

JUAN SIDDI FLAMENCO THEATRE COMPANY

WWW.JUANSIDDIFLAMENCO.COM

Study Guide: Flamenco Dance, Music & Song of Spain

Program Overview

Flamenco is an interwoven, cultural artistic expression that originated in Andalusia, Spain. Students will learn about the history of this ethnic art form and will acquire new Spanish vocabulary while enjoying some of the company's exciting repertoires.

Program Description

The program begins with a short introduction about flamenco. Questions will be asked to students based on information from the study guide. The relationship between the *cante* (song), the *toque* (playing of the guitar) and the *baile* (dance) will be discussed. Depending upon the repertory performed, costumes and accessories will also be explained. For example, the use of *castanets*. Time will be allotted before the end of the program to review what was learned and to answer questions.

Program Objectives

- To learn about flamenco song, music and dance.
- To learn about the interrelationship between the song, music and dance in flamenco.
- To learn about the history of flamenco and the cultures that have influenced it.
- To acquire new Spanish vocabulary words as they relate to flamenco.

Vocabulary

JALEO - literal meaning: racket or uproar. Jaleo is the act of encouraging the dancers, musicians and singers in flamenco with enthusiastic expressions, usually with the shout of "Olé!"

PALMAS - literal meaning: the palms of the hands. The percussive sound produced by clapping the hands in a sharp and rhythmic manner. It is one of the most important factors in the rhythmic counterpoint of flamenco.

TACONEO or ZAPATEADO - literal meaning: heel stamping. Flamenco footwork consisting of sharp, strong rhythmic beats made by the dancer's feet, chiefly by stamping the toes and heels.

CASTANUELAS - literal meaning: castanets. An instrument consisting of a pair of concave shells joined on one edge by a string. These are held in the hand and used to produce clicks for rhythmic accents or a ripping or rattling sound consisting of a rapid series of clicks. They are traditionally made of hardwood.

CANTE - literal meaning: song. Cante is the word used to designate the song and singing in flamenco

TOQUE - literal meaning: tap. Toque is the word used to designate the playing of the guitar and other instruments in flamenco

BAILE - literal meaning: dance. Baile is the word to designate the dance in flamenco

BRAZEO - from the word Brazo, meaning arm. Brazeo is the use of the arms in flamenco dance

COMPAS - literal meaning: rhythm. Compas is the word to designate a specific rhythmical style in flamenco.

PALO - the term used to designate a flamenco style.

LETRA - literal meaning: lyrics. The poetic verses sung by the flamenco singer.

DUENDE - literal meaning: magic. The state of pure emotion flamenco artists experience when dancing, playing or singing.

Flamenco: A Short Introduction

The origins of flamenco can be traced back to the Middle Ages and the meeting and mixing of several musical traditions in Andalucia, the southern region of Spain controlled by Islamic suzerains for nearly eight hundred years. In Arab Andalucia, African and Arabic music developed along with the Spanish guitar and its rhythms. It was there that some groups of persecuted peoples—Romani, Greeks, Visigoths, Jews, Moors—from all over the medieval world, migrating through Europe and the Middle East from as far away as India, some fleeing the Spanish Inquisition, settled in southern Spain. It was there that these nomadic peoples, today known as gypsies, married their songs and dances of exile, despair, suffering, and also hope, with the ecstatic religious sounds of Andalucian music to produce flamenco whose essence is *duende*.

Duende's deep emotion is the ineffable mystery of life in art, song, music, and dance. The Spanish poet and playwright Federico Garcia Lorca once said about *duende*: “The great artists of Spain, whether Gypsy or flamenco, whether they sing, dance, or play, know that no emotion is possible unless the *duende* comes. All arts are capable of *duende*, but where it finds greatest range, naturally, is in music, dance, and spoken poetry, for these arts require a living body to interpret, being forms that are born, die, and open their contours against an exact presence.... It is truly deep, deeper than all the wells and seas in the world, much deeper than the present heart that creates it or the voice that sings it, because it is almost infinite.”

Some Examples of Palos

Tientos and Tangos: some of the oldest gypsy *cantes*, joyous songs which celebrate new beginnings.

Siguiriyas: the most gypsy *cantes*, are also the most profoundly emotional. The siguiriya releases pent-up feelings of heart-break, injustice, protest, defeat, liberty denied, misery, and despair. They also express love, tenderness, loyalty, and companionship.

Alegrias: The music, song and dance of the *alegrias* are lively and vivacious. *Alegrias* translates as gaiety and are performed as a celebration for weddings, births and other happy occasions.

Solea: the musical and poetic character of the solea is balanced, encompassing slow, intimate *cantes*.

Bulerias: the most festive and spontaneous of the flamenco styles.

Ideas for Pre-Presentation Activities

- Have students research where gypsies originated and the cross-cultural influences that affected the development of flamenco.
- Have students become familiar with the country of Spain and the customs of Andalucia, the birthplace of flamenco.

Interdisciplinary Curriculum Connections

Social Studies, Foreign Language, Arts