

## FLAMENCO: A DEVELOPING TRADITION

“Cautivo y prisionero  
canto mis penas,  
que así limo los hierros  
de mis cadenas.”

The ancient history of *flamenco* is pure hypothesis, partly owing to the “Dark Ages” which shrouded the folk expression of a large portion of Andalusia from soon after the victory of the Catholic Kings at Granada in 1492 until the emancipation laws of Charles III in 1783. Although flamenco as such is a product of the nineteenth century, the hypothesis may be taken right back to pre-Iberian days when there was a flourishing civilization in the south of Spain, with its capital, Tartessos, more or less where Seville—or Cadiz—is now, perhaps the first Empire in the West. The Iberians inhabited the north and the east but the towns along the Andalusian coast were founded by Phoenicians from Tyre (Cadiz) and Phocaeans from Asia Minor (Málaga). During the Celtic invasions the south was held by Carthage until Andalusia finally became Roman as a result of the Punic wars.

There are references to Tartessos and the legendary Atlantis,

the sunken continent of the Iberians, in classical literature; its metric laws were reputed to be similar or superior to the code of Hammurabi. This placed Andalusia on a par with Egypt, Babylon, China... and its people traded with Crete. At a later date, both Martial and Juvenal drew attention to the *puellae gaditanae* whose unusually rhythmic dancing was "different" from that seen elsewhere in the Roman Empire—except Crete. Then there were the songs they sang, as distinctive as those of Egypt: "*Cantica qui Nili, qui Gaditana susurrant.*" Martial. These may have been the vestiges of ancient oriental traditions, when dancing had a ritual or erotic function as in the sacred dances of India—or the dancing of Salomé. The Arab historian, Hamzah ibn Hasan-el-Isfalini, writing in the tenth century, recorded the dispatch of twelve thousand musicians from India to the King of Persia, Bahram Gur, fifteen centuries earlier. Alexander the Great certainly brought back singers and dancers from his Indian campaigns and one of the finest pieces from the Indus civilization (Mohenjo Daro) portrays a dancing girl. A Roman statuette of a dancer from Cadiz, the Venus Callipyge, owned by the National Museum of Naples, has been popularly recognized as Telethusa, Martial's paramour. At all events, these heiresses of a forgotten land were probably slaves learned in the arts of singing and dancing and playing musical instruments, like the Egyptian *almehs*, or the *qaynas* who graced the Arab courts at the dawn of Islam.

An instrument resembling the guitar as we know it, with a handle and a flat back, may have been introduced under the Romans but another curved instrument, not unlike the lute and perhaps deriving from the Greco-Assyrian *cithara*, was noted in Córdoba in the year 1000. The lute itself, *al-ud*—the Spanish *Laúd*, hailing from an oriental instrument of Persian or Arab origin, was in general use by the twelfth century. Early French literature, too, mentions a *guiterne mauresque*. However, the miniatures illustrating the *Cantigas de Sancta Maria*, composed by Alfonso the Wise, (c. 1270), show that both types were played in mediaeval Spain. The Moresque guitar probably became the mandolin.

It has been suggested that wooden castanets originated in Andalusia, though they were not unknown in Rome. The Roman *crusmata* (crotals) were made of bronze, producing a sound

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half-way between that of castanets and another type of finger-cymbals, also of bronze, similar to the *chinchines* used by the Moors and still played in parts of the south to-day. In Spain, the widespread gypsy custom of snapping fingers in accompaniment may have been an unconscious attempt to imitate their sharp dry sound. Another musical instrument, almost certainly indigenous and probably ancient, consists of two pieces of cane forming clappers. As elsewhere in Europe, the fiddle was adopted as a folk instrument after the violin was introduced in the sixteenth century. The pipe and the tabor were known in Andalusia from earliest times.

What strikes the visitor to Andalusia to-day is its universality. It seems fair to say that there has never been any real break in continuity. Even the invasions of the Vandals and the Visigoths left the south comparatively undisturbed, thanks to the initiative of the clergy, whose genius for organization provided the guaranty of peace. This was the time of the school of St. Isidore of Seville, who not only helped to construct the liturgy, but compiled a codex of classical antiquity alongside a history of the Goths.

When the Arabs arrived in 711, they consequently found Byzantine and Jewish church music and a Romanized Celt-Iberian heritage based on the sensibility of the ancient East, doubtless handed down from the *cantica gaditanae*. In other words, oriental, Greek and native secular and religious traditions.

The underlying modal and occasionally pre-modal patterns found in *flamenco* have been the source of much conjecture. Taken to a logical conclusion, the boldest and most attractive of the theories hints a codification of music in the days of Tartessos. More modestly, the Dorian mode, so frequent in the Mediterranean and coinciding with the *hijaz*, one of the Arab melodic structures called *maqam*, may conceivably have originated in Andalusia before being systematized by the Greeks. The similarities or reminiscences noticed between flamenco and Indian music, on the other hand, argue romantically in favour of direct transmission through the gypsies. But as there are 72 scales in Indian music, the fact that one of them happens to be based on the Dorian mode may be another coincidence. In any event, the rudiments of the Persian, Indian and Chinese musical systems were all taught at

Córdoba under the Umayyad dynasties.

The existence of pre-modal music has been observed in archaic Sicilian songs. Their characteristics are not unlike those of the *tonás* or *tonadas* (early *cante jondo* and supposedly the basis of flamenco): no accompaniment, free rhythm, limited register—six tones at the most—without fixed intervals, syllabic delivery. On the whole, however, the feeling is Greek rather than oriental.

In Spain, the adoption of the Byzantine liturgy under the Visigoths, preserved by the Mozarabic church in Córdoba until the thirteenth century, is said to have inspired the Andalusian cadence based on the Phrygian mode, the most compatible of all with the distress and anxiety of flamenco, although the Sicilian evidence implies early familiarity in the Mediterranean with all these forms. The Carolingian reform and the later controversy over the true position of the Dorian mode, even the “tonal” Phrygian cadence, presumably also have their relevance. Nor should it be forgotten that during the anarchic period before the unification of the liturgy at the turn of the sixth century, the inclusion of folk themes played its part in encouraging worship. An analogy might be drawn with the growing popularity of the *misa flamenca* to-day. At another level, in Constantinople itself, hymns became increasingly florid as the church entered into contact with Arab classical music which, though extraneous, could not be divorced entirely from the haunting melodies of the pre-Islamic world chanted by the Bedouin caravaneers.

Arab civilization in Andalusia was at its height in the ninth century under the Emir, Abd al Rahman II. Ziryab, a singer and poet from Bagdad and a disciple of Ishaq al-Mawsilli, the last custodian of the pure Arab tradition, taught Eastern music, introducing the enharmonic scale, oral practice, the measure and melismatic ornamentation which remained a feature of Andalusian folk-song up to the mid-seventeenth century. He also added the fifth string to the lute and perfected the 24 *nawba* suites to provide a more comprehensive system.

With Ziryab, Islam had brought its classical compositions, the *qasida* of the desert, but when all seemed about to be lost under the gloomy Emir, Abd Allah, a new genre, the *muwassaha*, invented by the blind poet of Cabra, Muqaddam ben Moafa, in the early tenth century, offered a means of restoring the bases

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of the art. The folk equivalent was the *zejel*, an endless string of verses sung to a refrain in a mixture of the Arab vernacular and the romance dialect spoken by the Mozarabs. They were ribald satirical lyrics, always extempore, and may have been meant for a narrow group of initiated rather than the crowd. The *zejel* was often danced, captivating all in the mid-eleventh century with Ben Quzman, the undisputed master of the genre. It also had a wide influence on Provençal poetry.

Throughout the long years of tolerance, native Andalusian folk music was made up of *jarchyas* (the former *cantica*?) and *zamras*, street dances in which everyone took part. With the invasions of the ascetic tribes from North Africa, the Almoravids, in 1091, cultural life declined. There had already been a decadent trend during the period of internal dissension known as the Kingdoms of Taifa and when the Almoravids were vanquished in their turn by the fanatic Almohads in 1146, religious freedom ceased. The Castilian successors of St. Ferdinand, who held Seville, soon succumbed to the delights of Arab Andalusian ways, but inevitably retaliated after the expulsion of the Mozarabs in other areas under the new rulers, and compelled Moorish communities to leave Spain. This may have been one of the sources of the alleged likeness between some flamenco songs and North African music: *kadria vemel maya*—*polo: kadria zidane*—*playeras* or early *siguiriyas*; *kadria sika*—*landangos de la Peza*. Although Ziryab's system of *nawba*, preserved fairly faithfully in Morocco, is called the "music of the Moors of Granada," that failing kingdom in its latter days was but a shadow of all that had gone before, struggling on by virtue of its trade and diplomacy rather than its cultural achievements. The population was so numerous that many families, not only refugees, were pushed back into the hills and the coastal range behind Málaga, the enclave of the *verdiales* (close to a country song and dance and almost an anomaly in flamenco on account of its varied instrumental accompaniment, including the lute in the oldest versions, replaced in others by the violin). Castilian presence in the rest of Andalusia ensured continued Mozarabic expression along the Guadalquivir.

Reference is made to the Jewish liturgy in the early days of Arab rule. One poet wrote that he was so enraptured by the singing of the female slave, Qamar, that he cried out "like the

Jewish women hawking in the streets" (eighth century). Later, when intolerance had set in, the celebrated poet, Ben Sahl, a converted Jew who died in Seville in 1251, said that he was "twice humiliated by being in love and being a Jew..." The influence of Jewish psalmody seems traceable in some *siguiriyas* (Joaquin la Cherna). The later prayer, *Kol Nidrei*, in which the Jews asked for God's forgiveness under the Inquisition, is easier to discern in the *saeta* (a Sevillian *saeta* sung by Centeno). But *saetas* are also extraordinarily like the Muslim call to worship. An anecdote relates that the *first saeta* was sung by a woman who in her sorrow on seeing her son being led away to an *autodafé*, involuntarily imitated the *muezzin*. Certainly Islam was practised in secret on the large estates and in remote villages long after the Reconquest. But, again, *saetas* bear striking resemblances to Orthodox and even Roman liturgy. They are still recited by some confraternities to tell the story of the Passion (*saetas cuarteras* in Puente Genil) and are sung polyphonically in Murcia. There is no record of individually sung *saetas* before the mid-nineteenth century, in fact. The *saeta flamenca* follows the beat of *martinetes* (*tonás*), *siguiriyas* and, very occasionally, *mala-gueñas*.

The gypsies who began to reach Spain about the mid-fifteenth century encountered an atmosphere of incipient hostility to all minorities, a dramatic emotional climate not alien to their own temperament. Such strange and curiously gifted people who disdained conventional tasks were bound to arouse the suspicions of the forthright inhabitants. Doubts as to the sincerity of the conversions of the Jews had already given rise to persecution and it was at about this time that the statutes of *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood) were issued. But the gypsies also found themselves on the threshold of Renaissance Spain, the Spain of Erasmus. As an ancient race, they must have felt instinctively attuned to the type of world they encountered in Andalusia yet they approached it with a fatalism that was unusually humanistic, as a look at their verses will show. The independence and resourcefulness bred of a nomadic life have made every gypsy aware that, come what may, his destiny is basically in his own hands. Unlike the *pícaro*, he has no illusion about outward reality.

During the sixteenth century, successive edicts were promul-

gated against the gypsies, Jews and Moriscos who failed to embrace the Catholic faith, but secular folk traditions survived more or less openly. The gypsies were made more welcome in Andalusia than elsewhere, being frequently protected by the nobility and arousing the interest of writers. They soon separated into the settled inhabitants of the towns and the vagrants who continued to roam the countryside as “strolling minstrels” and may be compared with those in Sacromonte in Granada to-day. Each town had its *gitaneria*, often the same as the *judería*, also inhabited by the Moriscos who lingered on or returned after the risings crushed in 1502 and 1568 and the decree banishing them altogether in 1610. According to some, Andalusian gypsies are a product of ethnic mingling, though it would be hard to say how extensive this was as neither gypsies nor Jews favoured racial integration.

Theories abound as to the meaning of the word flamenco, but offer little more than anecdotal interest. It could come from *felag enkum* or *felag mengu* traditionally thought to mean “Moorish song from the Alpujarra” and “runaway peasant” but possibly corruptions of another term. Again, it has been suggested that it refers to the gypsies’ showy dress, from *fl/llama*—*flamante*, or *llamativo*. The adoption of the term by the gypsies themselves could spring from flamenco as referring to those who had been in Flanders, or all foreigners, preferred to the more pejorative *gitano*. The Turkish *Atzigan*, however, derives directly from the Greek *Atbinganoi* meaning “those to be left alone,” related to a religious sect in Asia Minor, the Melchisedekites, but perhaps also a reference to a low Indian caste. This would fall into line with the linguistic research which has identified the gypsies as the peoples living on the right bank of the river Zind, who then travelled westwards in two directions, through central Europe and along the southern Mediterranean coast. The expression *jondo*, literally deep, indicates the grave yet passionate mood of certain flamenco styles.

As far as can be gathered from literature, folk music in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries resembled that of the rest of Spain and was of a cheerful communal character. Islamic additions to the Andalusian legacy tended to be effaced beside the ubiquitous *fandangos*, *jotas*, *seguidillas*; however, a vogue

subsisted for what seemed to be more specifically Moorish dances, such as the *zorongo* and the *zarabanda*. Whether courtly or folk, dances were composed of duets and solos with few rounds or group pieces. Otherwise ballads were sung, pastoral airs, love songs, lullabies... solos with choruses being more common in the north and east. But as all Spain had inherited something from the four centuries when Andalusia was the centre of learning, the family likeness is hardly surprising.

The "dynamic" division noted in flamenco between the supposed hill or agricultural songs and the styles along the Guadaquivir has been attributed to the persistence of isolated Andalusian and Morisco communities in lonely districts and the concentration of a variety of influences in the centres along the river. Once again the example of Sicily is helpful. The prison songs collected there were invariably richer and had evolved more rapidly than the old love songs and lullabies, often preserved in archaic form in areas where there was little contact. But whether in the country or the town, one suspects that the repertoire in Andalusia remained comparatively restricted. The "forging" of *cante jondo* was a slow process pursued through many years of hardship and oppression. Significantly the appearance of certain dynamic flamenco styles in the villages round Seville may be traced to the last persecution of all, the expulsion of the gypsies from Triana after a massacre in the early nineteenth century.

The strongest musical connections between Andalusia and Spanish America were established at an early date. Doubtless the long voyage across the Atlantic offered ample opportunity for beguiling the time with entertainment and the church took care of the rest. *Villancicos* have always been popular in America. They are said to descend in a straight line from the *Cantigas de Sancta Maria*, if not from the *muwassaba*, their vocal expressiveness being transmitted through the courtly and folk compositions of Francisco Guerrero and Alonso Mudarra. *Villancicos* based on *bulerías* are traditionally sung and danced by the gypsies at Christmas. The *romancero*, too, has given rise to interesting national developments such as the *corrido mexicano*, although this did not appear in its present form until the nineteenth century and differs considerably from the gypsy ballad, or *corrido*



*gitano*. In Cuba, the choral singing before the crosses erected on 3rd May, St. Helen's day, is almost identical with that still heard in Seville. The *pregones*, the cries of itinerant street vendors selling their wares, closely resemble *saetas*, whether recited or sung. Similar cries have been assimilated to a very high degree in flamenco in some *catiñas*: *mirabrás*, *coracoles*, and can really only be detected by the words.

The so-called *cantes de ida y vuelta* (to and fro), Spanish rhythms which went to America and returned in a modified form much later such as the *guajira*, a version of the *Punto de la Habana*, or the *milonga* from Argentina, failed to take proper root in flamenco and along with certain additions from Spanish regional music, like the Galician *farruca*, went to make up the lighter stage repertoire. *Jondo* styles seem to have had little or no impact in America.

A matter requiring exploration in depth is the African contribution on both sides of the Atlantic, but this is exceedingly hard to unravel from the tangled skein of influences. Certainly, in the mid-sixteenth century Seville was a large market for slaving licences, second only to Lisbon which maintained its supremacy until 1640. And throughout the protohistory of flamenco, Seville and Cadiz remained the great trading ports with the west. There were some 100,000 slaves in Spain up to the seventeenth century and many were black. To what extent they brought and cultivated music of their own is almost impossible to say. The black population in Cadiz at any rate was soon protected by the church and organized into confraternities. They sang *villancicos*. However, the Turks roving the Mediterranean at the same time also kept slaves, some of whom were from Central Europe and others gypsies...

The swinging rhythm permeating several flamenco styles remains but a hint, if compared with the rumba, brought from the Cuban theatre. The *rumba flamenca* is really the only example of an American rhythm which has been fully integrated without losing its distinctive character. As regards the tango, the complex rhythm and counter-rhythm and improvised melodic line characterizing the Andalusian version make its link with the Argentine tango appear very tenuous. The "American tango" Baron Davillier saw danced in Spain in 1862 was taken from a *zarzuela*

by Barbieri, which had been successful a few years earlier. While the Argentine tango seems to be basically African in origin, the Andalusian *tango*, widely considered as one of the sturdiest pillars of flamenco remains elusive. All one can say is that the feeling is overwhelmingly Spanish.

It is interesting to speculate on the likelihood of an early Andalusian epic transmitted through the *archuzas*, historical poems composed by the Arabs before the Caliphate, mingling with the *romancero* in subject-matter and reappearing for present purposes in the gypsy *corrido* or *corrida*, from *letras corridas* meaning a series of verses running on spontaneously without a refrain. More startling likenesses, however, can be discerned between the themes and versification of genuine flamenco and the Mozarabic *jarchyas* which came to light comparatively recently, although naturally it is impossible to establish the musical ascendancy with any confidence.

The origins of *cante jondo* have been sought in the *endechas* (dirges), or the official *plañideras*—*playeras* sung at funerals and wakes. Not so long ago it was still common for gypsies to dance during a vigil. Other sources have been inferred from classical poetry. The *tonús* are based on the octosyllabic quatrain of the *romance*, but sometimes slip into the alternating five and seven syllable lines of the *seguidilla castellana*. The *endecha*, typically a quatrain with three six syllable lines and an extended third line with eleven syllables, prefigures the *siguiriya*, although the first true *siguiriya gitana*, with a repetition of metre in the third line producing eleven or twelve syllables, has been attributed to Francisco de Yepes, the brother of St. John of the Cross, who lived between 1540-1607:

“En esta mi huerta  
una flor hallé,  
¡ oh, bien de mi alma!, ¡ oh, bien de mi vida!  
¿si la cogeré?”

The peculiar tristich of *soleares* has been associated with Galician folk poetry called *ruadas*. Strong parallels can nevertheless be drawn with the *jarchyas*. This time convincing examples occur in Cervantes:

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“Echada está la suerte;  
yo he de seguir mi camino,  
aunque me lleve a la muerte.”

*Soleares* usually consist of an octosyllabic line though occasionally nine syllables creep in. The *soleariya*, no different musically, has a shortened first line of five syllables. Of course much of the charm and the authenticity of the *coplas* derives from such metric irregularities. Sometimes, even a single line will suffice, if cleverly broken up and repeated, as in many *tangos* and *cantiñas*.

The “Dark Ages” mentioned above stretched from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-eighteenth century. The first record, however dubious, of a *cantaor*, was of Tio Luis el de la Juliana in Jerez in the late eighteenth century roundabout the time of the emancipation laws of Charles III. He probably sang *tonás* and ballads. *Toná* is the generic name given to all songs *a cappella* following a free melodic line and therefore includes *martinetes* and *carceleras*, the prison songs. Sometimes a kind of coda, of obvious liturgical character, is added:

“si eso no es verdad  
que Dios me mande la muerte  
si me la quiere mandar.”

An anecdote has it that, like *saetas*, *martinetes* were sung outside the prisons in *caló* (Spanish gypsy language) to send messages on their soaring melody, and not only by the prisoners themselves. According to tradition there were thirty-three *tonás*, the years of the life of Christ. The four or so that survive are archaic in character and closely resemble one another. The singing is usually *legato*, with frequent changes of key. repetitive but sober with few melismatic effects. Some titles indicate a heroic or descriptive manner. It seems unlikely that the spirit of the others was any different although conceivably there may have been less doleful pieces.

The gypsy ballad has a pattern similar to that of the *toná*, but cannot strictly be regarded as flamenco owing to its marked narrative character. Ballads are often sung at weddings to the rhythm of *soleares*. They may have been influenced metrically

by the *alboreá*, the gypsy wedding song and dance, a kind of *villancico* verging on *bulerías*, a style presumed to derive from the *soleá*. However, the taboos of different sorts surrounding all the ritual songs have made their execution frequently faulty. Superstition often prevents performance on profane occasions, which doubtless accounts for their relative stagnation. *Saetas*, in particular, are now deliberately encouraged by contests.

The most dramatic and serious of the songs in the existing repertoire and the most suited to elevated feeling is the *siguiriya*. It is now generally accepted that it grew out of a *toná*, acquiring a complex rhythm with twelve beats in a *compás* (measure): 1 3 5 8 11 12, and three beats to each note in the cadence, to a closely interwoven guitar accompaniment.

It also obeys certain conventions found elsewhere in the Mediterranean, (in Campania, for example, where there is a similar relation between prison songs and funeral laments) notably breaking up the declamation according to accent, often dividing a word into two musical phrases. Within that structure and despite the convention the melodic line remains free.

This brings to mind Bela Bartok's remarks on Bulgarian and Rumanian folk music. Bartok regarded complex rhythms such as 5/8 and 7/2 as natural. Now, if some *tonás* be stylization of Spanish folk songs, as alleged, the work of the gypsies would have been twofold, first to discard the commonplace duple and triple time Bartok deplored in Western Europe, restoring a natural *parlando rubato*, then to move on to reviving their ancestral dynamic rhythms. In other words the "archaism" of the *tonás* is artificial. The theory of a stylization is not really plausible, but with an oral tradition nothing is ever final. Totally different connotations may sometimes be called up merely by playing tunes faster or slower. At all events the idea gives interesting insight into the actual process of "*aflamencamiento*" and shows that the primary conditions are asymmetry and recitative.

Some of the earliest *siguiriya* appear to be just two *tonás* put together (Paco La Luz). Gradually, the sad coda became a vigorous *cabaletta* (called *macho*, designed to give an assertive rather than virtuosic flourish to the ending. The *siguiriya cambiada* or *cambio de siguiriyas*, sung in a different key after a series, indicates a switch to another passage or to another song altogether. Some

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of these *cambios* were so powerful that they soon became songs in their own right. *Cabales*, a *cambio* attributed to Silverio, an Andalusian who went to America and whose flair for business led him to open a *Café Cantante* of his own has a distinctive lilt that is unmistakable.

*Soleares* are deceptively simple, yet the style is the most complete of all, its lyrical vein welcoming almost every mood. Like *tangos*, *soleares* appear to have been associated originally with a dance. The rise of the *Café Cantante* and the greater social acceptance of the gypsies led to the assimilation of the *cantiñas* (including *alegrías*) and *fandangos* from the Cadiz hinterland, relieving the tension of *cante jondo*. With the growing popularity of the melancholy nostalgic *malagueñas*, *granáinas* and Levante songs, also a form of *fandango*, the genres might almost have been divided into *seria* and *bufla*.

There have been various intuitive attempts to classify the styles along these lines: *cante chico*—*cante grande*, recalling the *género chico* of the zarzuela, more recently *cante gitano*—*cante gitano-andaluz*. The last distinction puts its finger on the aforementioned difference in flexibility between the styles of east and west. The “gypsy” styles are Protean, leaving room for improvisation within a given framework without betraying the spirit or altering the beat. The songs stemming from Andalusian folk song, compositions for the stage, and one or two independent pieces with a fixed melodic line offer few opportunities for invention beyond the purely expressive. Yet some great artists have succeeded in leaving their stamp on these styles too. On the whole, non-gypsy singers tend to be more at home in the tuneful songs requiring less personal commitment. The miners’ songs are a case in point. Of the many labourers recruited to work the mines in La Unión in Levante, few came from Lower Andalusia and the local *fandango*, *tarantas* and *cartageneras* were enriched variously from the noble complaint to what might be termed the first genuine protest in the history of flamenco, following the mutinies raging in 1898 and 1916.

Early flamenco was almost always without *son*, i.e. tapping on the table or the floor or marking the beat with a stick, as *martinetes* are still sung—or should be—to-day. Guitar accompaniment to the serious styles was introduced with the creation of

fuller versions, perhaps as a counterpart to the increasing professional participation in the festive genres: appreciative exclamations (*jaleo*), clapping (*palmas*), snapping fingers (*pitos*) and, to some dances, castanets. The custom of singing *pa'alante* (at the front of the stage) and *pa'atrás* (at the back to a dance) with the according stylistic modifications may well be an old gypsy tradition. The equivalent of *cantes para escuchar* (to be listened to) and *cantes para bailar* (to be danced) is found in Hungary in the slow gypsy songs (*ballgató*) and the quick dance songs, in which the text, when there is one, is broken down into unintelligible syllables and often lost entirely. Hungarian gypsies imitate the instrumental accompaniment themselves.

Structure, whether song, dance or guitar solo, consists of three parts, *tercios*, often repeated and not necessarily corresponding to a strophe. Each *tercio* may begin with an *ay* or *quejío* (complaint), in the melancholy songs, or by a lively, virile entry in others. Each *ay* has meaning: initially, to allow the singer to warm up, *templarse*, medially more often than not as a reference back to the beginning or else to herald a transition and finally to produce an aesthetically and emotionally satisfying conclusion. Other vocal artifices include grace notes *vibratos*, *melisma* and so on. The chief feature is the break, or catch, in the voice, the *jipío*, a histrionic utterance symbolizing human striving, despondency, hope. The golden rule is that everything must be organic, never pure embellishment. A good artist achieves an approximation between the practised lament and the cry from the heart.

Dancing is regarded by many and not only by tourists as one of the major attractions of flamenco, yet the technical polish indispensable for public performance has made it the accessory rather than the core of the art. Mediaeval religious ceremonies and processions readily mixed folk and art forms, and dancing of this type survives to-day in the *Seises* performed by the cathedral choir boys in Seville during Holy Week, at Corpus Christi and the Assumption of the Virgin. *Sevillanas* are now danced from house to house at the *Cruces de Mayo* on 3rd May. Even in Sacromonte, children invariably pick up the remnants of "gypsy" dances from someone once connected with the theatre. Admittedly on special occasions or unexpectedly at a fair, late at night, something of the confidentiality and immediacy of flamenco

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singing may be achieved, but it is the exception rather than the rule.

When reflected in dancing, terms such as *chico* and *grande* take on slightly different overtones. It would be hard to call the danced version of *alegrías*, *verdiales* or even *sevillanas* “*chico*.” The graceful overtones have an innate classicism which lends unsuspected stature to the music. The most satisfying definition applied to dances so far, beyond the generic *gitano*—*gitano-andaluz*, is threefold: *jondo*, castanet (*palillos*) and mixed stage dancing. The *jondo* dances stand out from the rest in their sobriety: economy of movement, expression concentrated in the arms and the hands or, in *zapateado*, in quivering from the waist downwards. They are rarely set out beforehand and the figures depend solely on certain rules of form and the *compá*. They are individual and personal, barely needing even the reminder of the guitar, as if the dancer were holding a private conversation with himself, hearkening only to his *taconeo* (heel-beats), the total opposite of the expansive, carefree castanet dances. Sometimes, too much reliance on the inspiration of the moment can give the impression of a lack of purpose, but the need to sustain the drama avoids the danger of narcissistic invention.

On the whole, the *jondo* dances we know reached their present state somewhat later than the songs, the most recent of all being Antonio's stage version of *martinetes*. Both Cervantes and Quevedo mention the *zapateado* but it did not come to the fore until it was popularized in the nineteenth century by two of the earliest professional dancers, el Raspaó and Miracielos. The *soleá* was introduced in the Golden Age by La Mejorana, the mother of the great Pastora Imperio, who died two years ago. The *siguriya* was first danced in the twentieth century by Vicente Escudero, a gypsy from Castile.

The castanet dances, frequently duets, form part of the Andalusian heritage. They correspond to the songs of the same name, and offer little or no opportunity for innovation.

Despite its late appearance, the guitar made a swift recovery with the opportunities for experimentation granted by the success of the *Cafés Cantantes*. Lorca said that the guitar had constructed *cante jondo*. In some *siguriyas* and *soleares*, there is indeed a kind of symbiosis, as if each artist knew beforehand what the

other would do, as in Indian music, each dependent on the paramount significance of the words. The *tercios* are marked by *rasgueos* at the beginning and end of the improvisations and the *paseo*, giving the tonality or leit-motif that will prompt the singer. At another level, their chords bring the rhythm of the guitar and the counter-rhythm of the *palmas* into unison with the melodic line. The *falsetas* provide dreamy interludes or lyrical developments, depending on the style.

It may be more exact to speak of a *toque gitano* than a *toque jondo*. The nervous playing common to the gypsies is extremely hard to put into words but one might say that utmost attention is given to "finish." Their style might almost be described as parsimonious, with expressive silences and resonance in the lower register. A loquacious guitarist will ruin many an effect.

Solo guitar playing has little to do with flamenco proper and in many respects may be considered as having moved farther away than stage dancing. This type of performance attenuates the need for unconditional commitment and unity, but on the other hand helps to bring out the sheer beauty of the themes. The experiments of some of the great guitarists have been extremely fruitful. The future will depend on how far they can carry their resources without arriving at something hybrid and devoid of meaning. Ideally, the guitar should succeed in rendering innermost chords. But it should not lose the quality of a comment on life. One wonders. Perhaps one should consider why, in folk music, voice is so often superseded by instrumentation. The evolution of the tradition may rest with the solo guitar even so.

What, then, actually makes up the art of flamenco? Why does one convince where another fails? Why is gypsy performance almost invariably more meaningful than that of a non-gypsy, no matter how remarkable? The technical precepts are common to all. Apparently Ziryab showed singers how to force their voices. Certainly, in flamenco, the vocal chords must be "taut." If the voice is "placed" as in concert singing, the character of the piece will be lost. Quality of voice, too, is appreciated in a different way. For a long time the type of voice regarded as ideal was husky, *afillá*, called after a legendary singer, El Fillo, so much so that it was often cultivated with alcohol. The passages opened with an impetuous attack, *rajo*, tearing voice and soul



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as it were. Oriental overtones are achieved—unwittingly—by a deliberate failure to produce a round note and by *glissandi* creating shades finer than the microtones of the guitar. The treble or falsetto voice was considered as totally unsuitable until the advent of an unusually gifted Andalusian, Don Antonio Chacón, who overcame the difficulty, enriching and transforming many of what up to then had seemed sweet or insipid styles and introducing versions and creations of his own. His natural good taste prevented him from venturing too often into certain *jondo* styles. The real revolution, however, came with the interpretations of Manuel Torre, who used the natural, or chest, voice which gave an exalted feeling to the song. Women's voices tend to be ringing and musical, *fácil*, like that of La Paquera de Jerez, but Pastora Pavón, who was a kind of Maria Callas of flamenco, known as La Niña de los Peines on account of the beautiful combs she wore, had a rich velvety voice, called *redonda*, the flamenco voice *par excellence*.

Art and authenticity depend on the singer's "composition" of *tercios*, *melisma* and *jipios*, his ability for singing *por derecho* sustaining the mood despite changes of key, and his degree of identification with the words. This, combined with a faculty for improvisation, which is the mark of the true artist, should produce the thrill called *duende*, a state close to the Arab *tárab* or the Indian *bhaav*, exciting the imagination, but in a secular world. It may be just a brief flash effecting a tiny detail, but it must be one that will carry him to ever greater heights. When his inspiration is particularly felicitous, it would be no exaggeration to say that he has achieved a form of catharsis, another rendering of the human predicament. That is why many singers are more moving in old age.

After the symbolical figure of Tio Luis and the general enfranchisement, opportunities for contact and exchange were suddenly precipitated by the Napoleonic wars. More and more names were recorded after 1800 and by 1842 when the first *Café Cantante* opened, flamenco had become a recognized feature of Andalusia. It was at this time, too, that Seville resumed its intensive musical life as a centre for opera and ballet. Spain, on the tide of romanticism, attracted many travellers and gypsy themes, as elsewhere in Europe, were eagerly adopted by composers and

producers. A portrait of the dancer, Petra Cámara, famous for her *jaleos* and *cachuchas*, by Chassériau, now hangs in the art gallery in Budapest. However, there seems little foundation for the view that *bel canto* influenced the development of flamenco. The most one can say is that certain vocal mannerisms recall baroque opera, which would appear to have its source in church music, as would *villancicos*. The real secrets of the art remained in the hands of a few gypsy families until the beginnings of the "Golden Age" in 1860.

The gypsies were naturally attracted by the *Café Cantante*, which offered a *modus vivendi* suiting their self-reliance and reluctance to apply themselves to anything beyond their traditional crafts... This was also a period of considerable aesthetic intermingling. The gypsies adapted strains from Andalusian folk music and the *payos*, non-gypsies, entered the fray as professionals, often gypsifying their styles. It seems to have been a kind of blissful moment when there was no artistic enmity. Countless refinements were introduced and often totally new songs were created hence the many variants of a basic type called after their initiators. Given the existing labyrinth of flamenco styles one can only wonder how many more were lost. Oral traditions handed down by memory are bound to be conservative, above all in structure and beat and the oldest songs are frequently the most beautiful, the less beautiful or accomplished having been weeded out by natural selection in the course of time. This does not mean that new songs are mediocre, of course, but it is fair to say that mediocre songs are often new.

The words followed a similar evolution. On the whole "gypsy" themes tend to be realistic, sagacious rather than philosophical, humorous and occasionally gruesome or malicious. Constant improvisation encouraged many topical allusions, as short-lived as the music. Owing to their precarious existence, the gypsies of Lower Andalusia had preserved many of the characteristics of nomadic life: easy adaptation to circumstances, an instinct for the right opportunity, a desire to please when deemed expedient and so on. The comparative security and regularity of café entertainment together with the need to appeal to a wider public naturally affected the mode of apprenticeship and removed the art from its social background. With the introduction of records

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at the end of the century, ornate or outwardly striking styles were given longer shrift.

The theatrical phase set in about 1913, marking a decadence that was to last until the end of the Second World War. Many mines closed down in 1919, which hastened the corruption of the styles in those areas. In 1922, Manuel de Falla and Federico García Lorca attempted to remedy matters by organizing the first *Concurso de Cante Jondo* in Granada. Their now generally acknowledged mistake was to exclude professionals and find themselves obliged to train the competitors beforehand, yielding to the romantic view that flamenco was the spontaneous creation of the folk. Shortly afterwards, however, contests of improvised singing and dancing between Seville and Cadiz were held in Alcalá, a village near Seville, to maintain the friendly rivalry between the two towns. The positive side of the venture at Granada was that it persuaded intellectuals at least to take the art seriously, although in the main the situation remained unaltered and was even aggravated by the spread of the *opera flamenca*. There were good artists to be found but they failed to be recognized by the general public. In other words, genuine flamenco returned to semi-clandestinity, being cultivated as before by specific gypsy groups. The prize-winners at Granada, Diego Bermudez (Tenazas), who walked 173 kms. to take part, and Manuel Ortega (Caracol), only 14 at the time, both belonged to old gypsy families.

Gypsies really only sing and dance for one another, or for *aficionados* they know and respect, and never give the best of themselves in public performance. Consequently, even in less glittering times, there is a fair chance that the art will survive as long as they do. In 1929, an American visitor to Spain reported:

“During the Holy Week I was in Seville, three of the best *cantaores* refused large sums to sing *saetas* from the balconies of clubs and private homes. With both the Gypsy and the Andalusian, singing is often a ceremony, an inner necessity, as well as a pleasure. Manuel Torre, the illiterate Gypsy, who lives in a street of the poor in Seville, will never exercise his art for money unless he is in the mood and unless he knows the listener is worthy. His song too is sacred.”

Signs of renewed interest appeared in quick succession in the fifties, with the first Concurso de Cante in Córdoba in 1956 (held every three years) the first anthology of records, *Hispavox*, in 1958, the founding of the Academy of Flamenco Studies in Jerez and the revelation of Antonio Fernandez Diaz, Fosforito, a *payo* who won all the major prizes at Córdoba. *Peñas*, clubs for *aficionados*, have been flowering steadily since and some villages even have two... Festivals are held all over Andalusia every summer, usually coinciding with a local fair and financed by the municipality. More and more programmes are organized on radio and television.

In the last few years some artists have attempted to use flamenco as a political instrument or for regional self-assertion, more recently still as a mouthpiece for organized social movements, all part of the spirit of the age. Certainly this adds to the general effervescence but, however strong one's sympathies, one cannot but be aware of the aesthetic discrepancy between form and content. There is a world of difference between the tragic sense of life inherent in all flamenco and the party line put forward nowadays. The elegiac resignation even of the miners' protest obeys an impulse more complex than circumstantial claims.

The present situation seems to be one of unprecedented enthusiasm combined with a singular lack of creativeness in the Golden Age sense of the word. The Festivals serve to keep up the spirit of emulation but when public funds are at stake large audiences are inevitable and connoisseurs tend to stay at home. The rich or reckless *aficionado* willing to spend vast sums on an evening with artists of his choice has not disappeared entirely, nor has the artist prepared to ruin health and hope singing all night long in an atmosphere of smoke and alcohol just because the moment is right, like Fernando Terremoto who died three months ago, one of the finest *jondo* voices ever. For the ordinary person, however, there are very few chances of experiencing the real thing.

Without the gypsies "in the triangle" formed by Cadiz, Ronda and Seville with Jerez at the centre, there would have been no flamenco. But it is equally certain that the gypsies alone were not enough. As Antonio Mairena said, "*el cante, el baile y el toque nacen de un ambiente.*" "If the soil is good and the

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fertilizer is right, the seed will flower." In his view, the fertilizer is the gypsy contribution, a view which is unfortunately often resented.

Flamenco has everything to gain from being appreciated on its own ground yet genuine artists tend to be overlooked in a search for something that is largely imaginary. As Mairena said, people will persist in combing Andalusia, shining their torches under stones and behind bushes, trying to find *cante*. *Duende* is not something that is tangible or can be learned with a method. It is not accessible to all. Basically it is a form of communication of which many may never become aware, rather like Picasso's "I don't look, I find."

It may be thinking too far ahead to say that flamenco will have to withdraw once more with the "purists" if it is to protect its vitality as an art. At the 9th Flamenco Congress in Almería in September 1981, it was agreed that a renewal of some sort was necessary to avoid the twin threats of academicism and commercialization. Whether or not the tradition can be handed on to a more creative generation and more discriminating audiences will depend very much on the gypsies' ability to preserve their integrity, as they have in the past probably more than any other people.

There is a dangerous drift away from "making music" yet records will never replace learning from the master. Records also create false expectations. An anecdote tells how Antonio Mairena would listen to Juan Talega for hours then beat his head against the floor if he could not get it right, whereas José Menese, a *payo* who has taken up the cause of the people, no longer feels free to sing in his own village. Both soil and fertilizer are becoming contaminated at a time when modern conditions have made many young people look to flamenco as embodying something they feel has been lost, a spontaneous lyrical alternative to the anonymity of life in a mass age.

Sadly, perhaps, one has to admit that flamenco is no more gypsy than it is Indian Jewish or Arab. Even its antiquity is in doubt. As a cultural phenomenon it is Andalusian, but one which the gypsies have made their own, which they have put together in an inimitable way with inimitable intensity of feeling. Manuel Torre said that everything that had *sonidos negros* (black sounds)

had *duende*. The black sounds were black sorrows—*penas negras*.  
For those who can hear them they will always be there.

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