

Flamenco

played by

MARIO ESCUDERO



M
128
E74
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1955

MUSIC LP

FW 6920 FOLKWAYS RECORDS, N.Y.

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FLAMENCO GUITAR SOLOS by Mario Escudero

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FLAMENCO GUITAR SOLOS

By Mario Escudero

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES INSIDE COVER

ALMORADI (Farruca)
FALSETTA AL BORDON
RECUERDO A SEVILLA (Serenata)
ALEGRÍAS DEL ALOSNO
FANTASIA ONUBENSE (Fandangó)
SARRACENA
SEVILLANAS (Popular)

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Of a gypsy family of artists Mario Escudero was born in Alicante (Spain), October 11th, 1928. His father was a gypsy, his mother from Andalusia. When he was very young, he learned the rudiments of Flamenco guitar from his father. At the age of nine, in 1937 in Bordeaux, France, he made his first public appearance as a Flamenco guitarist.

To increase his knowledge of the traditions and techniques of Flamenco art, he continued his studies as a member of several Spanish 'Folkloric' groups touring the country with them, continuing with one group where another left off. In 1941 he went to Madrid to learn from the Masters. It was at the Colmado de Villa Rosa, (in Madrid) this hostel and grocery, that he met the great Flamenco artists, among them Ramon Montoya with whom he studied for many months.

When he was fourteen years old he became first guitarist for Vicente Escudero. He has since then also toured with Jose Greco, Carmen Amaya and Rosario Antonio through Europe and North and South America.

Notes by Esther Brown

Flamenco is a most vital and extremely ancient survival of symbolic ritual, for which the music of the guitar is the spiritual core. It is so old, in fact, that there is scarcely an ancient culture which has not been credited with having originated or influenced it. Since pre-historic times, Spain -

"... a mountain-studded peninsula, with its parched and barren interior... with one face turned east toward the source of civilization and the other westward toward a new world..."

has been the cross-roads, the meeting place, and the home of many cultures. Influences due to migration and culture contacts are evident in abundance. Phoenician, Moorish, Moslem, Hebraic, Arabic, Egyptian, Greek, East Indian, Byzantine, Early Christian, and even American Indian influences are among those claimed for it.

There can be no doubt that Flamenco combines the introversion and the rich and intricate symbolism of the ancient East, with the extroversion and primitive vitality of the West, to express man's oldest and deepest feelings about his inner and outer world. The guitar itself has the symbolic form of the spider who weaves the web of life, and the music of the guitar is based upon a most highly evolved and ancient numerical and astrological system, in which each number is the center of a constellation of analogies, of mystical correspondences between all things in heaven and earth. Symbolic elements of both the dance and the music seem to range from vestiges of the Stone Age to those of the highest of ancient cultures.

Charged with genuine spiritual passion and cosmic meanings, Flamenco is a ritual enactment of both the renewal of vital instinct and the mastery of it. It is at once an affirmation of sexual virility and a symbolic transformation of it - a spiritualization of instinctual energy. It symbolizes the potential that exists between polar opposites in man and nature, as a basic condition for creating and controlling energy. Male and female, mountain and valley, sun and moon, the mystic lake of the mountain, and "the river that cries" are among the symbolic images associated with Flamenco. But it is the flamingo bird that dominates its symbolic form - the flamingo, from which it takes its name and which gives the clue to its essential meaning.

The long-legged bird that stands on one foot near water is a familiar and widespread symbol of rain and fertility in many ancient cultures. It is associated with rain rites, fertility, purification, re-birth, harvest, or healing rites, according to variants in mythologies. The stork, the crane, the ostrich, the tikling bird of the Philippines, are among such symbols. There is the Crane Dance of ancient Greece, the ostrich dances of Africa, and the well-known Tinikling, the rice harvest dance of the Philippines with its accompaniment of rhythmic clickings. One-legged fertility and rain dances were known in ancient China, and the flamingo itself in China symbolizes purity, elegance, and dignity. Eagle dances of the American Indian bear a striking resemblance to elements of Flamenco, and bird dances with stamping and clicking steps are found in many ancient cultures as rain rites, fertility, or purification rites.

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The flamingo inhabits most of the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, and India, Ceylon, China, parts of South America and many other countries. In flight, flamingos present a striking sight, with their long necks and legs stretched out straight, looking like great white and rosy-scarlet crosses with black arms. At rest, they are no less fascinating as they stand on one or both legs with their long eel-like necks twisted or coiled upon their bodies in every conceivable position. When feeding they wade about in the lagoon, stirring up the mud with their feet, and they lower their long necks to sift the mud through their bills. As they do so, they reverse the ordinary position of their heads so as to hold their crowns downward and look backward and up, as if looking over their shoulders. Then they erect their long necks in a graceful arch as they swallow their food. Their nests are peaked mud huts that rise up from the water to about a foot above the surface.

It is easy to see how the flamingo could become a symbol of spiritualized instinctive vitality. The bird as symbol of the spirit is universal among ancient cultures, as is the serpent, symbol of instinct and sexuality. The flamingo seems to combine both of these attributes, like the winged dragon of ancient China, or the plumed serpent of the Aztecs.

The classical species of flamingo, the "Phoenicopterus" with its rosy-white plumage and flame-colored wing coverts, giving the wings the appearance of being edged with bright red, is symbolically reflected in many details of Flamenco. The traditional costume worn by the woman in the Alegrias, the oldest and purest of the women's dances, is directly derived from the appearance of the flamingo. The "traje de cola" or trailed dress, is always of white, and its many ruffles are edged with bright red, like the flame-tipped wings of the flamingo. The long tight-fitting torso of the dress, suggesting the sinuous neck, the wing-like red-edged ruffled sleeves, and the trail itself, all seem to reflect the image of the flamingo.

The most characteristic position, or pose, of flamenco dancing is that of a long-legged bird standing near water, and when this is well done in the performance of the ritual it always evokes cries and "ole"! The many variations of hopping on one foot with the bird-like movements of the other leg, the arching of the back and the sudden quick tossing of the head, the coiling of the body, and the broken turns and twistings, and the whole vital elegance of the dances, all suggest the movements of the flamingo bird. The clicking of the heels, the stabbing of the earth, the snapping of fingers and sharp hand-claps, derive from impressions of the bird.

The sticks for beating the drum for Flamenco were adorned with feathers at the top and at the bottom with the tail of an ox. The short melodic intervals of the music, as well as the hand and arm gestures of the dancing, seem to symbolize the rapid ascending movement of a hand lifting an empty container and dipping the water from a lake in the mountain (the mystical place of the flamingo), then thrusting it vigorously over the earth. The slow downward drawing of the hand and arm suggests the drawing down of the "heavenly dew," as in certain rites of ancient Eastern cultures.

Vicente Escudero, the world's foremost exponent of authentic Flamenco dancing, and for whose group Mario Escudero plays the guitar, says of the "Seguiriya Gitana" which he includes in his program, that he had studied the ancient East Indian ritual on which the "Seguiriya Gitana" is based, for five years before presenting it for the stage, and that

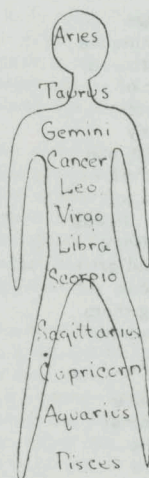
"... it represents the eternal and infinite sadness of certain nomadic tribes of India, those tribes

whose perpetual wanderings are accompanied by the liturgical 'lament' of this incantation, charged with plaints and wails."

In addition to this aspect, is the symbolic meaning of "the river that cries" expressed in the "ay, ay, ay" of the chant, the "cante jondo" or deep song. "The river that cries" is the mystical relationship that exists between the mountain and the valley, and represents the whole tragic sense of life, the emotional stream of existence which gives meaning to experience. All flowing water, streams, rivers, and also clouds, are expressions of this in ancient cultures, and mountains symbolize the sacred place where streams take their source. In a still deeper sense, "the river that cries" may refer to the web of life, the veil of illusion, or Karma - the wheel of fate, in East Indian religion. Much of the Flamenco music of the guitar does, indeed, sound like a "river that cries."

The Solearis, which is the masculine counterpart of the Alegrias, and with which it forms the oldest and purest essence of male and female dancing in Flamenco, has been interpreted as deriving from "soledad," meaning loneliness, solitude, melancholy. But it is more likely that it was originally an expression of the ancient universal symbolism of the sun, from "sol", as the masculine principle of the universe. Masculine virility is the essential and most prized characteristic of man's dancing in Flamenco - in the Solearis, the Zapateado, and the Farruca. To quote Escudero himself again:

"If anyone said that my dancing is effeminate, I would never dance again."



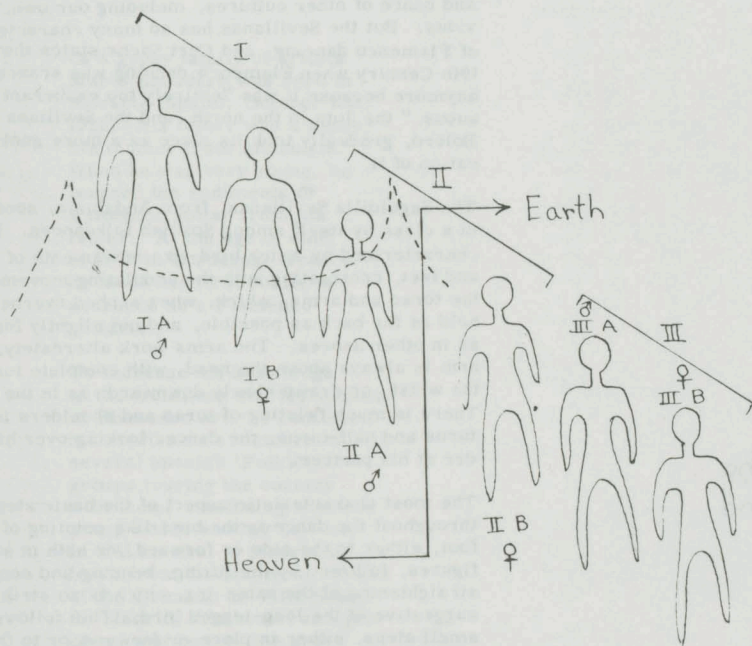
The seven notes of the musical scale is based upon another numerical archetype, the seven-fold architectonic principle which exists throughout nature and is universal in religious symbolism. Schneider places the Flamenco as a medicinal rite, along with the Tarantella and the sword dances, and gives its ritual function as "purification libido," with the flamingo as its animal symbol.

With this insight into the meaning of Flamenco, we see it as a dynamic naturalistic conception of physical events, and an attempt to reconcile physical nature with spirit. It symbolizes the battle between individuality and nature, the gaining of directional momentum by overcoming a definite initial resistance. Mountains opposed to valley on the cosmic plane, male opposed to female on the human plane, create that difference of potential between opposites which is the basic condition for generating and directing spiritual energy. Perhaps the vital intensity

of Flamenco may also be said to express and to reconcile the unconscious conflict between East and West. This may be one reason for the universality of its appeal and for the impelling fascination Flamenco seems to hold for all who come in contact with it.

The music of the guitar is the controlling spiritual center of the Cuadro Flamenco, setting the initial mood, inspiring, guiding, directing, all aspects of it. The guitar maintains the traditional authority of the structure of Flamenco, and at the same time allows for and inspires the ecstatic improvisation of dance and chant and the complex battery of rhythms created by the heel-clicking, stamping, "palmas" (hand-claps), and finger-snapping, punctuated at the high points by the "ole" of the group.

Three Melismatic Groups in Chants



There is a profusion of styles of accompaniment, appropriate to every type of song or dance. There is the "rasgueado" sweeping the fingers back and forth over the strings; the "paseo" or "promenade," constituting a melodic interlude; there is the expression of the main theme or its suggestion in lively variations (the "falsetas") which permit the performer to display his skill at improvisation; and finally there is "el toque flamenco" - the use of six vibrant strings which suffice to yield the quintessence of this ancient music which says so much.

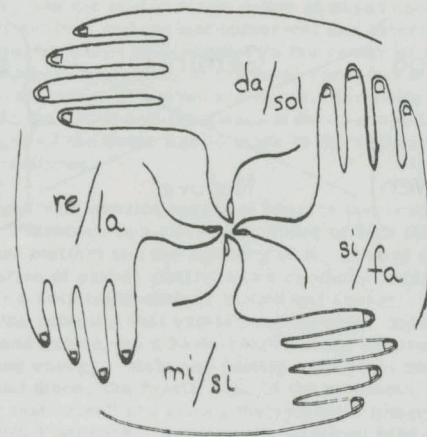
The "jaleo" or group responses, the hand-claps, and "ole!"s, express the communal collective aspects of Flamenco, the group participation in the rite. Men, women, children, old and young, everyone follows with rapt absorption every detail of the dancing and chanting, responding frequently throughout.

The singer keeps his eyes glued to the guitar as he takes his cues and improvises his chant. There are traditional passages in the music and in the figures of the dance for testing the tempo between guitarist and dancer, and for orienting them to each other, but the guitar allows for ecstatic improvisations of the dancer who is free to lengthen passages. The guitar sets the rhythm and the spirit of all aspects of the ritual, and responds to what it has inspired, playing with or against it.

The alternating male and female dances of the Flamenco as it now survives, the Solearis, the Farruca, the Alegrias, the Zapateado, the Bulerias (a younger, more recent version of Alegrias, sometimes referred to as the "boogy-woogy" or "jam-session" of Flamenco), the Tango, the Garrotin, are interspersed with "cante jondo", the deep song, throughout the ritual, and all are held together by the music of the guitar.

The symbolism of the guitar music, which dominates and controls the whole Flamenco ritual, has been traced by Marius Schneider of the Spanish Institute of Ethnography in Barcelona, to a most ancient and widespread numerical and astrological system. In the Pythagorean sense that numbers are the first things in the whole of nature, "... they suppose the elements of numbers to be the elements of all things, and the whole heaven to be a musical scale and a number."

Each number is the center of a constellation of analogies, of mystical correspondences, forming numerical archetypes that govern the laws of the universe. The various parts of the body and the tonal range of the voice have their corresponding relationship to the different emotional contents of the psyche, to the signs of the lunar, natural, and heavenly zodiacs (the constellations and their animal symbols), and to the elements of nature. Clouds, lightning, mountains, valleys, caves, rain, thunder, etc., are mystically related to the head, neck, chest, heart, intestines, etc. of the body, to the head voice, chest voice, deep chest voice, etc. through the stellar constellations, and express different emotional contents of man.



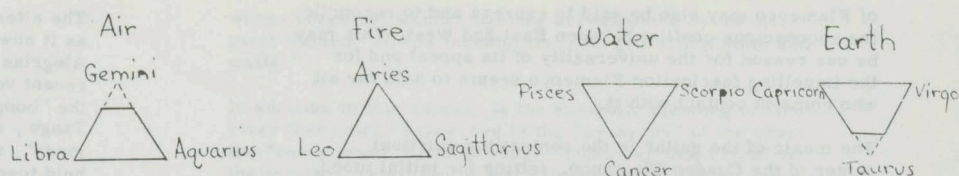
FOUR MODES (ABCD)

I	Pisces	si	B
II	Gemini	si b	D
III	Virgo	la	C
IV	Sagittarius	sol #	A
<hr/>			
III	Scorpio	sol	C
IIII	Aquarius	fa #	A
IIII	Leo	fa	D
IIII	Taurus	mi	B
<hr/>			
II	Aries	mi b	B
IIII	Libra	re	C
IIII	Capricorn	do #	A
IIII	Cancer	do	D

In this ancient cosmology central problems of the human soul were dealt with from an impersonal astrological approach, which helped to withdraw the personal conception of fate, in favor of the collective. Nature within is the same as nature without, and energy generated within the soul is governed by the same laws as other natural processes in the universe.

The four modes of Flamenco music, each with its different emotional range, and the four-fold structure of the "Cuadro Flamenco," as the ritual is called, is based upon the division of the world into four quarters according to the four cardinal directions, corresponding to the four-fold structure of the psyche, as in all primitive cultures. This illuminates the meaning of the Spanish proverb, "Every man's head is a world."

The three melismatic groups of Flamenco music, represent another numerical archetype, contained within the four-fold structure, each of the three groups corresponding to an element in nature and a ritual function. In ancient China the "three" represented heaven, earth, and man - and man united heaven and earth. This concept is reflected in the Chinese attitude toward the family as the basis of spiritual life, as also in the Christian trinity. In Flamenco music, according to Schneider, the first of the three melismatic groups, the fa-mi, corresponds to the sea which symbolizes cure; and the third group, the fa-do, to the mountains, symbolizing convalescence.



In its present form the Flamenco often begins with the Sevillanas, a group dance about which there seems to be considerable doubt as to its being an authentic Flamenco dance at all. Escudero states that the Segidilla Sevillanas is not an authentic Flamenco dance, but merely a popular classical dance of Spain, not to be confused with "Seguiriya Gitana" mentioned above. That Flamenco has made an indelible impression on most of the music and dance of Spain, as well as on the music and dance of other cultures, including our own, is obvious. But the Sevillanas has so many characteristics of Flamenco dancing, and Curt Sachs states that in the 19th Century when Flamenco dancing was scarcely danced anymore because it was "entirely too exuberant and sensuous," the Jota in the north, and the Sevillana and the Bolero, gradually took its place as a more gentle modification of it.

The Segidilla Sevillanas, from Andalusia, seems to be in a class by itself among Spanish folkdances. It is characterized by quick bird-like movements of the head and feet, contrasting with the undulating movements of the torso and arms, which, when arched overhead, are held as far back as possible, and not slightly forward as in other dances. The arms work alternately, and one arm is always above the head, with complete turns of the wrist, or drawn slowly downward, as in the Alegrias. There is much twisting of torso and shoulders in the turns and half-turns, the dancer looking over his shoulder at his partner.

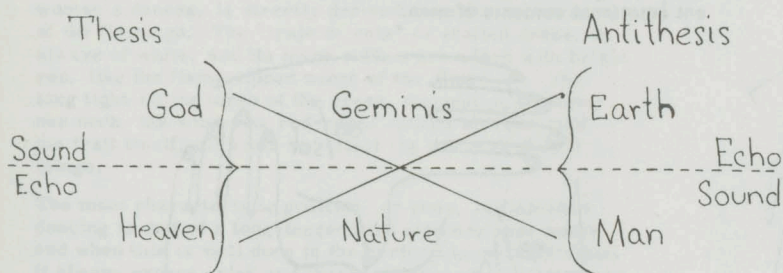
The most characteristic aspect of the basic step used throughout the dance is the bird-like pointing of one foot, either to the side or forward, or both in some figures, followed by the lifting, bending and semi-straightening of the same leg, which is so strikingly suggestive of the long-legged bird. This follows three small steps, either in place or forward, or to the side.

The formations of the Sevillanas is given by Curt Sachs as a square of four couples, though it is often performed by two men and two women in square formation, or by two women, or in a line of couples, the men in one line facing the women in another. Each "copla" or figure of the dance has three parts, and the whole dance seems to be a series of variations and ornamentations of the basic simple step pattern of three steps and the bird-like movement of the leg, with a continuous crossing over to the right and re-crossing to the left between partners, punctuating each part with a typical Flamenco turn.

Despite the loss of symbolic meanings and the corruption of ancient forms since the beginning of the industrial era, even today perhaps no region in the world is more steeped in music than Andalusia, and the music of the guitar is still the very pulse and breath of the Andalusian people, just as Andalusia is still the home of the dance. The rich musical heritage of Spain seems to have been most treasured by the Andalusian Gypsy, who brought to it his own ancient tradition, and a living symbolism that stems from the deepest layers of man's nature in all places and in all times.

Marius Schneider: The Musical Origin of Animal Symbols in Mythology and Ancient Cultures

INVERSION



The Farruca (in this record, from Almoradi), generally considered a man's dance, seems, however, to contain most of the elements of Flamenco music, in the nature of an overture. It would appear that this may originally have been one of the dances performed by both a man and a woman in which they never touch each other, not even with the hands. It is usually the first dance taught to children because it does contain the basic techniques of most of the Flamenco dances.

The Alegrias del Alosno indicates its ancient authenticity as Alosno, along with Granada and Seville, was long a center for preserving authentic Flamenco dancing. The Alegrias may be said to be the high point of the women's dancing in Flamenco, for its ritual intensity and the exotic beauty of its slow undulating movements.

