

FLAMENCO



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FLAMENCO

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FLAMENCO DANCE SONG
BULERIAS
SOLEARES
MALAGUENAS
ANDALUSIAN FOLK SONG
SOLEARES FOR GUITAR
CUADRO FLAMENCO
SAETA
ANDALUSIAN FOLK SONG

ANDALUSIAN FOLK SONG
SONG FROM MALAGA
MALAGUENAS
PETENERAS
RUMORES DE LA CALETA
RECUERDOS DE LA ALHAMBRA

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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SPAIN: FLAMENCO MUSIC OF ANDALUSIA

INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

By Gilbert Chase

The type of Spanish music known as flamenco is derived from an older body of traditional Andalusian song called cante jondo, meaning literally "deep song" (jondo being the aspirated Andalusian form of the Castilian word hondo, "deep"). The origins of cante jondo are complex and clouded by controversy. Three factors that probably influenced its development are (1) the influence of Byzantine chant introduced into Spain in early Christian times; (2) the Moslem invasion of Spain in 711 A. D.; and (3) the Gypsy migration to Spain, which took place in the 15th century.

The Byzantine influence is so remote that it would be difficult to demonstrate a direct connection with cante jondo. On the other hand, the Moslem occupation of Spain, which lasted from 711 to 1492 and was concentrated (especially toward the end) in the region that we know as Andalusia, left profound traces on Spanish culture, including language, architecture, and music. Although we are accustomed to speak of the "Arabian" influence in Spain, it is important to bear in mind that the Islamic Empire which established a Caliphate in Andalusia included other cultures besides the Arabian. All of the northern fringe of Africa was included in the domain of Mohammedanism, as well as Syria, Iraq, Turkey, and Persia. Through the widespread Mohammedan religion there were even cultural links -- musically important -- with India. Thus the Byzantine influence may have simply been absorbed in a vaster, many-stranded web of Oriental musical practices drawn together from various sources by the power of Islam and thence transplanted to Spain.

As for the Gypsies, or gitanos, who first arrived in Spain toward the middle of the 15th century and who settled for the most part in Andalusia (and Granada in particular), they apparently had an active role in the development of cante jondo and are known to have figured prominently in the emergence of the

various songs and dances derived from it, which came to be called flamenco. It is significant that the seguriya gitana, or "Gypsy Seguidilla," is considered the basic form of cante jondo. The term cante flamenco, incidentally, did not come into use until the latter part of the 19th century (the first mention in print is from 1871). Although flamenco means literally "Flemish," no explanation supported by conclusive evidence has ever been put forth to account for the use of this term in connection with the type of music we are discussing. The explanations usually given are mere guess-work, hence of no value. The term, in any case, grew from popular usage, which has little regard for etymology or logic. In some way or other it became associated with the Gypsies of Andalusia and so with the music and the dances popularized by them.

Rather than to seek specific influences, which are always somewhat conjectural (highly so in the case of the alleged Hebrew influence on cante jondo), it is perhaps more helpful to recognize a general kinship between Andalusian "deep song" and the music of the Orient, rooted probably in remote Asiatic sources. This kinship is based, fundamentally, on the essentially melodic nature of the music, as contrasted with music that has a harmonic basis. European music in general has a harmonic and instrumental basis. Even its melody is largely derived from harmonic structure. But in cante jondo, as in Oriental music, melody predominates and determines the essential features of the style. Although dancing and guitar-playing are important aspects of the flamenco tradition, its soul is in the singing voice. What the voice does is what makes flamenco different from European music. The distinguishing traits of flamenco music are melodic traits.

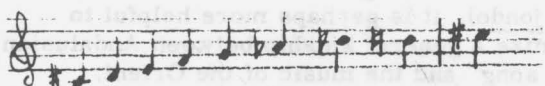
These distinguishing traits may be enumerated as follows: (1) a melodic range that seldom surpasses the interval of a sixth; (2) the reiterated use of one note, almost to the point of obsession, frequently accompanied by appoggiature from above and below; (3) the use of profuse ornamentation, but only at certain prescribed moments

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and as a means of intensifying the emotional expressivity of the song; (4) frequent use of portamento, i. e., "sliding" from one note to another; and (5), most important of all, the use of enharmonic modulation. This last term certainly requires an explanation, which cannot very well be done without falling afoul of some technicalities.

In European musical theory since the advent of the harmonic system instituted by Rameau in the 18th century, "modulation" has meant the transition from one tonality to another by a shift in the tonal center. But "modulation" as applied to a purely melodic style means something else. Expressive modulation in a melodic style means the alteration by less than a semitone of certain notes of the scale. An analogy would be the slightly flattened "blue" notes of Afro-American music (third and seventh degrees of the scale). Such microtonal alteration is also standard procedure in Oriental music. In cante jondo, any notes of the scale except the tonic and the dominant may be altered in this manner. A peculiarity of cante jondo is that the notes subjected to this microtonal alteration are often divided and subdivided in such a way as to alter the points of attack and resolution of entire phrases, or parts of phrases, in the melody. Together with portamento, which makes the voice pass from one note to another through infinitesimal gradations of pitch, expressive modulation through enharmonic alteration gives to cante jondo its family affinity with Oriental melody.

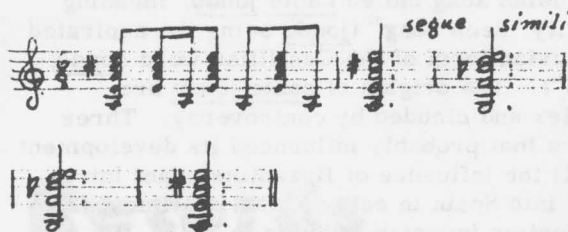
The following scale has been given as typical of flamenco music:



It is an eight-note scale with four semitones and may be regarded as consisting of two disjunct tetrachords, each beginning with a semitone. In this respect it resembles the rāga Bhairava or so-called "Gypsy scale" of Hindu music, and the familiar Arabian scale called Higāz; but it lacks the augmented seconds that characterize these two scales and which are considered so typically "Oriental"; and this is an important difference.

Flamenco is sung either without accompaniment, or with guitar (played by someone other than the singer). When flamenco music began to be known and published, it was frequently presented in arrangements for piano, which inevitably falsified its true nature, for reasons which the foregoing explanation of enharmonic

modulation should have made clear. The guitar adapts itself much better to the flamenco style, but it is not correct, as has been asserted by some writers, that flamenco developed from the characteristics of guitar technique. Flamenco, we repeat, is a purely vocal-melodic style, around which are clustered certain instrumental and choreographic forms. If there was any borrowing, it was probably from vocal to instrumental style: the superior flamenco guitarist makes the instrument sing (again there is an analogy with Afro-American music in the transition from vocal blues to instrumental jazz). Flamenco guitar-playing uses two methods: rasgueado (strumming), whose function is primarily rhythmic and harmonic; and punteado (plucking), whose function is primarily melodic. Conventional chord progressions, unhampered by academic considerations, are often surprisingly "modern", as in the following examples:



The generic type or matrix form of cante jondo, as previously remarked, is the seguiriya gitana of Andalusia, with its complex rhythmic pattern characterized by the alternation of 6/8 and 3/8 meters. In actual performance it is much more complex than these time-signatures indicate. The strategic silences are even more important than the strongly accentuated beats. Derived from it are the playera, the polo, the caña, the martinete, and the soleá -- all belonging to the traditional corpus of music called cante jondo. The secondary or more modern types of Andalusian folk music, derived in turn from the foregoing, constitute what we call flamenco.

Most of the flamenco types, the majority of which are both sung and danced, take their names from cities and provinces of Andalusia. Such are the sevillanas (Sevilla), rondeñas (Ronda), granadinas (Granada), murcianas (Murcia), cartageneras (Cartagena), and malagueñas (Málaga). Of these, the sevillanas and the malagueñas have been most widely popularized. Sevilla and Málaga share with Granada the distinction of being the chief centers for the creation and diffusion of flamenco music.

Of the flamenco types that do not have place-names, some of the best-known are the fandango (and its variant, the fandanguillo), the soleá, (plural, soleares), the peteneras, the alegrías,

and the bulerías. With the exception of the soleá, these are primarily dances, though all of them have their respective coplas or verses to be sung. Other types, such as the martinete, the saetas, and the tonás, were originally sung without accompaniment, though in recent times accompaniments are sometimes added.

The typical setting for flamenco music and dance is the cuadro flamenco of Andalusia. The word "cuadro" means both a picture and its frame, and it is used figuratively to denote, according to the dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy, "a grouping of persons or things which is presented to the sight and is capable of moving the spirit." If we add "sound" as well as sight, that will do very well for a general description of the cuadro flamenco, which consists of a grouping of persons (singers, dancers, instrumentalists) and things (guitars, castanets, costumes), and which is indeed very capable of "moving the spirit" of the spectator through a vivid and varied combination of sight, sound, and movement.

Having been given the background and the frame, the reader of these notes must now employ his or her imagination to complete the picture of the cuadro flamenco. Visual aids, to be sure, are not lacking. Prominent among these would be the painting by John Singer Sargent, in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum of Boston, titled "El Jaleo" (this term will be explained in a moment). This painting by the great American artist depicts a cuadro flamenco with extraordinary fidelity and animation. In the foreground is a woman dancer, with one arm gracefully extended (the arms in Spanish dancing are extremely mobile and expressive), and the other lifting up the train of her voluminous white dress. The motion of the arm and the type of dress indicate that she is dancing the alegrías, liveliest and gayest of the flamenco dances. Later her place will be taken by another dancer, in the ever-changing movement of the cuadro flamenco. But for the moment this dancer is the center of attention, the magnetic point upon which converge not only all eyes (except those of the singer, who is lost in ecstasy), but also the whole battery of sound -- guitars, hand-clapping, castanets, singing, cries of "Ole!" and other ejaculatory encouragements -- which accompanies the choreographic action of the cuadro flamenco. Seated on plain chairs against the wall, the guitarists, singers, and dancers in repose constitute not merely the background of the picture, but also the support, as it were, of the dancer who occupies the temporary center of attraction. This "support" is partly musical (chiefly rhythmic) but also emotional, and has a psychic reality that is almost physical in its

impact. Without it the dance can be only a spectacle, not an action "capable of moving the spirit." There is an emotional interplay between the dancer and the other members of the cuadro, just as there is rhythmic interplay between the stamping footwork of the dance, the castanets, the rhythmic striking of palms, the chords of the guitar, and the shouts of "Ole!" All is a counterpoint of movement and sound, freely improvised around a basic core of traditional practice. As in all true art, freedom is a function of form.

Especially to be observed in Sargent's painting is the attitude of the singer in the cuadro flamenco, which is completely characteristic. As he sits upright in the chair, his hands, with palms turned downward and inward, rest just above the top of both knees. In moments of intense emotion the fingers will tighten their grip on the inside of the thighs. The head is thrown back, with eyes closed, and the muscles of the throat are taut with the effort of producing the prolonged melismatic flourishes of cante flamenco. When he reaches the end of a phrase it will be a climactic moment, an emotional resolution greeted by cries of "Ole!" and by a change of pace in the dance. At this point the reader will doubtless wish to turn to the recordings, to hear the sound of flamenco singing instead of continuing to read about it. The music is the thing to catch the ear -- by all means. But first, a brief description of some common flamenco terms may be helpful, along with the music, in filling in the details of the imaginary cuadro flamenco which these remarkably authentic recordings will evoke through the ear and the mind's eye.

Jaleo. This term, which Sargent used for the title of his painting, is roughly the equivalent of the American "jam session." It denotes the act of encouraging the dancers and singers in the cuadro flamenco with hand-clapping, cries of "Ole!" and various expressions of enthusiastic approval, such as "Salero!" ("salt shaker," salt being the symbol for the best of anything in Andalusia), "Viva la madre que te parió!" ("Long live the mother who bore you!"), and "Anda, chiquilla!" ("Go on, girl!").

Palmadas. The percussive sound produced by striking together the palms of the hands in a sharp and rhythmic manner. This is usually done with the arms held up and away from the body. It is one of the most important factors in the rhythmic counterpoint of the cuadro flamenco.

Zapateo. Rhythmic sound patterns made with the dancers' feet (from zapato, meaning "shoe"),

as in American tap-dancing. From this word is derived the name of a generic dance-type called Zapateado.

Taconeo. The phase of zapateo, or foot-work, which consists of sharp and strong rhythmic beats made by the dancers' feet, chiefly by stamping with the heels. This plays a prominent part in many of the recordings presented here, and helps to convey the rhythmic pattern of each dance. The term comes from tacon, the Spanish word for "heel."

Palillos. The Andalusian term for castanets, which elsewhere in Spain are generally called castañuelas (from castaña, meaning "chestnut") They are said to have been given that name because they resemble a chestnut shell in their shape. In playing the palillos, which in Andalusia are attached to the thumb of each hand, the left hand marks the beat while the right hand makes the counter-beats and the trills, called carretillas or barrigas. A smaller type of castanet is called pito in Andalusia.

Pica. A phase of taconeo which consists in striking the ball of the foot on the floor with an audible thud.

Zarandeo. Body movement of the dancer, characterized by swinging the hips and shaking the shoulders.

Many other flamenco terms might be mentioned, but most of them have to do with choreographic details which are of marginal interest for our present purpose.

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NOTES ON THE RECORDINGS

SIDE I, Band 1: This brief selection is a sort of capsule introduction to the spirit and style of flamenco. A man's voice is heard against the rhythmic counterpoint of guitar, hand-clapping, and the foot-work of the dance. The words of the song are unintelligible, so rapidly are they enunciated, but the flamenco atmosphere is unmistakable and transports us at once into the heart of Sevilla, where this recording was made.

SIDE I, Band 2: This selection, also very brief, introduces the type of flamenco dance-song known as bulerías, characterized by its gaiety and speed. It is similar to the alegrías, which means "joys." This recording gives a vivid impression of the jaleo, with its palmas and cries of "Olé!" punctuating the verses of the song (a male singer again), the taconeo of the dance, and the tricky guitar accompaniment.

SIDE I, Band 3: This band contains an example of a famous type of flamenco music, the mala-gueñas. Like the soleares, it belongs to the group of flamenco types that are primarily songs, but which are also danced. The voice of the male singer is heard in the coplas, or verses of the song, alternating with short interludes (called falsetas) played by the guitar. The mounting excitement of the cuadro flamenco is conveyed through frequent changes of pace, the play of castanets and taconeo, and the customary jaleo, all leading to a tremendous climax.

SIDE I, Band 4: Here we have the soleares, one of the basic flamenco forms which was taken over from the older tradition of cante jondo. The name is the plural of soleá, which in turn is an Andalusian corruption of soledad, meaning "loneliness." Generally it is a song of longing or lament, like the Afro-American blues. But when used with the dance, as in this recording, it is animated by a strong rhythmic impulse (which often happens in the case of the blues also) generated, as usual, by the guitar, the palmas, and the taconeo. This number was recorded in Sevilla.

SIDE I, Band 5: In this typical Andalusian folk-song we encounter the singer's opening flourish on the syllable "Ay!" which is so characteristic of cante jondo and thence of the authentic flamenco style. After a brief guitar interlude, the voice of the male singer re-enters with the copla, or verse, consisting in this case of one of the perennial variants of the ancient theme that Sappho wrote of some 2,500 years ago in her immortal lyric: the sight of the loved one

"taking away the senses" of the lover. Reduced to its simplest terms, the theme appears in the copla of this song as follows:

Ay !
Que el sentío me lo quitas
cuando te veo en la calle!
Que el sentío me lo quitas
y no paro de mirarte.

You take away my senses
When I see you in the street.
You take away my senses,
Yet I can't stop looking (at you).

The by-now-familiar jaleo accompanies and enhances the flamenco version of a timeless theme.

SIDE I, Band 6: In contrast to the animated and complex movement of the cuadro flamenco, this selection offers a stylized version of the sol-earres for guitar solo, with Angel Bermejo as the performer. We can appreciate the guitarist's skill in the melodic phrasing of the punteado, which brings out the singing quality of the instrument.

SIDE I, Band 7: Of all the selections presented here, this one perhaps evokes the most vivid impression of the excitement generated by a cuadro flamenco through sound and movement. Though the visual element must be supplied by the listener's imagination, everything else is realistically communicated through the medium of sound. The whole battery of percussive effects is here brought into play: the beat of the palmadas, the sharp staccato of the taconeos, the rhythmic figuration of the castanets outlining the turning motions of the dance, the precisely-timed shouts of "Olé!", and the ever-commanding chords of the guitar, king of flamenco music. No singing voice intrudes on this orgy of rhythm.

SIDE I, Band 8: In this remarkable recording a twelve-year-old girl from Sevilla sings a saeta, a type of Andalusian religious folksong traditionally sung without accompaniment. The saeta, meaning literally "an arrow," is a very old type of religious song in Andalusia, belonging to the traditional body of cante jondo. It is a song of the Passion of Christ and is sung during the religious procession of Holy Week in Sevilla, addressed either to the Virgin Mary or to the image of the crucified Christ which is carried in the procession. The singer, usually a woman, stands on a balcony overlooking the procession, grasping the iron railing firmly in both hands (the grip tightens as the emotion grows). The procession stops so that the image which is being addressed remains stationary

while the saeta is being sung. A fanfare of trumpets gives the signal for the procession to move on. Lately, cornets and drums have replaced the trumpets, and in some recordings these instruments are used to accompany the song; this practice, however, is not in accordance with traditional usage.

It is believed that the name saeta ("arrow"), given to this type of song, is related to an ancient sacrificial symbol. The words of the saeta sung by the young girl in this recording are as follows:

Who has nailed Thee down,
Who has placed thorns on Thee,
Who has wounded Thee in the side?
What of Thy Virgin Mother,
With her heart pierced (by grief)?

The saeta or arrow of song is symbolic of the heart pierced by grief.

SIDE I, Band 9: The same twelve-year-old girl, whose style is of extraordinary purity, here sings a secular folksong of Andalusia with guitar accompaniment. The song consists of apparently unconnected coplas (sometimes known in folklore as "wandering verses"), but the main themes are "there's no place like home" and "long live pretty girls," both of which are fairly universal sentiments. So the singer sings about her little house "in the land of salt" (i.e., Andalusia, the "best" of all lands) and of the village square (plazuela) where celebrated bullfighters appear with their followers. And then, inconsequentially, she says to her sweetheart:

My love, if you should go to Guadarrama,
Buy me a chest,
Buy me a chest, sweet boy,
If you should go to Guadarrama.

SIDE II, Band 1: Another Andalusian folksong, this time sung by a man with guitar accompaniment. It belongs to the type of narrative song dealing with topical events, of which the most familiar example to American listeners is probably the Mexican corrido. Revolutions, robberies, derailments, shipwrecks, battles, bullfights -- these and many more are commemorated in this type of song, usually improvised by an anonymous singer on the basis of a traditional verse-form and melody.

Following the guitar introduction and after the initial prolonged "Ay !" that is the flamenco trademark, the singer describes an episode evidently connected with the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39:

I find nothing that compares
 With the wall of Cádiz:
 Had it not been for that,
 All of us would have died.
 It made the bombs and shells,
 As they reached the wall,
 Go flying toward the sky!

It will not be erased from my mind
 That on the 18th day of August --
 It will not be erased from my mind --
 In an explosion that took place
 Many innocent people perished.
 And I looked up at the sky,
 Then went away horrified
 Because I saw all the little stars
 Running away.

SIDE II, Band 2: This song, in dialogue form, was recorded in Málaga and features a male singer called "Urro de la Trinidad," accompanied by guitars, with dancing and the usual jaleo. The song deals with a theme that is widespread in the folklore of all the world: that of the hero who has been carried off to his grave, but who is "really" not dead, only sleeping. One gathers that the "Julio Romero" mentioned in the text was a bullfighter (the favorite type of hero in Spain). The dialogue in the song is between the little bridge of San Rafael and a young girl of Córdoba, who walks along the road with grief-stricken features and a black ribbon on her head, mourning the death of Julio Romero. To the little bridge she sings:

Won't you tell me, little bridge,
 That is seen from San Rafael,
 Tell me why, you little road,
 They have taken him away forever?

Where now is Julio Romero?
 Where is he -- for I don't know?
 Please tell me, little bridge
 That is seen from San Rafael.

And the little bridge replies:

Maiden, maiden of Córdoba,
 Take off your ribbon of black,
 And don't walk along so sadly!
 For Julio Romero lives,
 He lives, and he is sleeping,
 Do not cry, lest you awake him.
 He is sleeping in his chamber
 With his lovely companion.

SIDE II, Band 3: This selection presents another excellent male singer of flamenco, "Juan de Jerez" (of the city which produces the wine that we call "sherry"), who sings malagueñas accompanied by guitars. The

taconeo of the dance, the palmadas and shouts of "Olé!" complete this final evocation of the cuadro flamenco, after which our recordings pass on to other phases of Andalusian music, represented by the guitar solo.

SIDE II, Band 4: The last three selections on this record are guitar solos played by Sánchez Granada. They illustrate the artistically developed flamenco style which has had such a predominant influence in the emergence of modern Spanish music over the last half-century or so. The first of these selections is the nearest to the popular style of flamenco, for it is an interpretation of the traditional peteneras (said to have been named after a singer called "La Petenera"), an Andalusian dance-song related to the seguidillas sevillanas. The prevailing guitar technique here is the punteado, which in the hands of a skilled player such as Sánchez Granada is capable of producing a wide range of dynamic shadings as well as a singing melodic line.

SIDE II, Band 5: This is a guitar transcription of a composition by Isaac Albéniz (1860-1909) entitled "Rumores de la Caleta" (from the suite "Recuerdos de Viaje"), originally written for piano: One might be justified in saying, however, that the guitar transcription restores this music to its natural condition, for Albéniz, in nearly all of his piano music, was definitely guided by the guitar style, and particularly by the flamenco type of Andalusian music.

The title of this piece may be freely translated as "Sounds of the Port" (caleta is a small inlet where ships can moor), but the intent of the music is not at all realistic or descriptive; rather it is poetic and evocative. The general character of the piece is that of the malagueñas, in 3/8 time. Considered sectionally, it is in three-part form (A-B-A), with the middle section (Lento) consisting of an intensely expressive melody in cante jondo style, with punteado accompaniment. The introduction of this melody represents the opening flourish of the cantaor (flamenco singer) on the syllable "Ay!":



and it concludes with a descending cadenza in 32nd notes, marked lento and ad libitum, imitating the singer's cantilena by which the point of final rest is reached.

The composition as a whole begins with 24 measures of preluding, after which the "song" enters in the upper register (meno tempo, cantando), with a melody that descends through the characteristic compass of a sixth. This is followed by an instrumental interlude which corresponds to the falsestas of flamenco music. The melody and the falsestas are repeated, leading to the entrance of the predominantly melodic middle section.

SIDE II, Band 6: This is an original composi-

tion for guitar by Francisco Tárrega (1854-1909), entitled "Recuerdos de la Alhambra" ("Memories of the Alhambra"). Tárrega, following in the footsteps of the great masters, Dionisio Aguado (1784-1849) and Fernando Sor (1784-1839), laid the foundations, both as performer and composer, for the modern school of Spanish guitar music, whose leading representatives have won world-wide fame. This composition may best be described as a melodic study for guitar, provided that does not detract from its poetic charm and its fascination as music merely to be enjoyed without any technical considerations. The artistic punteado style reaches its culmination in a composition such as this, to which Sánchez Granada (how aptly named!) does full justice in this recording.

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