

‘Desplante Flamenco’: A Study to Better Understand Its Meaning in Flamenco Dance

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There are different definitions of the term ‘Desplante’ in relation to flamenco dance. In this study, we will delve deeper into this concept to understand its meaning in dance and to better interpret it. We will also explore its origins, which will lead us to reflect on what flamenco dance truly is and what influences it has received.

Keywords: ‘Desplante’ in Flamenco; Flamenco; Resilience and Resistance; Empowerment of the Flamenco Dancers; Bullfighting and Flamenco.

Existen diferentes definiciones de la voz *desplante* aplicada al baile flamenco. En este estudio trataremos de profundizar en este concepto, para conocer cuál es su significado en el baile y poder interpretarlo mejor. Indagaremos a la vez en su origen, lo que nos llevará a reflexionar sobre lo que es realmente el baile flamenco y qué influencias ha recibido.

Palabras clave: Desplante flamenco; flamenco; resiliencia y resistencia; empoderamiento del bailaor/a; toreo y flamenco.

1. Introduction to ‘Desplante’ in Flamenco Dance

To better understand what ‘Desplante Flamenco’ is we need to find different definitions and analyze them. Different dancers and teachers give us definitions of ‘Desplante’ that might be confusing when we try to learn what it is and what it means. ‘Desplante Flamenco’ is a moment of the Flamenco dance with which a section closes, or it is used as a finishing touch to other steps, which is very typical of the aesthetics of Flamenco dance. It corresponds to the guitar with the simple strums that go at the end of the melody. It is done by hitting the foot hard against the ground (‘golpe’). Another characteristic element of ‘Desplante Flamenco’ is the rudeness. It is the haughty gesture that the dancer directs to the audience at the end of some moment of the performance and that usually draws applause from the spectators. To better understand ‘Desplante Flamenco’, we need to understand where it comes from and what Flamenco dance is.

1.1 Flamenco Is Erotically Charged

‘Desplante’ is part of Flamenco dance. When defining Flamenco dance, we need to have in mind all the different meanings Flamenco can have. One of the meanings is that it is sexually charged, as some author suggests.

Malefyt (1998) explains about the sexual qualities in flamenco, and how erotically charged and gendered this form of art can be:

The guitar is often compared to a woman’s body and guitarists are always men, sparking many jokes, and much mild lewdness. Even castanets played in the right and left hands,

are distinguished as male or female (right female, left male mine): the 'male' castanet is recognized for the ever-so-subtle but evident 'protrusion' at its base. These sexual qualities in flamenco (although mentioned only in brief here) add to the strong gender divisions already present in Andalusian society, and make flamenco a charged, but relevant subject in which to explore issues of gender and local/national identity. Flamenco, like many dance forms, is drenched in eroticism (pp. 64-65).

It is clear then that flamenco is erotically charged and that the students learning flamenco moves, especially the females, need to be able to communicate those erotically charged meanings and metaphors with their body movements (Figure 1). 'Desplantes flamencos' can be done by male and female dancers.



Figure 1. Drawing by Ashley Siles (2015)

On the other hand, castanets or 'palillos' as we know them are percussion instruments used in 'Bolera' School dances, Flamenco dance, and 'Danza Estilizada' (Spanish Classical dance). They are also used in several Spanish folkloric dances. The dictionary by Blas Vega and Ríos Ruiz (1988) says the following about 'palillos':

Hay un momento importante para las castañuelas andaluzas: cuando a finales del XVIII, Andalucía crea escuela propia de baile refundiendo y afinando los bailes populares españoles que estaban en uso. Y con los bailes vino también la transformación del toque de castañuelas. Se rompe con el sonido monótono y simple producido por el sacudir de la muñeca y se crea



otra técnica. Cambia la posición del cordón que se coloca en el dedo índice¹ mientras los otros cuatro quedan libres para pulsar la castañuela, de esa forma se obtiene una sonoridad muy rica que no había tenido antes. Tanta importancia tiene esta transformación que a la nueva escuela se la bautiza con el nombre de Bailes de Palillos. A partir de aquí comienza el verdadero auge de las castañuelas, se perfecciona su construcción dando un tono diferente a cada una de la pareja. La izquierda con un tono grave hace de acompañamiento, la de la mano derecha con un sonido agudo, hace las escalas y representa con su repiqueteo a la melodía. Se les asigna un nombre de acuerdo con el sonido: macho y hembra, respectivamente (p. 168)².

1.2 What Is ‘Desplante’ in ‘Toreo’ (Bullfighting)?

‘Desplante’ in bullfighting is a defiant attitude of the matador towards the bull, generally at the end of the bullfight (Figure 2). The spectacular aspect of this attitude almost always deserves applause. However, it is only justified at the end of the task, when the bull is clearly dominated.



Figure 2. ‘Desplante’ by Juan José Padilla

On the Tauroarte website, we find a definition taken from José Silva Aramburu’s *Enciclopedia taurina* (Bullfighting Encyclopedia) —first published in 1961—, according to which a ‘Desplante’ is “un adorno dentro de las actuaciones del torero, con aire de reto o desafío, bien en pie o de

¹There is a typo in the original text and it should be ‘dedo pulgar’ (thumb) where the cord of the castanets is placed.

²“There was a pivotal moment in the history of Andalusian castanets: at the end of the 18th century, Andalusia established its own school of dance, refining and blending the popular Spanish dances already in use. Along with the dances came a transformation in castanet playing. The monotonous, simple sound produced by wrist shaking was abandoned, and a new technique was developed. The position of the cord, now placed on the index finger while the other four fingers remained free to pluck the castanet, was changed, resulting in a richer sound unlike anything seen before. This transformation was so significant that the new school was named ‘Bailes de Palillos’ (Stick Dances). From this point onward, the castanets truly flourished. Their construction was perfected, giving each castanet a distinct tone. The left castanet, with its low pitch, provided accompaniment, while the right castanet, with its high pitch, played scales and represented the melody with its tapping. They were given names according to their sounds: ‘macho’ (male) and ‘hembra’ (female), respectively”. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.

rodillas”³. It can be an “acto lleno de arrogancia con el toro”⁴, but also “desabrimiento y descaro con el público”⁵.

■ 1.3 Examples of ‘Desplantes’ in Bullfighting

In this section, you can find several examples of ‘Desplantes’ in bullfighting (Figures 3, 4, 5 and 6). Most of these are positions you can find in Flamenco dance as well, as bullfighting influences Flamenco steps and movements. These photos are meant to help understand how ‘Desplantes’ look in bullfighting and allow students of flamenco see the influence bullfighting has on Flamenco. At the same time, Flamenco influences bullfighting.



Figure 3. Postcard of bullfighter El Litri, doing a ‘Desplante’ on his knees and with his back to the bull

■ 1.4 What Is ‘Desplante’ in Flamenco Dance?

The dictionary by Gamboa and Núñez (2007) defines the ‘Desplante’ in Flamenco as “paso de baile” (dance step). He adds:

Uno de tantos términos que compartimos con la tauromaquia. Si en tal disciplina es desplante, ese gesto altivo, lo hace el torero frente al a la cara del toro, en el flamenco lo hace el bailaor o bailaora ante el público al rematar algún momento de su actuación. El abuso de desplantes es una de las actitudes más criticadas por los antiguos frente a la nueva escuela de baile flamenco, muy proclive a la realización de continuos desplantes a fin de arrancar cuantos más aplausos mejor (p. 198-199)⁶.

³“An embellishment in the bullfighter’s performance, with an air of defiance or challenge, either standing or kneeling”.

⁴“Act full of arrogance toward the bull”.

⁵“Disdain and insolence toward the audience”.

⁶“One of the many terms we share with bullfighting. If in that discipline it is a ‘Desplante’, that haughty gesture, made by the bullfighter facing the bull, in flamenco it is made by the dancer before the audience at the end of a moment in their performance. The overuse of ‘Desplantes’ is one of the attitudes most criticized by the older generation against the new school of flamenco dance, which is very prone to performing continuous ‘Desplantes’ to elicit as much applause as possible”.



Figure 4. ‘Desplante’ by José María Manzanares in the plaza of Alicante



Figure 5. ‘Desplante’ by Padilla in the plaza of Pamplona

Another definition we can find of ‘Desplante’ in Flamenco is given by Martínez de la Peña (1969), and she explains the following:

Se denomina desplante a una serie de golpes fuertes del pie, dados contra el suelo sin ningún refinamiento ni matiz, lo que, refiriéndose a las danzas primitivas, se denomina pateo, pero que en flamenco recibe este nombre especial. Su fin es descarga motriz; la expresión más primitiva de desahogo físico. Este estilo, sin duda alguna, corresponde a las primeras manifestaciones de danza que existen. Se encuentra en las culturas prehistóricas y también en las danzas de primitivos actuales, negros, australianos, etc.; pero mientras que en las culturas menos desarrolladas se observa este pateo en forma monótona y continua, el flamenco lo



Figure 6. 'Desplante' by El Fandi

emplea solamente como remate de otros pasos. El desplante pone fin de forma violenta a la serenidad de un punteado o al virtuosismo de un zapateado. De una forma más amplia, los desplantes sirven también como remate a una parte completa del baile. El desplante se corresponde en la guitarra con los rasgueados sencillos que van al final de la melodía (p. 56)⁷.

While researching about 'Desplante' online, I found a page where people left different definitions of 'Desplante' in the Foro Flamenco chat. Here are some of those definitions:

- 'Desplante' is, in 'baile flamenco', a means of rounding off a series of 'escobillas', or of signaling the end of a 'falseta', where the body displays an expression of arrogance or acrimony (Andrea Pirela, Venezuela).
- 'Desplante' is a sudden movement of the body which is not guided by the harmony of the sequence—quite the opposite; it makes a definitive break, catching the body itself and the audience by surprise (Lucero, Mexico).
- The 'Desplante' is a break in the dance that begins with a pre-arranged step, to signal to the guitarist that the dancer's improvisational sequence will follow. The 'Desplante' gives way fully to the dancer's inspiration, imagination and creativity before returning to the set rhythm (Tova, Rumanía).

In these definitions, 'Desplante' has different meanings. It maybe confusing and unclear when we try to explain what a 'Desplante' is in Flamenco. It is especially hard for Flamenco dance students who try to learn what it means so they can dance or perform a 'Desplante'.

⁷“The term 'Desplante' refers to a series of forceful, unrestrained foot strikes against the ground, which, in primitive dances, are called 'pateo,' but in flamenco, they have this specific name. Their purpose is a release of energy, the most primal expression of physical catharsis. This style undoubtedly corresponds to the earliest forms of dance. It is found in prehistoric cultures and in the dances of contemporary indigenous groups, such as Africans and Australians; but while in less developed cultures this footwork is observed in a monotonous and continuous manner, flamenco uses it only as a finishing touch to other steps. The 'Desplante' abruptly ends the serenity of a gentle foot tap step or the virtuosity of a footwork. More broadly, 'Desplantes' also serve as the finale to an entire section of the dance. 'Desplante' corresponds in the guitar to the simple strumming that goes at the end of the melody possible”.



1.5 Dancing ‘Desplantes’ in Flamenco: Steps that Are ‘Desplantes’ in Flamenco

In this section you can find some specific ‘Desplantes Flamencos’ to help you understand what ‘Desplantes’ look like:

- ‘Vuelta de tacón por detrás’⁸ (Sara Martin Flamenco, 2020).
- ‘Desplante por delante con chaflán’⁹ (Guillermina de Bedoya, 2021).
- ‘Golpe con resbalado (chaflán) hacia el lado con unos pasos, para ir a cada lado’¹⁰ (Guillermina de Bedoya, 2022a).
- ‘Desplante alternativo básico por tangos’¹¹ (Flamenco Dance Lessons, 2016).
- ‘Desplantes en la Escuela Bolera’¹² (Guillermina de Bedoya, 2023b).

2. Connections between Flamenco & ‘Toreo’ (Bullfighting)

The closeness between flamenco dancing and bullfighting is evident in the gestures and movements of the body, the twists of the waist (‘quiebros’) and movement of the arms. In this case, the similarity between the elegance and attitude of the bullfighter and the presence of the dancer is evident. At the same time, in bullfighting you can find analogies regarding the timing of interpretations, for example, in the natural pass that can be assimilated to a ‘Soleá’ or a ‘Seguiriya’, or the manoleínas to the ‘Saeta’. It is also worth highlighting the similarities that can be observed, for example, between the lighting costumes and the clothing of the flamenco dancers. As for language, starting with the use of the word ‘Olé!’ with which both the bullfighter and the flamenco artist are highlighted and encouraged; and continuing with numerous other words used in both areas, such as rudeness, temper, cheers, etc.

2.1 Origin of Bullfight

Raúl Mata (2023, January 1) wrote an interesting article explaining the origin of bullfights. History places the first documented bullfight in the year 1128 (12th century), at the wedding of Alfonso VII of Castile (son of Urraca I of León) and Berenguela of Barcelona. It took place in the town of Saldaña (Palencia, Spain). The chronicle of the time included: “when Alfonso VII married Doña Berenguela the girl, daughter of the Count of Barcelona, in Saldaña, among other functions, there were also bullfighting festivals”.

Furthermore, the history of bull rituals dates back to the Bronze Age. In ancient cultures, the bull was an important symbol as an identifying element of rites and animal sacrifices whose purpose was to promote the strength of warriors or the fertility of livestock. Its use was also frequent in offerings, funeral ceremonies or rituals of passage. Of these ancient traditions there are vestiges from cultures such as Indo-Iranian, Mesopotamian, Egyptian and European, among all of them those referring to the Iberian Peninsula are relevant due to their direct relationship with bullfighting traditions that led to bullfighting, or cultural traditions which were later taken to other countries, such as Portugal, France, Mexico, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela or Ecuador.

⁸Back turn using the heel to turn, similar to ‘La Verónica’ or ‘Media Verónica’ in Bullfighting.

⁹Forward ‘Desplante’ with a slide.

¹⁰Hit with the whole foot with a slide (‘chaflán’) moving to the side and with some added steps. This step makes you move from side to side.

¹¹Alternate Basic Tangos ‘Desplante’.

¹²‘Desplante’ in The Bolera School.



Figure 7. ‘Desplante Flamenco’ (photo by Tarumán Corrales)

Already at the beginning of the Middle Ages, documented testimonies regarding bullfighting indicate that festivals and bull games were already established in the Iberian Peninsula from ancient rituals with bulls in which different ways of outwitting the cattle were practiced, and which were taken with a festive and playful air. Francisco Romero was the first bullfighter in the 18th century.

■ 2.2 The Connection between Gypsies & Bullfighting

The documentary “Gitanos en la arena”¹³ talks about all the ‘toreros gitanos’ who existed in Spain in the 19th century, and their art as bullfighters.

The first Gypsy bullfighter known was José Ulloa. He started bullfighting in 1802. He killed his wife and had to flee justice and became a thief (‘bandolero’) and joined the band of ‘Los Siete Niños de Écija’ (‘bandoleros’ who were active between 1814-1818). Bullfights then were already a consolidated spectacle that attracted lots of people.

■ 2.3 List of Famous and Well-Known ‘Toreros Gitanos’ (Roma Bullfighters)

Bullfighting was part of the life of Spaniards in the south of Spain. How did some bullfighting movements influence Flamenco dance? The answer is that many Gypsies who lived in Spain

¹³Aired on April 29, 2023 as part of the program *Toreo en blanco y negro* (Bullfighting in Black and White), a bullfighting documentary series that uses archival footage to explore the history of bullfighting in the 20th century (*Toreo en blanco y negro*, 2023).



were also bullfighters. Gypsies who were bullfighters were: José Ulloa, Manuel Díaz Labi (or Lavi), Fernando ‘El Gallo’, Rafael Gómez Ortega — ‘Gallito’, ‘el Gallo’ or ‘el Divino Calvo’—, his brothers Fernando y José Gómez Ortega, Rafael Ortega Gómez ‘Gallito’, Joaquín Rodríguez Ortega ‘Cagancho’, Francisco Vega de los Reyes ‘Curro Puya’ —also known as ‘Gitanillo de Triana’—, Rafael Albaicín, Vicente Fernández el Caracol, Manuel Amador, Sebastián Cortés, Rafael Soto Moreno ‘Rafael de Paula’. As we can see, bullfighting was part of Gypsies lives as much as of Spaniards lives, as they had assimilated into the Andalusian culture of the south of Spain. It is then understandable that some moves used in bullfighting and on the arena were used in Flamenco dance as well. The connection is clear.

■ 2.4 Definition of Flamenco by RAE Dictionary

To better understand what the word ‘Desplante’ means, we need to understand what ‘Flamenco’ means and its different connotations, here are some definitions found in the RAE Dictionary.

4. adj. Dicho de una manifestación cultural, o de su intérprete: De carácter popular andaluz, y vinculado a menudo con el pueblo gitano. *Cante, bailaor flamenco*. Apl. a pers., u. t. c. s. *Un flamenco de voz desgarrada*¹⁴.
5. adj. Perteneciente o relativo al flamenco (|| dialecto). *Léxico flamenco*¹⁵.
6. adj. coloq. Chulo, insolente. *Ponerse flamenco*¹⁶.
7. adj. coloq. Dicho de una persona: De aspecto robusto y rozagante¹⁷.

■ 2.5 Movements and Steps with Meaning in ‘Flamenco’ Dance and Influence of Bullfighting and Other Spanish Popular Dances

Flamenco dance, bullfighting, and Spanish folkloric dances share many movements, including ‘Desplantes’. Some movements done in ‘toreo’ (bullfighting) can be seen in Flamenco dance and in some folkloric dances. ‘Desplantes’ can also be found in ‘Toreo,’ in Spanish folkloric dances, and in Flamenco dance.

One of the movements in ‘Toreo’ is ‘La Verónica,’ which in bullfighting is a specific movement bullfighter do when they fight the bull, and in Flamenco, there is a turn from behind with a heel, imitating the bullfighters in the pass of ‘La Verónica.’ Here you can find an example of ‘Media Verónica’ in Bullfighting (Soy de Moral, 2014).

‘Braceo’ and ‘marcajes’ (arm movements) in Flamenco are also found in Andalusian folklore and other Spanish folkloric dances such as ‘Sevillanas’, ‘Jotas Aragonesas’ (Jotas from Aragón and Navarra), and the Fandango.

‘Sevillanas’ are not Flamenco, but there is arm movements like in Flamenco. It is a folkloric dance from Seville and both types of dances feed each other.

The mixture of the 18th century ‘Bolera’ School (‘La Escuela Bolera’) and Flamenco create the Stylized Dance (‘Danza Estilizada’ or Spanish Classical Dance). These schools plus the folkloric dances of Spain (Andalusia) convey aspects of Spanish culture. Classical ballet arm movements, Flamenco arm movements, stylized arm movements, or Aragonese ‘Jota’ arm movements are very similar, and in all these dances we can find movements that are ‘Desplantes’ as well.

¹⁴Said of a cultural manifestation, or its interpreter: Of a popular Andalusian character, and often linked to the gypsy people. *Singing, flamenco dancer*. Applied to people, it is also used as a noun. *A flamenco singer with a heart-wrenching voice*.

¹⁵Relative to flamenco (|| dialect). *Flamenco lexicon*.

¹⁶Cocky, insolent. *To become flamenco*.

¹⁷Said of a person: A robust person.

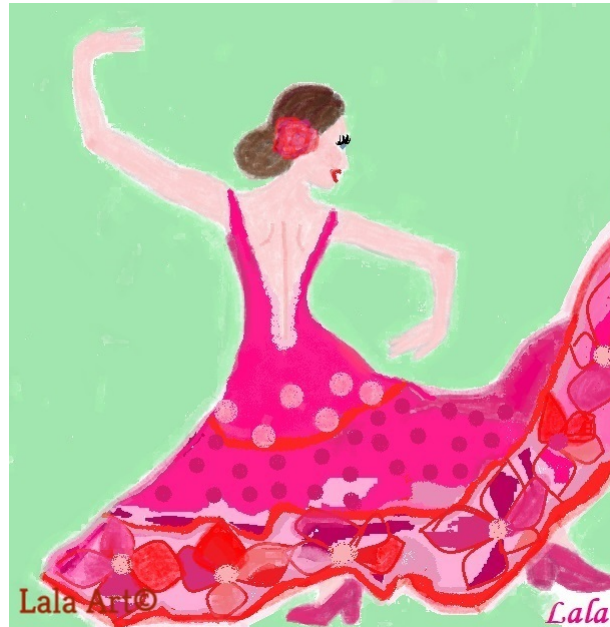


Figure 8. *Flamenca 5* by Lala (Digital Painting, LalaArtC, April 2022)

Some ‘Sevillanas’ steps, ‘Alegría’ steps, and ‘Jota’ steps have similarities and connections. Here you can see an example of how these different Spanish dances influenced each other (click on the link):

- ‘Sevillanas’ steps (AndaluciaTube, 2013).
- ‘Fandango’ steps (Pepa Molina, 2019).
- ‘Jota’ steps (YouMoreTv-Cultura, 2006).

3. Flamenco Is Influenced by Spanish Folkloric Dances and Viceversa: The Fandango

The Fandango started out as a folkloric dance in Spain and later became a ‘Palo Flamenco.’ It is considered the most primitive ‘Palo Flamenco,’ and we can find ‘Desplantes’ in the Fandango. The first recorded example of a Fandango in musical writing dates from 1705 (Flamenco Horizon, 2006).

According to the *Diccionario de autoridades* of 1732, by then the Fandango in Spain was a “dance introduced by those who have been in the kingdoms of the Indies”, that is, it is understood that its origin is Hispanic American and not peninsular Spanish (Horizonte Flamenco (2006); Rocío García Sánchez, 2017). In general, the Arab origin of the traditional Fandango is admitted, due to its similarity with the Arab-Andalusian dance and the Mozarabic ‘jarchas.’ Later it spread and acclimatized to the other Spanish regions, thus acquiring its own profiles. In this way, the Moorish Fandango was transformed into ‘Jotas, Muñeiras, Alboradas,’ etc.

On the other hand, the *Diccionario de autoridades* of the Royal Spanish Academy, from 1732, assigns an American influence on the Fandango, which is done with a very happy and festive sound. There is news of the Fandango Flamenco around 1870, and it is supposed to have been



born in Andalusia from the mixture of the folkloric or traditional Fandango, to which we have previously referred, with the Flamenco ‘cantes’ that were performed in Andalusia at that time. The Andalusian environment at the end of the 19th century, which coincides with the birth and proliferation of the ‘Cafés Cantantes’, was the ideal setting for Andalusia to create its own Fandango, the Fandango Flamenco. As stated on the Horizonte Flamenco website¹⁸,

El fandango es uno de los estilos fundamentales del flamenco, no sólo por lo que el propio fandango como estilo representa, sino porque ha sido tronco del árbol, cuyas ramas constituyen otros cantes que han fijado personalidad dentro marco del cante flamenco, como son la malagueña, granaína, taranta, minera..., que, con base en el flamenco, se constituyeron en estilos propios. La copla del fandango flamenco consta de cuatro o cinco versos octosílabos, que en ocasiones se convierten en seis por repetición de uno de ellos¹⁹.

Professional dancer, and Flamenco dance teacher Sara Martín explains about the origin of the Fandangos: “It is believed that in Andalusia in the 18th century, the fandangos were part of the festivities. They were danceable and played in a minor key, but there was no ‘cante’. They are different from the ‘Fandangos Flamencos’. Now they have ‘cante’ and they are played in a major key”²⁰.

José Francisco Ortega (2015) wrote a study about the Fandango, where it might have come from, and which other dances might have influenced it during the early 18th century in his article, “Manuel Martí, Déan de Alicante, ¿un testimonio sobre el fandango de comienzos del siglo XVIII?”. Ortega explains that Manuel Martí, dean of Alicante, describes in a letter written in 1712 a dance that he watched in Cadiz (south of Spain). Though he did not mention it as this dance, Martí’s description is believed to be the earliest testimony of the Fandango. Ortega studies what the dean of Alicante wrote, and we learn that two other dances are compared to the Fandango, as they looked very similar to Martí. Those dances were ‘Chica,’ and ‘Calenda’. We also learn that in 1789, in an article about dance, the dance ‘Chica’ was no other dance than the Fandango, but less developed. ‘Chica’ and ‘Calenda’ are also compared to the “dishonest zarabanda” by Father Juan de Mariana (1536-1623). He also compares these two dances to an older dance related to the ‘puellae gaditanae’.

A similar idea can be read in Carlo Blasis’ treaty of dance, although Ortega believes he is translating Moreau de Saint-Méry. Blasis (1797-1878) was the principal dancer in the King’s Theater, and he was also a composer of ballets. He wrote that America was not the only country influenced by African dances, as there was influence of the Moors. He mentions the Fandango, which for him is the same as the ‘Chica’ under a more decent form.

Martí considered these dances dishonest and quite shameful. Other dances related to the Fandango, which could have been the dance Martí saw in Cadiz as he does not name it, were dances that arrived in Spain from the Africans during the 15th century. These dances were, ‘Zarabanda’, ‘Chacona’ and ‘Zarambeque’. Ortega Castejón believes the dance Martí saw might have been any of these, as Martí did not name the dance fandango in his description of the dance. Ortega’s study is very interesting, and it adds important information about when the Fandango might have first been danced in Spain.

¹⁸See <https://www.horizonteflamenco.com/el-fandango-1>.

¹⁹“The Fandango is one of the fundamental styles of Flamenco, not only because of what the Fandango itself represents as a style, but also because it has been the trunk of the tree, whose branches constitute other songs that have set their personality within the framework of Flamenco singing, such as the ‘Malagueña’, ‘Granaína’, ‘Taranta’, ‘Minera’..., which, based on Flamenco, formed their own styles. The Fandango Flamenco ‘copla’ consists of four or five octosyllabic verses, which sometimes become six by repeating one of them”.

²⁰In Sara Martín Escuela de Flamenco, *Fandangos de Huelva* (Introduction), Private Online Course, 2022.

■ 3.1 'Fandangos de Huelva' (Fandangos from Huelva)

The Fandango is a characteristic musical form of Spanish folklore. The Fandango from Huelva is a song that has undergone a process of flamencoization when acclimatizing to a specific area, which corresponds to the province of Huelva. It is a Flamenco style today ('Palo Flamenco').

Recent studies speak of 32 styles of 'Fandangos de Huelva' spread over 9 locations: Almonaster la Real, Alosno, Cabezas Rubias, Calañas, Encinasola, El Cerro del Andévalo, Huelva, Santa Bárbara de Casas, Valverde del Camino.

■ 3.2 Other Early Fandangos We Can Find

The Fandango in *The Marriage of Figaro* (1786) by Mozart is an early Fandango. The Fandango in this Opera is in the Finale of the Opera which has 5 parts. The third part is the Fandango, and it was considered an indecent dance at the time (García Sánchez, 2017). Mozart's Fandango was based on Christoph W. Von Gluck's Fandango in the Ballet *Don Juan* (1761)²¹.

García Sánchez (2017) explains that the Fandango was of Spanish origin. *Don Juan, or the Stone Guest's Banquet* is a ballet with a libretto by Ranieri di Calzabigi, music by Christoph Willibald von Gluck, and choreography by Gasparo Angiolini. The ballet's first performance was in Vienna, Austria in 1761. The ballet *Don Juan* was based on Molière's *Don Juan* (*Don Juan ou le Festin de Pierre*) of 1665.

■ 3.3 Fandango and Its Meanings in the 18th Century

In Gluck's ballet, it is important to mention the function the Fandango has. It appears in a sequence of four dances. It is the last dance, and it is very different in nature, as the other dances were French courtly dances (García Sánchez, 2017). The Fandango is charged with sensuality and is performed during a very dramatic moment in the ballet.

Wolfgang A. Mozart's Fandango in *The Wedding of Figaro* (1786) had to overcome many obstacles to become an Opera. The Emperor had forbidden the performance of the play *The Wedding of Figaro* by Beaumarchais (1778). Mozart's Opera was based on this play. Beaumarchais visited Madrid and became familiarized with the Spanish Fandango there.

Fandango was the dance everybody was dancing in Spain, and he considered it vicious, carnal, lustful, obscene, provocative, and danced with violent moves at times. The dance showed a new way of moving the body and the hands. Beaumarchais included musical pieces in his play which came directly from Spain. Beaumarchais wrote the Figaro Trilogy: *The Barber of Seville* (1775), *The Marriage of Figaro* (1778), and *The Guilty Mother* (1792).

In Mozart's Opera (1786), Lorenzo Da Ponte wrote the libretto secretly. The Fandango was Mozart's idea as indications of the Fandango only appeared in the music and not the libretto.

To include a Fandango in the Opera would be another obstacle to overcome. They had to convince the Emperor, Joseph II. The Finale had 5 parts. The third part was the Fandango. Once the Emperor saw the Fandango scene, he wanted to have it included in the Opera. The Fandango would be performed several times in Vienna before it was cut from the Opera.

The Fandango could be considered a symbol of the Egalitarian Philosophy of the Enlightenment Period. Da Ponte and Mozart portray class struggles in their Opera. These struggles were represented by the court dances and the popular dance. The Fandango represented the triumph of reason and equality between men (García Sánchez, 2017).

²¹On Ricardo Enrique's channel you can see the Fandango included in Gluck's *Don Juan* in a recording made in November 2006 at the Royal Opera House of Versailles (Ricardo Enrique, 2016).



Figure 9. “Fandango” by Pierre Chasselat (1753-1814)

In Spain, the Fandango was danced by countesses and maids. In Vienna, the Fandango represented change coming and new values like equality, and it was an omen of the French Revolution.

■ 3.4 The Old Fandango as a Pre-Flamenco Form

In the podcast “El fandango antiguo como forma preflamenca”, Álvaro de La Fuente presents very interesting information about the old Fandango as a pre-flamenco form. He explains that parts of the old Fandango are included in the new Fandango, and it is a way of keeping the old Fandango that way²².

The Andalusian cadence is 4 notes that go down. The Flamenco interlude with an Andalusian cadence comes from the old Fandango. Today it is no longer used.

Fandango became popular in Andalusia in the 18th century. There is a hypothesis that it comes from America. It is defined as a ‘Dance of the Indies’ in the *Diccionario de autoridades*.

Álvaro de La Fuente explains that the 3 oldest Fandangos located in scores appear in 1705, one of them entitled “Fandango Indiano” (11’18”). There is talk of a possible Afro-American origin, like tango and rumba. Guillermo Castro points out that it must be taken into account that the ending ‘ango’ that appears in Fandango, and tango is believed to be of African or Afro-American origin. Exchange with Africa since immemorial time (11’51”).

Álvaro de La Fuente explains that in Latin America, Mexico and Venezuela, the term ‘Fandango’ is documented as early as the 17th century (12’05”). Antonio García de León, in the prologue to the book *Tablados y fandangos*, something from the stage dances in the ‘Son Jarocho’ by Claudia Cao Romero, explains that the word could derive from the ‘Bantu fanda’, which

²²See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CEJkj34fbU>.

means party. It was widely used in colonial times in New Spain from the beginning of the 17th century (12'22"). The first Fandangos written for strings and orchestra were written in Mexico at the end of the 17th century by Gaspar Fernández, Manuel de Zumaya, etc. (12'41"). From there he would go to Spain. This ancient Fandango acquired great importance in European music in the 18th century, serving as an inspiration to several composers. As García Sánchez (2017) also explains, we find it in the Ballet *Don Juan* by the musician Gluck, which Mozart himself borrowed for *The Marriage of Figaro* (Opera bufa).

Also, the Neapolitan Doménico Scarlatti composed a Fandango for harpsichord. He arrived in Spain in 1729, staying in Seville until 1733 and then moved to Madrid in 1757 until his death in 1805) (16'10"). One of the most famous Fandangos was composed by Luigi Boccherini, who died in the Madrid neighborhood of Lavapiés and knew how to capture pre-Flamenco.

Lastly, Álvaro de La Fuente highlights the Fandango by Father Soler y Ramos, late-Baroque composer and musicologist (20'46").

4. 'Jota' from Aragón and Navarra and the Connection to Andalusia

In this section we will talk about the origins of the 'Jota', as explained by Javier Barreiro²³.

The 'Jota' is the most widespread traditional music genre in Spain. Javier Barreiro explains on his website that musically, it is a ternary rhythm of a binary grouping and with a fast air that, in the different places where it is practiced, has diversified incorporating other elements of its own and that usually supports an octosyllabic quatrain, that is a stanza of four lines, or a quatrain, where each line consists of eight syllables. According to Barreiro, Gregorio García Arista extensively documents 'sotar' from the Latin 'saltare' (to dance), which is the most commonly accepted. Ribera relates it to the Arabic 'xatha' (dance), which Corominas shares. With its current form it appears in a manuscript from Ávila in the transition from the 16th to the 17th century, Figures for harp, and it is recorded again in 1705 and on different occasions during the 18th century.

Regarding its origins as a musical genre, Javier Barreiro mentions different experts on this topic. He explains that José Inzenga and Rafael Mitjana derive it from a Greek dance. Ruperto Ruiz de Velasco speaks of a Celtic or Gothic dance. Abundantly it has been written about its Arab origin, ardently defended in the theories of Julián Ribera and Eduardo Martínez Torner, which Demetrio Galán Bergua has already put into question. Manzano affirms that in no way can the 'Jota' be of Arab origin as soon as the context of Spanish popular music is known, for which reason he concludes that the theories of the scholars are untenable. For Tomás Bretón, who also emphatically rejected its Arab origin, the 'Jota' was modern: "if [it] is not a variation and consequence of the Fandango, it must come from Italy, from The Carnival of Venice, which has the same shape as the 'Jota'".

Federico Olmeda and Felipe Pedrell also considered the so-called Aragonese 'Jota' to be of recent creation, in relation to that cultivated in other parts of the Iberian Peninsula.

Barreiro explains that the 'Jota' is sound (music and, later, lyrics) and dance. When we talk about the origins of the 'Jota' regarding the dance, we can even go back to the apotropaic dances (warriors, medicinal...) of prehistoric times. Ricardo del Arco spoke of a probable connection with Iberian dances, apparently warlike and jumping, but it seems more plausible if it is a matter of giving the dance of the 'Jota' archaic origins, relating it to tarantula dances, widespread in the Mediterranean and that in principle they constituted a kind of magical-religious exorcism

²³See <https://javierbarreiro.wordpress.com/2016/12/16/origenes-de-la-jota-aragonesa/>.



Figure 10. ‘Jota aragonesa’ (photo by LordFerguson)

against the bite of said arachnid, and this is verified by the great researcher Marius Schneider in his magnificent work, until now that has just been reissued, almost unfindable, *La danza de espadas y la tarantella* (The Dance of Swords and the Tarantella), published in Barcelona (Spain) in 1948.

Regarding music, experts tell us that the ‘Jota’ is characterized by its particular rhythm: grouping under the same meter of two united periods (two 3×8 bars), which leads to the scores being written in 6×8 but the Aragonese ‘Jota’ is written in 3×4 and with a faster rhythm.

We have music and dance called ‘Jota’ in the 18th century. One of the oldest mentions corresponds to the so-called Codex Saldívar IV. This important document was bought by the musicologist Gabriel Saldívar y Silva (1909-1983) from an antiques dealer in León (Guanajato) in 1943. It contains compositions by Madrid-born Santiago de Murcia (1673-1739), the most international guitarist of the Spanish Baroque. He probably did not travel to America, but his works were performed there. The codex is dated approximately in 1732 and contains ‘Gallardas’, ‘Jácaras’, ‘Folías’, ‘Marionas’, ‘Canarios’, ‘Fandangos’, ‘Jotas’, ‘Tarantelas’, and other popular music. Editions of it have been made and many of its compositions have been performed. Musicologists continue to investigate and discuss its contents.

Starting in 1750, abundant ‘Jotas’ appear in *Farces*, *Hors d’oeuvres*, *Zarzuelas*, *Tonadillas* and other popular plays, so much to the taste of the public. Several of them contain a refrain in which the genre is named, “a la jota, jota...”. The blind musician, Luis Misón, is often referred to as the first author to introduce ‘Jotas’ in his ‘sainetes’ and, specifically, his work *Los ciegos* (tonadilla a tres, 1758) is cited. Barreiro found another earlier ‘Jota’ in *La residencia del chiste*, an original farce by Antonio Guerrero, premiered in 1757.

Barreiro believes it is very possible that others can be found, even earlier. He explains that Luis Misón in *La cocinera* (tonadilla a cinco, 1760) includes one that begins: “This is the new ‘Jota’ of Andalusia, the muleteers sing it wonderfully, a marolí marolí, my marolita”. For Barreiro, the world of the ‘Tonadilla’, well studied by José Subirá, nevertheless houses endless data and

suggestions for the study of Spanish popular music.

Barreiro explains that the polygraph from Zaragoza Cosme Blasco quotes on page 29 of his *Memoirs of Zaragoza* (1890) the Coplerillo from Zaragoza blasco-cosme-memorias-de-zaragoza (1783) by Vicente Fernández y Alagón, Count of Sástago, and reproduces one of the old couplets which contains: “Three streets of Zaragoza / are ruinous and quarrelsome, / Las Doncellas, Santa Bárbara / and Calabaceras”. Apparently, apart from Don Cosme, no one known to have seen this couplet, according to J. L. Melero in his work (2016) on old couplets. Barreiro concludes that there is, therefore, no evidence that these couplets or songs were ‘Jotas’. The same can be said of the *Cuaderno de rondones* compiled by Francisco Gibert and dated in Lleida (21-VII-1799). It contains a ‘Jota’ with a ‘bandurria’ accompaniment, which Ana Iguarbe recorded and appears in the book-album *Siempre la jota*.



Figure 11. Gustave Doré, ‘La jota aragonesa’ (*Le Tour Du Monde*, Paris, 1867)

■ 4.1 More About ‘Jota Aragonesa’

The ‘Jota’ is a traditional dance and song widespread throughout much of Spain. Its style varies depending on the region, there being, for example, the Aragon ‘Jota’, the Castilian ‘Jota’, the Manchega ‘Jota’, the León ‘Jota’, the Valencia ‘Jota’, the Mallorca ‘Jota’, the Navarra ‘Jota’, the La Rioja ‘Jota’, the Mountain ‘Jota’ from Cantabria, from Asturias, from Galicia, from Extremadura, from Alta Andalucía, from Murcia, the ‘Jota’ from the Basque Country, the Catalan ‘Jota’, and even the Insular ‘Jota’ from the Canary Islands²⁴.

²⁴See the entry “Jota” on Wikipedia.



Understood as a stage representation, the ‘Jota’ is sung and danced to the accompaniment of castanets and the performers are usually dressed in regional costumes. In Valencia, in the past, the ‘Jota’ was danced in the burial ceremony. It was also danced, and is danced in Catalonia, and especially in the ‘Tierras del Ebro’ area (Amposta, Tortosa, etc.) and in ‘Campo de Tarragona’ (‘Jota Fogueada’). Also in the Canary Islands, the ‘Jotas’ and ‘Rondallas’ with peculiar characteristics were the most outstanding part of folklore, today somewhat displaced by the protection of other styles considered more autochthonous.

However, on the islands there is the ‘Isa’, a piece of music that derives from the ‘Jota’. In the Philippines, the Spanish religious transmitted the ‘Jota’ to the Tagalogs, who interpret it in ‘Rondallas’ and accompanied by native instruments. The varieties of ‘Jota’ de Aragón, La Rioja y Navarra are related to each other and form the so-called ‘Jotas del Ebro’, being one of the most characteristic of this genre.

■ 4.2 Two Jotas from Andalusia: Connections between ‘Jota’ and Flamenco

We can find certain connections between ‘Jota’ and Flamenco dance. You can check these two ‘Jota’ dances out “Jotilla de Villanueva de Córdoba” (*No-Do*, 1963) and “Jota serrana de Pozoblanco” (*No-Do*, 1972) in Solienses (2022).

Flamenco (primitive pre-flamenco Fandango, more modern Fandango, other ‘Palos’ in Flamenco) and folkloric dances like the jota feed each other and share many movements in their dances (arms, hands, castanets, foot work, and body posture). ‘Desplantes’ can also be found in folkloric dances.

■ 4.3 Origins of Flamenco Having in Mind the Music

David Bruce Composer looks at the huge range of influences that go into making Flamenco music in a short documentary, “The Mystery at the Heart of Flamenco” (2018)²⁵. In Flamenco we can find: The European “common practice” chord progressions, the Islamic scales, the music of Gypsies, the music of Berbers, and finally, the guitar itself. His explanations about the different musical progressions and Islamic scales we can find in Flamenco music are very interesting and show us that Flamenco has many different cultures in it. Even though we are uncertain of how Flamenco originated, we can certainly analyze Flamenco music and see all the influences from different countries and cultures.

5. Rebellion and Resistance through Flamenco Dance Steps: ‘Desplantes’ Used to Empower Flamenco Dancers

Flamenco used to express of the persecution of Gypsies and their misfortunes and miseries as Paco de Lucía used to say, according to Noelia Cortés.

Flamenco is filled with the artistic expressions of past live events and misfortunes of the Gypsies. They were not welcome anywhere in Spain, and surviving one day meant a big celebration for this community. Their ‘cante’, ‘baile’, and ‘toque’ (singing, dancing and music/playing the guitar) expresses all those unhappy events, as well as the happy ones. Their dancing and music are also a way of resilience, resistance, and rebellion as they survived one more day in hostile environments. A ‘Desplante’ done by a ‘gitano/a’ empowers him/her on stage as they are requesting to be recognized and applauded by the audience for the steps they just danced. We need to remember ‘gitanos’ were a marginalized group with no power, no home, and nobody who

²⁵You can check out his video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XYgTkW4WK80>.

would care for them. When they dance on a stage, they become the center element on that stage by being observed, and they become important. The stage becomes then a space where Flamenco dancers (male and female) can express emotions like sadness, justice, unfairness, misery, happiness, or anger, emotions they would not be able to express off stage. And their audience listens to them sing and sees them express their world through the Flamenco dance and the 'Palo' used. The stage empowers the Flamenco dancers as they become heard and seen.

■ 5.1 Bullfighting and the Origin of 'Desplante'

Flamenco and Toros influence each other. 'Toros' start in the 12th century in Spain (at a royal wedding). Gypsies arrived in Spain in the 15th century. They bring their Gypsy dances which mix with the Andalusian culture and folkloric dances in the south of Spain. Flamenco is officially created in the 19th century and commercialized in the 'Cafés cantantes'.

Romantic stereotypes in Europe admire the Spanish 'Torero' (Bullfighter) and 'La Flamenca/La Gitana' (female Gypsy). We find these stereotypes in music, literature, paintings, and dance, especially during the Romantic Period. The 'torero' as we know already does 'Desplantes' to the 'toro' (bull) while fighting and teasing it. Once some moves are done, he does a 'Desplante' to challenge the wild animal and show himself as a proud and brave fighter. These movements are also present in Flamenco dance, and we can say, Flamenco and bullfighting influence each other.

■ 5.2 Flamenco Influences Other Popular Dances and Viceversa

Flamenco is influenced by 'La Escuela Bolera' (The Bolera School), and by 'Danza Estilizada' (Spanish Classical Dance) during the 19th and 20th centuries. It is influenced by Spanish folkloric dances like Fandango, 'Seguidillas' and 'Jota Aragonesa'. It is influenced as well by Arabic and Sephardic Jewish culture and music, and by African dances performed by the slaves. One particular African dance is inspired by the traditional drum rhythms of Ghana. 'Kotoko Brass' has created a unique, joyful, and improvisational style of West African dance music described by the Boston Globe as "propulsive, infectious party music". Flamenco is also influenced by indigenous dances performed in America during the Colonial period ('Bailes de Ida y Vuelta', 'Zapateados').

On the other side, Flamenco is influenced by bullfighting and bullfighter's movements and attitudes like, clothes, 'Desplantes', movements, passion, and Andalusian culture and customs. Flamenco influenced 'La Escuela Bolera' (The Bolera School). We know dancers shared space in the 'Café Cantantes' during the 19th century and copied each other's steps and moves. Flamenco dancers, Bolera dancers, Spanish Classical Dance dancers, and Gypsies shared their dances, and their 'bailes gitanos' (Gypsy dances). Flamenco also influences Spanish folkloric dances with arm positions, foot movements, jumps, and some tapping steps.

■ 5.3 The Blackness of Flamenco

Meira Goldberg speaks about the blackness of Flamenco in an interview (Grau, 2018). This aspect of blackness is not talked about much in Flamenco even though there are many influences of the dances the African slaves used to dance in certain Flamenco steps. Examples of these movements in Flamenco dance are hip movements in Tango Flamenco, certain jumps with turns, the happiness for instance in a 'Bulería', or the improvisational moments in Flamenco. For Goldberg, the blackness of Flamenco is manifested in the "rhythmic richness, in the detail of a very rich musical system that in flamenco confuses the uninitiated because it is very difficult if you do not know it".



Figure 12. *Flamenca 8* by Lala (Digital Painting, LalaArtC, April 2022)

■ 5.4 Words Used in Flamenco that Have African Influence

we can find two words used in Flamenco dance which come from African languages, and which have influenced Flamenco, according to K. Meira Goldberg. The words are ‘Zapateta’ and ‘Gambeta.’

According to the RAE, it is called a ‘Zapateta’ the “golpe o palmada que se da en el pie o en el zapato, brincando al mismo tiempo en señal de regocijo”²⁶

Synonyms or cognates of ‘Zapateta’ (when dancing) are: caper, pirouette, braided; [hits on the floor] tap.

What is ‘Gambeta’? According to the RAE is an “movimiento especial que se hace con las piernas jugándolas y cruzándolas con aire”²⁷.

For Goldberg, the blackness in Flamenco is not just talking about African or African American roots in Flamenco. She refers to the conception we have of what race is, the difference between white and black. Those differences that arise from slavery, colonization, from the foundations of race that are represented throughout culture, in literature, and in dance as well. For Goldberg, the clearest elements of that blackness in Flamenco are “the lascivious, the transgressive, the noise understood as confusion and noise”. Goldberg also mentions Federico García Lorca and explains that he did not refer strictly to the Africanity in Flamenco, but to the alliance of cultures. Being from Granada, Lorca understands the black, the Jew, the Gypsy, the Moor and claims this non-purity of blood. Goldberg explains what is sinful in Flamenco and says that we find it in the ‘Zarabanda’, in the ‘Chaconne’, in the old Fandango with all those rhythmic structures

²⁶“Hit or slap given to the foot or shoe, jumping at the same time as a sign of joy”; see <https://dle.rae.es/zapateta?m=form>.

²⁷“Special movement that is done with the legs by playing them and crossing them with air”; see <https://dle.rae.es/gambeta?m=form>.

and their aesthetic and moral values.

Goldberg explains that Flamenco is dangerous because it is libidinous. That is why in the 19th century the 'Paso de Panaderos' was prohibited in Mexico. And hence the reference to Casanova being attributed to the fact that a man having danced a Fandango, the woman is already yours. For Goldberg, Flamenco was black after the battles of the Reconquest, since the Moor, the Jew, or the one who did not have clean blood was despised. All this perception of otherness goes back centuries. In Spain in the 15th and 16th centuries, many Afro-descendant people lived together. As the Empire declined, slavery declined. Gypsies, Moors and blacks coexisted. During the Great Roundup of 1749 against Gypsies, many preferred to register as blacks to avoid being deported. Goldberg also explains when Flamenco was Cuban in this interview. Cuba was the jewel of the Spanish Empire until the loss of the colonies in 1898, and Havana was just another Andalusian city. Habanera music is a global musical fashion and from there came the Cuban 'Rumba' and black 'Tangos'.

In the following links we can see examples of 'Pasos de Panaderos':

- Panaderos (Irene Blanco, 2020).
- Paso de panadero (Guillermina de Bedoya, 2023a).
- Pasadas y panaderos (Guillermina de Bedoya, 2022a).

■ 5.5 African Dances from the African Slaves Influenced Flamenco

Until now, the ethnic origin of the African slaves who were transported to America more than 300 years ago was unknown. According to an article published in *SINC* magazine (2015), the analysis of the complete genome of three individuals buried on the island of Saint Martin in the Caribbean in the 17th century, at a time marked by the slave trade between Africa and America, demonstrates that these slaves came from Bantu-speaking groups in northern Cameroon and from non-Bantu communities in Nigeria and Ghana.

■ 5.6 Two Dances That Possibly Influenced Flamenco Steps

The following two dances from Africa countries have connections to Flamenco (Kwehu Media África, 2021)):

- Dance number 1: 'Chicacha' Dance. Danced mainly by women and it consists of hip movements in circles. Flamenco dances have this movement as well (6'24").
- Dance number 2: Bantú ethnic group (Pokomo Tribe) from southeastern Kenya dances 'Kitoko dance' (notice the clapping and rapid dancing and turning of women, while they move their skirts. They also tap with one foot. This looks very similar to some dance steps in a Flamenco 'Bulería' (7'58").

■ 5.7 Examples of 'Bulerías' (Flamenco) and Connections with African Dance 'Kitoko' (Southeastern Kenya)

In the two links below, you can find 'Bailores Flamencos' dancing a 'Bulería', which appears to have connections with African Dance 'Kitoko':

- Fiesta Gitana (Pygmalion0314, 2011).
- Farruquito y familia (Gitanabarby, 2009).



Figure 13. Group of gypsy women dancing (photo by Torres Molina)

6. Flamenco Is Survival of the Gypsy People

Mar Gallego (2018) interviews Noelia Cortés — a Spanish writer and activist for the rights of the Gypsy people— in “Andalusia Would Not Be the Same Without the Gypsy People”. It is important to understand that even though Flamenco is the mix of Gypsy dances and Folkloric dances from the south of Spain, Gypsies bring their personal experiences to Flamenco dance. Gypsies did not have an easy life and each day they survived was celebrated. Noelia Cortés talks about some of these ideas and what flamenco means to her. She mentions Paco de Lucía:

As Paco de Lucía said: “flamenco is the music of an oppressed people like the gypsy, of a poor people like the Andalusian”. For me, it is the tool that gives voice to the helpless and transforms pain into something so beautiful that it ends up being a way to celebrate survival. I easily relate it to my life story because it tells the story of mine. I would also add those impoverished people that no one wants to include in their sphere, like the kinkis of the 80s, have you noticed? That generation of young people lost to heroin has as its soundtrack a large majority of Gypsies, everything they sing in the documentary *Los jóvenes del barrio* is flamenco. In the films of Eloy de la Iglesia, *De la Loma*, etc., the ones who sing are Los Chichos, Los Chunguitos, Lole and Manuel. There were Los Calis singing about the ruin caused by heroin... Flamenco is social, it cannot be understood as something that should sound good, period. It is deeply social, as much as a speech by Julio Anguita.

Flamenco is then the expression of important moments in life, emotions, miseries, and happy moments lived by the Gypsy people (‘Gitanos’). Flamenco talks about their social context, the socio-economic status of Gypsies, and the problems they need to endure and survive every day. Expressing their lives through ‘cante’, ‘toque’, and ‘baile’ allows this community to keep their sense of identity, and culture in a world that does not accept them for who they are.

7. Conclusion

To summarize main ideas presented in this study, we can say that Flamenco is filled with the artistic expressions of past live events and misfortunes of the Gypsies. Their ‘cante’, ‘baile,’ and ‘toque’ (singing, dancing and music/playing the guitar) expresses all those unhappy events, as well as the happy ones. Their dancing and music are also a means of resilience, resistance, and rebellion as they survived one more day in hostile environments.

As Goldberg explained, Flamenco is dangerous because it is libidinous. That is why in the 19th century the ‘Paso de Panaderos’ was prohibited in Mexico. We learned that for Goldberg, Flamenco was black after the battles of the Reconquest, since the Moor, the Jew, or the one who did not have clean blood was despised. In Spain in the 15th and 16th centuries, many Afro-descendant people lived together. As the Empire declined, slavery declined. Gypsies, Moors and blacks coexisted. During the Great Roundup of 1749 against Gypsies, many preferred to register as blacks to avoid being deported.

With the ideas Noelia Cortés we learned that Andalusia would not be what it is without the Gypsy people. It is important to understand that even though Flamenco is the mix of Gypsy dances and Folkloric dances from the south of Spain, Gypsies brought their personal experiences to Flamenco dance. Gypsies did not have an easy life and each day they survived was celebrated. For Cortés, Flamenco is the tool that gives voice to the helpless and transforms pain into something so beautiful that it ends up being a way to celebrate survival.

To conclude, we learned that a ‘Desplante’ done by a ‘Gitano/a’ empowers him or her on stage as they are requesting to be recognized and applauded by the audience for the steps they just danced. We need to remember ‘Gitanos’ were a marginalized group with no power, no home, and nobody who would care for them. When they dance on a stage, they become the center element on that stage by being observed, and they become important. The stage becomes then a space where Flamenco dancers (male and female) can express emotions like sadness, justice, unfairness, misery, happiness, or anger, emotions they would not be able to express off stage. And their audience listens to them sing and sees them express their world through the Flamenco dance and the ‘Palo’ used. The stage empowers the Flamenco dancers as they become heard and seen. As an example of empowerment of a Flamenco dancer (‘Bailaor’) on stage, while sharing the culture of the Gypsy people through the Flamenco dance, I am using the performance of the flamenco dancer Matías Campos (2023), from Granada (Spain). Campos communicates the suffering of the Gypsy people using the ‘Soleá’²⁸. Campos challenges his audience using many ‘Desplantes’ in his Flamenco dance. He is recognized and seen on stage while he shares the miseries and unhappiness of the Gypsy people through his Flamenco dance. There are constant ‘Desplantes’ and rudeness in his flamenco dance adhering to the School of Manolete (Granada, Spain)²⁹, and the audience can feel and see the sadness, solitude, loss, anger, and rebellion against the Status Quo in this choreography, in this ‘Soleá’ (Canal Andalucía Flamenco, 2023).

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²⁸In flamenco, ‘Soleá’ means “solitude” or “loneliness” and refers to a solemn, slow, and profoundly emotional style of flamenco music and dance. Considered the “mother” of flamenco, the ‘Soleá’ explores themes of sadness, loss, and introspection through its distinctive 12-beat rhythm and deep, heartfelt melodies.

²⁹It is believed that the School of Manolete was created by “moriscos, judíos y gitanos de Andalucía”, and it lived on through many generations of authentic Flamenco dynasties.



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