

Flamenco

I. Flamenco is the music of the Andalusian gypsies in southern Spain. The earliest forms of cante flamenco (flamenco song) can be traced back to the cities of Cadiz, Ronda, Seville, and Jerez de la Frontera during the 18th century. Camarón de la Isla (1950 – 1992) was one of the greatest flamenco singers of the 20th century.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sobbzaIa4_E&feature=youtu.be

II. Flamenco evolved from a mixture of Byzantine, Arab, Jewish and Gypsy cultures in Andalucía. Also, the Moors, who dominated Spain for nearly 800 years, greatly impacted the music of the South.

A. This video from Morocco is a good example of Moorish music. You can see the relationship to flamenco, particularly in the vocal styling, if you compare it to the video of Camaron de la Isla. Moorish music includes elements from the Middle East, North Africa, and native Iberia.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nM06ug9w2Ug&feature=youtu.be>

B. The Andalusian region has been an ethno-cultural melting pot since the 8th century. It is therefore very hard to isolate the many different influences on flamenco music. Nonetheless, along with the Moors, the Jewish culture left a distinct and lasting impact on the music of southern Spain. This clip features Sephardic music from the Jewish communities of Spain.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQeI_raD0YA&feature=youtu.be

C. Along with Moorish and Jewish influences, elements of western European culture impacted Flamenco. One of the greatest European contributions was the classical guitar. Spanish composer Fernando Sor's work is highlighted in this video. Sor (1778-1839) is considered the consummate master of classical Spanish guitar.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0k52eRNEoH0&feature=youtu.be>

III. Now let's focus on the basic form of flamenco. The three primary components of flamenco are Cante (song), Baile (dance), and Toque (guitar). The earliest form of gypsy Andalusian flamenco was merely the cantaor (singer) who often provided only his own rhythmic accompaniment.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MuDajqtr8Bk&feature=youtu.be>

A. Cante (song) is central to traditional gypsy flamenco. Guitar and dance are used to embellish the song.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LgQLayZxgtg&feature=youtu.be>

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1. Flamenco began in the late 1700's.....a time of misery in the Andalusian region, especially for gypsies.
2. Cante jondo (deep song) is the very core of Flamenco. In this early form of song, the cantaor both interprets the original text and also adds a few verses to communicate his own story of suffering.
3. Cante jondo is the foundation for many other styles of flamenco.
4. Another form of Flamenco song is cante chico (light song) which came into prominence during "La Edad de Oro" (The Golden Age – 1869 to 1910). The fast paced bulerias is only one of many different forms of cante chico and is often accompanied with dancing.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xDoGJUj3OfQ&feature=youtu.b>

a) *The Golden Age (1869-1910) represents a time of improved living standards and a growing audience for Flamenco performers as café cantantes (offering food with flamenco) began to emerge within the region.*

b) *It was a time of great creativity and competition amongst artists and performers. Many new forms of cante were added to the Andalusian gypsy repertoire.*

B. We now move on to the second primary component of flamenco, baile (dance).

1. Baile must convey the soul and power of flamenco. To do this, the dancer must have a good amount of emotional maturity. Most flamenco dancers reach their prime while in their thirties. Many continue to perform well into their fifties and some into their sixties. Notice how the singer provides direction for the dancer in the featured clip.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cfl0RnbAE2Y&feature=youtu.be>

2. As with cante, there are several different styles of baile. The dancer does not work from a completely choreographed set but instead includes their individual elements so that it becomes their own personal dance, depending on what they wish to express during the performance.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O6md9uNfiYE&feature=youtu.be>

C. The third primary component of Flamenco is the Toque (guitar). The guitar began to accompany cante during the early 19th Century and later as a solo concert instrument. Flamenco guitar playing is world renowned for its technical brilliance and virtuosity.

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1. Sabicas (1912-1990) was a complete master of solo flamenco guitar and greatly contributed to its worldwide popularity.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f2VROY01EAg&feature=youtu.be>
2. Paco de Lucia (1947 -) is considered the greatest flamenco guitarist alive. Although heavily steeped in the flamenco tradition, he enjoys exploring other genres as well. From 1968 to 1977, Paco de Lucia recorded 10 albums with legendary singer Camarón de la Isla (featured earlier). <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ogjWQtSFMg&feature=youtu.be>
3. This video features Paco Pena (Cordoba, 1942 -) who became professor of flamenco guitar at the Rotterdam Conservatory in 1985. He is a leading exponent of traditional flamenco guitar. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-f6aZmTUEnk&feature=youtu.be>
 - a) *Bulerias uses a rhythmic structure (compas) of 12 beats (notated either in 3/4 or 3/8) and is often used to accompany faster-pace dance.*
 - b) *In Bulerias, beats 3, 6, 8, 10, and 12 of the cycle are accented.*
4. Tomatito (1958 -) was surrounded by music at an early age and is the nephew of the legendary tacaor Nino Miguel. At age 16 he began working with Camaron de La Isla. In this video Tomatito performs a musical form called Rondena, with its slow (and varied) tempo. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-nGwF4BFUc&feature=youtu.be>

IV. Next we move on to one of the secondary components of Flamenco, percussion.

A. Palmas (hand clapping) provides an organic pulse and rhythmic anchor to the song and is oftentimes performed in groups of two or even three. One person claps the main pulse while the other(s) inserts various counter-rhythms.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBYkJmNMbJ0&feature=youtu.be>

1. Albeit a minor component, hand clapping was present throughout many of the videos featured this month.
2. Playing in unison (sounding as though one) takes a good amount of practice and skill.

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B. Additional percussive elements include pitos (finger snapping), taconeo (heel tapping), and zapateado (heel and foot stamping). In this video Carmen Amaya employs all three elements.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FCca6d2ceI0&feature=youtu.be>

V. I would like to finish with this performance by Enrique Morente (1942-2010).....one of the most innovative cantaoers of the 20th century.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wj2rv5UJJ_0&feature=youtu.be