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FLAMENCO

Flamenco is a passionate and seductive art form, a mysterious and misunderstood culture that has been burning in Andalucía for nearly five hundred years, and today flamenco has thousands of aficionado's worldwide.

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. Flamenco dancers try to express their deepest emotions by using body movements and facial expressions. As the dancers perform, they may also clap their hands or kick their feet. Many dancers also snap small percussion handheld instruments called «castanets» [5].

Flamenco differs from all other styles of music, and even though its spontaneity and emotional depth has similarities with jazz, or even the early blues, which was also the music of outcasts, it is the words and the driving rhythms that are the most important part. Harmonies and melodies are not the principal element in flamenco like in western music, where we tend to listen first to the tune, and after the rhythm and words, and the rhythms of flamenco also differ considerably to those of modern music.

The role of the guitarist is also different as it is his job to hold the performance together, the guitar being more of a percussive accompaniment than in modern day pop or rock music. He will also need to have an extensive knowledge of all the styles of song and dance, almost to the extent of being able to sing and dance them himself. One of the main characteristics in flamenco are the gypsies, and many believe flamenco to be their creation, but if this was accurate, then why do gypsies in other parts of the world not perform a similar music and dance [1].

Flamenco originated in Andalusia under the influence of the cultures of peoples who over centuries have coexisted in that territory – Arabs, Jews, Christians and Gypsies. Also, echoes of African culture had reached the southern shores of the Iberian Peninsula, combining the African rhythms with those of Andalusia.

Most of «non-Spaniards» associate the classical image of Spain with Andalusia [2]. The first documented mention of flamenco was in Andalusia in 1780. By that time flamenco's melodic structure and style were already defined and, therefore, this time is generally accepted as the start of its existence. Music was perceived as a dialogue, an exchange, and this explains its extemporaneous character. A dialogue between two singers, a singer and a guitarist, a song and a dance [3].

The «Golden Age» of flamenco is closely connected to the name of the singer Silverio Franconetti (1829–1889), who became the center of the epoch, when flamenco has reached its apogee and when the most beautiful examples of the genre were created. Around Silverio gathered the most prominent singers and without question he was the maestro number one in the galaxy of these outstanding talents: La Josefa, Tío Martín, Vergara, Enrique el Gordo Viejo, Curro Dulce, El Loco Mateo, Paco de la Luz, Manuel Molina, El Nitri and multitude of others. Among the most prominent guitar players of that time were Maestro Patiño, Pacoel Barbero and PacoLucena, and among the dancers – Antonio de Bilbao and Juan la Macarrona [4].

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