

# LEARNING ON STAGE

## LUCERO FLAMENCO PROGRAM

### Objective

The objective is to introduce the students to the art, culture and history of Spain using Flamenco dance and music as a vehicle. The bilingual presentation offers a unique way to excite and enrich the Spanish language curriculum.

### History and Culture

**Flamenco** music can trace its lineage at least as far back as the 15th. Century, when Moorish, Jewish, Indian, Christian, Byzantine and regional Spanish music blended into the regional art form of the Andalusian gypsies

**Gitanos** (in southern Spain). In its early days flamenco served as the private expression of a long-suffering outlawed people, but by the mid 19th century flamenco had emerged as an international cultural phenomenon.

The music, song and dance ranges from the mournful heart felt laments of **Seguiriyas**; the driving pulse pounding rhythms of the **Bulerias**; the lively, festive sound of the **Alegrias**.

Spain's history is as varied as the landscape and its people. The character of the people is analogous to the famous novels Don Quijote and Sancho Pansa by Cervantes, that being the romantic and the practical.

A long history shows how Spain was dominated by other cultures and governments, and in turn it has dominated other countries and cultures. From as early as the Romans and the Phoenicians, Cadiz was a famous city for commerce. Ships came to this port from all over the Mediterranean exchanging goods as well as music and culture.

The Moors conquered Spain and ruled most of its territory for 800 years leaving behind some of the greatest architecture and tourist sights which are still visited today. Their presence is also felt in the flamenco music of today through the use of the Frigian scale and some of the lamenting sounds used by the singers when they begin their songs. Even the Spanish guitar has its roots in the Arabian lute, or "oud".

Today Spain is most famous for having launched the discovery of the Americas. During Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand's reign (who sponsored the voyage of Christopher Columbus), Spain was the leading world power, its huge Spanish

Armada was rivaled only by the British Crown. Due to this historic fact Spanish is the dominant language spoken from Mexico to the tip of South America, with the exception of Brazil.

The new world gave to the old world riches and prosperity even down to our culinary tastes. Many foods which are known as Spanish or European, really came from the Americas. These include potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, corn, coffee and chocolate.

## **Music and Dance**

The Americas also enriched the flamenco's repertoire with songs coming from Cuba, Argentina and Columbia. Sometimes only the lyrics were adapted and other times the rhythms were adapted which are still utilized today. These are called guajira, rumba, columbiana and milonga. Spain's rich culture is shown through its variety of regions, each having its own song and dance, but the one that has become the most famous throughout the world is flamenco, which comes from the southernmost province of Andalusia.

The characteristics of flamenco are the passionate stamping of the heels, the rattling of the castanets, the ruffle of the female dancer's dresses, all accompanied by the sultry beat of the guitar and the rhythmic clapping of hands, known as "palmas". Spaniard guitarists like Andres Segovia, and Paco De Lucia, are responsible for bringing the guitar to the new level of artistry on the world stages.

Flamenco is divided into two main types: Cante Jondo and Cante Chico. Cante Jondo is made up of the deep profound songs and dances, the Chico being the happier and lyrical. Flamenco came in to its own "Cafe Cantandes" in Sevilla, starting in 1847.

There are many forms of flamenco music. Some are synonyms of names of cities, as Sevillana's from Sevilla, Fandango of Vuelva, Tangos of Malaga, etc.

Flamenco is the original fusion art form consisting of the local folk songs mixed with the Arabic, Jewish, Gregorian Chant, and finally sprinkled with the Gypsy's spirit, which gave its most fiery elements.

The rhythms are varied and very intrigued. The guitarist, the dancer, singer and the "palmeros" all have to work in unison to achieve the desired effect. Two of the oldest flamenco songs, are "Soleares" and "Siguirias", which have a meter of 12 counts to a measure. Other forms, like the tangos and the faruca, have 4 to 8 beats to a measure. Yet others are counted in 3's or 6's. We call this the "Compas". The "Aire" is the feeling we give to these rhythms.

## **Flamenco Elements**

**Compás** is the rhythm each flamenco style contains, with which the rhythmic tapping of cante, baile and toque is marked. There are different compases, that of twelve or three times four, which can be for soleá, bulerías, alegrías...; that of four, which is that of tientos, tangos...; and that of a combination, which can be for the siguriya or martinete. It is said that compás is the heartbeat of flamencos.

**Cante** (Song) – during its genesis, flamenco centered entirely on the song which was offered with only simple rhythmic accompaniment of none at all. Guitar and dance were not added until the 19th Century. The song provided the cantaor (singer) with an outlet for a wide range of emotions.

**Toque** (Guitar) -- The guitarist must provide a compelling and solid accompaniment to the dancers and singers and be able to respond quickly to cues from these performers. The flamenco guitar differs from the classical guitar in several ways: 1) a smaller box resulting in a more earthy tone, 2) the body is made of cypress, 3) the tuning is traditionally done by wooden pegs, and 4) a lower bridge than the classical guitar.

**Baile** (Dance) -- When dancing was first added to flamenco performances, a clear distinction existed between male and female styles. The man concentrated on complex, percussive footwork. The woman emphasized graceful movements of the arms, hands, hips, and upper body. Today the exciting sound of complex footwork by both men and women has become an expected part of flamenco performances.

**Palmas** (Rhythmic hand clapping) reinforces the rhythms to support the dancers and singers it is important to understand that palmas is not simply clapping in time with the music it is a true art form all its own.

**Cajón** (Box) has been added in recent years to flamenco performances. It is a large wooden box with a sound hole in the back and a smooth surface in the front it adds another exciting percussive element to a performance as well as important rhythmic reinforcement for the singers and dancers.

**Castanuelas** (Castanets) -- A relative newcomer to flamenco, castanets have now been widely integrated into modern flamenco performances and are used most appropriately with folk song and dance such as Sevillanas or Fandangos de Huelva.

**Jaleo** -- The shouts of approval and encouragement from performers and audience.

Examples:

Ole: shout of approval, as in bull fighting.

Asi se baila: That's dancing

Asi se toca: that's playing Asi se canta: that's singing

Eso es: That's it Hassa !: Great !

Toma que toma: Take it

Vamos alla: Go there

### **Terms used in flamenco:**

bailaora -----female flamenco dancer

bailaor -----male flamenco dancer

baile -----dance

cante -----song

cante jondo----deep song

aire -----feeling, literally - air

countaor -----male flamenco singer

countaora -----female flamenco singer

compas -----rhythm, beat

duende ----- soul of flamenco

fiesta ----- party

feria ----- air

jale -- shouting encouragement among the performance as well as the audience

guitarra ----- guitar

hombre ----- man

mujer ----- woman

ole ----- shout of approval

pitos -----finger snapping

tablao ----- flamenco night club

toque ----- flamenco guitar playing

voz ----- voice

zapateado --- footwork of the dance, also a dance form