalusia and that from the VIII to the XV centuries, when Spain was under Arab domination, their music and musical instruments were modified and adapted by Christians and Jews [13].

Between 1765 and 1860, the first Flamenco-schools were created in Cadiz, Jerez de la Frontera and Triana (Seville). In this epoch Flamenco dance started to have its firm position in the ballrooms. Early Flamenco seems to have been purely vocal, accompanied only by rhythmical clapping of hands, *toque de palmas*.

During its *Golden Age* (1869–1910) Flamenco was developed in the epoch's numerous music cafés (*cafés cantantes*) to its definitive form. Flamenco dance

arrived to its climax, being the major attraction for the public of those *cafés cantantes*. The time from 1910 to 1955 Flamenco singing is marked by the *ópera flamenca*, with an easier kind of music such as *fandangos* and *cantes de ida y vuelta*. The latter clearly showed South American influences.

From 1915 on Flamenco shows were organized and performed all over the world. Anyhow, not everybody was enchanted with that development and intellectuals such as *Falla* organized 1922 in Granada a contest to promote "pure" *cante jondo*.

The Andalusian folk music was festive and public accompanied often by simple orchestras and percussion instruments (castanets). The Gypsies, however, persecuted and abused for over 300 years, under constant threat of imprisonment and death, developed a "blues" tradition which was private, personal and ritualistic. Often they were too poor to have instruments so they used their hands "clapping" (*palmas*), and footwork (*zapateado*). In fact, the rhythms of Flamenco are prescribed by specific emotions, experiences and stories: *Alegrias* (happiness), *soleas* (solitude), *bulerias* (making fun), *siguiriyas* (wailing laments). Within these patterns of complex rhythmic phrasing (*compas*), the artists can improvise as much as they want [2; 12; 16].

1955 started a sort of *Flamenco Renaissance*, with the great performer Antonio Mairena being its key figure. Outstanding dancers and soloists soon made their way out of the small *tablaos*, successors to the early *cafés cantantes*, to the great theatres and concert houses. The Flamenco guitar which formerly was just featuring the dancers arrived to be a soloist art form. Great virtuosos like Paco de Lucia played an essential roll in this development [13].

Flamenco uses three basic counts or measures: Binary, Ternary and the (unique to flamenco) twelve-beat cycle, which is difficult to confine within the classical measure. There are also free-form styles, not subject to any particular meter, including, among others, the palos in the group of the tonás, the saetas, malagueñas, tarantas, and some types of fandangos. Rhythms in 2/4 or 4/4. These meters are used in forms like tangos, tientos, gypsy rumba, zambra and tanguillos. Rhythms in 3/4. These are typical of fandangos and sevillanas both of these forms originate in Spanish folk music, thereby illustrating their provenance as non-Gypsy styles, since the 3/4 and 4/4 measures are the most common throughout the Western world but not within the ethnic Gypsy, nor Hindi musical tradition [19].

English guitar player Roberto Lorenz gives a characteristic of the development of flamenco: 1) Flamenco sprang from the lower levels of Andalusian society, 2) The turbulent times of the people involved in flamenco culture, 3) The Gitanos have been fundamental in maintaining this art form, but they have an oral culture. Their songs were passed on to new generations by repeated performances within their social community. The non-gypsy Andalusian poorer classes, in general, were also illiterate, 4) There was a lack of interest from historians and musicologists. "Flamencologists" have usually been flamenco connoisseurs of diverse professions (a high number of them, like Félix Grande, Caballero Bonald or Ricardo Molina, have been poets), with no specific academic training in the fields of

history or musicology. They have tended to rely on a limited number of sources (mainly the writings of 19th century folklorist Demófilo, notes by foreign travellers like George Borrow, a few accounts by writers and the oral tradition), and they have often ignored other data. Nationalistic or ethnic bias has also been frequent in flamencology [19].

Flamenco is a rare combination of grit and geometry, deep spirituality and eroticism, the angle and the curve. Where ballet is a denial of gravity and a denial of the body, Flamenco is an affirmation of gravity and an affirmation of the body, in all its aspects. And then there is the concept of “*duende*”, a term coined by the great Spanish poet, Federico Garcia Lorca, who among other things, was a Flamenco intellectual and an aficionado. *Duende* means: *soul, fire*: to be possessed by such fire, passion and art that the dance becomes one with the artist, in complicity with the audience. The artist experiences his own potential at such a high level that he/she goes into mystical frenzy, a kind of trance, to which we respond in kind [12].

“I have raised three arches and with clumsy hands placed within them the Muse, the angel and the *duende*. The Muse remains motionless: she can have a finely pleated tunic or cow eyes like those which gaze out in Pompeii, at the four-sided nose her great friend Picasso has painted her with. The angel can disturb Antonello da Messina’s heads of hair, Lippi’s tunics, or the violins of Masolino or Rousseau. The *duende*....Where is the *duende*? Through the empty archway a wind of the spirit enters, blowing insistently over the heads of the dead, in search of new landscapes and unknown accents: a wind with the odour of a child’s saliva, crushed grass, and medusa’s veil, announcing the endless baptism of freshly created things”, wrote Garcia Lorca [14].

With idea, sound, gesture, the *Duende* delights in struggling freely with the creator on the edge of the pit. Angel and Muse flee, with violin and compasses, and the *Duende* wounds, and in trying to heal that wound that never heals, lies the strangeness, the inventiveness of a man’s work.

The magic power of a poem consists in it always being filled with *Duende*, in its baptising all who gaze at it with dark water, since with *Duende* it is easier to love, to understand, and be certain of being loved, and being understood, and this struggle for expression and the communication of that expression in poetry sometimes acquires a fatal character [17].

Coming from southern Spain, “*Duende*” has only recently migrated to English. Dictionaries give meanings sometimes at odds with each other. The New Oxford English Dictionary gives: 1) A ghost, an evil spirit; 2) Inspiration, magic, fire.

The Random House Dictionary gives: 1) A goblin, demon, spirit; 2) Charm, magnetism. The Larousse Spanish-English Dictionary translates *duende* as Goblin, elf, imp/Magic. It gives the usages: *los duendes del Flamenco*, the Magic of Flamenco; *tener duende*, to have a certain magic. We have taken the name *Duende* in order to honor Lorca’s dark creative force. *Duende* is there to challenge us to keep our ears open to the “dark sounds”, to keep our touch with the earth and with the ghosts of those who have come before, to never refuse the struggle which is needed to keep the spirits working on the side of truth [27].

The great artists of Southern Spain, Gypsy or flamenco, singers dancers, musicians, know that emotion is impossible without the arrival of the Duende. They might deceive people into thinking they can communicate the sense of *duende* without possessing it, as authors, painters, and literary fashion-makers deceive us every day, without possessing *duende*: but we only have to attend a little, and not be full of indifference, to discover the fraud, and chase off that clumsy artifice. They are: *dancers*: Carmen Amaya (1913–1963) [7; 26; 28], José Greco (1918-2000) [11; 15; 23], Antonio Gades (1936–2004) [5; 10], José Galván, Israel Galván, Pastora Galván, María Pagés, Eva Yerbabuena. *Singers*: El Cabrero, Diego “El Cigala”, Jose Mercé, Enrique Morente, Estrella Morente, Niña Pastori, Miguel Poveda (1973) [21; 22].

*Guitar Players*: Paco Cepero, Paco de Lucía (1947) [1; 24; 25], Victor Monge “Serranito”, Bruno Pedros, Paco Peña, Manolo Sanlúcar, Tomatito, Paco Sevilla [26], Roberto Lorenz and his beautiful poem “Duende”:

The guitar begins its cry of anguish,  
and time begins to stand still.  
The shadowy figures of death gather round  
to hear the echoes of a lost time.

In the stillness of the night,  
when even the stars are afraid to hear,  
when the soul is laid bare,  
and the sword of ridicule hangs over the heads  
of those brave enough to give voice to their pain.

The song begins and the Duende roams free,  
the pain of the world is focused in one place,  
and the inner most thoughts are known to all.  
Silver strings weave their intricate web around  
the cries of pain.

A bird in the distance catches the sound on the wind  
and flies off into the dark safety of the night.  
But there is no hiding from the sound, for it reaches into  
the darkest recesses of the soul.

And later as the sun begins to reclaim its place,  
and the shadows give way to a new dawn,  
the soul becomes warmer, as the night gives a final sigh  
and the duende returns to its resting place in peace [18].

Carmen Amaya from the movie “Maria de la O” (1939), “Queen of the Gypsies” by Paco Sevilla is an excellent book to learn about the fascinating Carmen and Flamenco [26]. “Queen of the Gypsies” is a feature length biography of the greatest Romani performer to bring the Art of Flamenco to the international stage. Carmen Amaya was possibly the greatest Flamenco dancer who ever lived and one of the greatest dancers of the millennium. This biographical portrait contains the most complete

number of archival dance clips, ever seen, world wide, of this phenomenal artist.

Vicente Escudero saw her dance then, and remarked to those accompanying him: “That Gypsy girl will bring about a revolution in flamenco dance, because she is the synthesis of two great styles merged in genius: that of the old dancer, from waist to head, with the imponderable arm movement and that rare fire in her eyes; and the exciting style of the dancer in her prodigious variation of the feet [23]”.

By the 1960's, the earthy form of flamenco had become synonymous in the public mind with Spanish dance, and Mr. Greco began to perform a good deal more of it. But he and his dancers and wide-ranging early repertory were as elegant as they were fiery. John Martin, dance critic of The New York Times, said of Mr. Greco in 1951: “His footwork is particularly brilliant, and he moves with notable elegance. He lacks generally, however, those electric tensions in the upper body that are so integral a part of the Spanish dance at its most exciting. His style, indeed, has more of silk about it than of steel [24]”.

With an intense stage presence to match the driving rhythms that characterize flamenco dancing, José Greco captivated audiences around the world during his career and brought Spanish dance into mainstream culture. The José Greco Dance Company was the first Spanish dance troupe to perform on Broadway, and among Greco's other accomplishments are numerous film and television appearances [8, 1].

It would be hard to name another dancer who has elevated Spanish dancing in the public eye to the extent that José Greco did through the prodigious accomplishments of his life and his career. Despite any artistic differences or father-son friction, Greco's philosophy and choreography live on through the efforts of José Greco II and his company. This legacy and tradition of Spanish dance that was so much a part of José Greco's existence will certainly live on through future decades [8, 2–3].

Paco de Lucía is the most innovative and influential flamenco guitarist of the last forty years. One of the greatest musicians alive today, beyond genres, styles, or categories, he plays his way right into audience's hearts with his brilliant mix of technical skill and feeling. One of the greatest musicians alive today, beyond genres, styles, or categories, “Paco is the best instance of what a star is. Listening to him, the novice listener will be enchanted, and the expert will go crazy... He's got everything!” – Manolo Sanlúcar. In concert, the Maestro plays his way right into the heart of the audience with his brilliant mix of technical skill and feeling [11].

The recipient of much acclaim, Catalan flamenco singer Miguel Poveda made a point early on in his career, despite his relative youth, to honor the style's grand musical traditions. Considered a genius in his native Spain, Catalan singer Miguel Poveda's rounded and nuanced voice has no equal in the world of flamenco. With great sensitivity and respect for tradition, Poveda combines the classical canon of the old ‘cante jondo’ - meaning 'deep song' in Spanish - with a large dose of originality and creativity, resulting in a totally unique approach to the gent [11].

Poveda brings to flamenco something new, as well something old: he both bows to tradition, always ensuring that these are respected, but also innovates, at

times perhaps unconsciously through his Catalan upbringing. What is certain is that his maturity as a singer has ripened greatly since his move to Andalusia where he is now located. The effect of contact and exchanges with singers in Seville and Jeréz can be felt in his voice [3].

**IV. Conclusion.** Many new to flamenco typically ask, “What is flamenco?” This might seem like a simple question, one that could be answered with a few formulas, a short list of essential features that, taken as a whole, defines flamenco. The reality of flamenco is far from this simple, tidy picture. In truth, flamenco exists in both time and space, changing from locale to locale and from epoch to epoch. By its very nature, flamenco is full of contradictions.

We love Flamenco. It’s one of the few dances in the world that isn’t about exploiting women or for them to be mere objects of entertainment, lust and general ogling. Flamenco is about expressing your soul and it really embodies how we feel as a woman: feminine yet powerful and able to take a lot of hardships in life.

Flamenco is a way of life for those involved in it, and it has been a highly professionalized art form since the nineteenth century, presented before enthusiastic paying non-Gypsy audiences since the early years of that century [27].

The Gypsies became the great artists of the day, inventing transforming, revising and preserving forms, from both cultures into a unique and pure art. Although until the 1970s there were always two different interpretative traditions in flamenco, one Gypsy, the other non-Gypsy. Since the 1970s there has been an overwhelming triumph of the Gypsy style of flamenco.

The flamenco order of things is roughly as follows: gypsies, Andalusians (payos or non-gypsies), Spaniards, foreigners.

Flamenco occurs in two main types of setting. The first, the *juerga*, is an informal gathering where people are free to join in creating music. This can include dancing, singing, *palmas* (hand clapping), or simply pounding in rhythm on a table. Flamenco, in this context, is very dynamic: it adapts to the local talent, instrumentation, and mood of the audience. One tradition remains firmly in place: singers are the most important part.

“For every man, every artist called Nietzsche or Cézanne, every step that he climbs in the tower of his perfection is at the expense of the struggle that he undergoes with his *duende*, not with an angel, as is often said, nor with his Muse. This is a precise and fundamental distinction at the root of their work [7]”.

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