

Musical Heirlooms

The aims of my research were threefold:

Part One: Music passed on from Generation to Generation

- To discover how parents share music with their children in Spain and how this has an effect on family life.
- To research how children learn and what music they learn through the influence of school and other educational establishments.

Part Two: Flamenco Styles

- To study the music of Flamenco and related genres, such as sevillanas, as a violinist, and to study palmas y compas, the clapping used in flamenco.

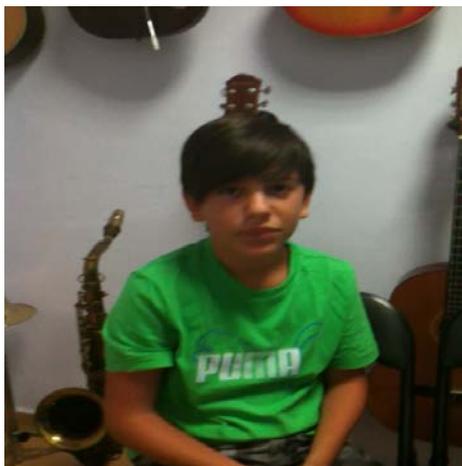
I travelled to Malaga in order to carry out my research, and worked with Fermin Espinosa Garcia, a Spanish guitarist from Cordoba.

Part One: Music passed on from Generation to Generation

The main area of music which seems to be passed on to children is that of children's traditional Spanish songs, some which tell stories of the area. Darius and Miguel as seen on the video sing their favourites.



Flamenco influences children from their birth; there is a style of Flamenco called "Nana Flamenco" which consists of lullabies sung by parents to their children.



Copla is a form of song popular in Spain, which developed from Spanish theatre in the 1700's, being similar to opera. Miguel explained that his father is a Copla singer, and was teaching him the vocal technique used here, as seen in this short clip.



The children also learn songs from their parents other than lullabies, which tell of historical figures from the past, such as this song, "Don Frederico".



From speaking to Spaniards of all ages , it seems that childrens songs, and the Spanish music loved by the parent were the two genres passed on.

As mentioned before, I worked closely with Fermin Espinosa Garcia, a guitarist from Cordoba. He began by explaining how his father loved Copla, and gave him a love of this from an early age by having the music in the house. This young man had a definite

love for flamenco singing, despite all the influences of modern music. He spoke at length and showed me musical examples of the famous copla singer Enrique Morrente, who died in 2010. Fermin told how he had spent much time mourning this loss to Spanish Flamenco music.

Fermin was , as in the case of Dario and Miguel, from a very close knit family, who all shared a love of music. I spoke to other parents, including a very memorable taxi driver, who spoke enthusiastically during the half-hour ride of the wide range of genres of flamenco, from Buleria to Fandango, picking tracks on his CD player to demonstrate his lecture, and tapping out the various compas rhythms on the dashboard! He showed me a picture of his 4 year old daughter playing the cajon (a box-shaped percussion instrument) and said how music was vital to life, how essential he considered it to pass instrumental and vocal skills onto the next generation. He was one of the most enthusiastic people I met, and was passionate about the music of his country, singing in a group, and speaking with force about the massive importance of teaching music to the younger generation, and the happiness and solace it can bring throughout one's life.

Throughout my time in Spain I met parents who were passionate about the music of their country, and keen that their children should know as much about it as possible. They seemed to have a closeness not always present in Britain between families, and a mutual respect for each others genres of music within the Spanish tradition.

During my stay , I went to a pop concert of Pablo Alboran, Latin Grammy award winner who was born in Malaga.



His voice is influenced by Copla and the Moorish style of singing. Although he is a "heartthrob" for the younger teenage generation, he is an excellent singer/guitarist and so it was amazing to see people of all ages arriving with their family, including grandparents, and all sitting down together to enjoy the same music.



One of the other ways in which children learn music in Spain is through the Roman Catholic church.

In Spain there are many fiestas based around the religious calendar, such as the famous Semana Santa in Andelucia which has its own special music, very sad and somber.

Whilst in Spain there was a land and sea procession where the fishermen pay tribute to their patron, the Virgen del Carmen. It is the tradition to decorate an image of the patron and carry her into the sea on the shoulders of local men, put her on a boat accompanied by a small floatilla, whilst singing the official anthem of the Spanish Navy.



On their arrival at the port they begin a procession with music not dissimilar to that of Semana santa, with drums,



woodwind, and brass. A short example can be found here, and it was clear that children were involved. Talking with Spaniards, it was clear that unlike in England where all children sing Christmas carols for example, in Spain the music of the religious festivals is taught solely in the church communities.

Each group that carries a float, normally of the same family for many generations, teaches children the music in their homes. The band that plays in these festivals is called the Cabra. The music can be heard in this clip:

Being a music teacher myself, I was also keen to learn what role educational establishments in Spain played in nurturing a love of music . I have felt it my vocation to pass on the joy of music to young people, opening their ears to a wide range of genres, as well as trying to maintain music of their local region.

I learnt from Miguel and Dario that apart from their parents, they received their musical education from three other sources, the Nelson Academy of music, school and the Music Conservatoire. From their mother Elena, I learnt that music education in school was not thought of highly in Spain by the children. When I was at school myself back in the 1970's I hated music at secondary school in the first three years, as in every lesson we were made to play simple tunes on recorders, and the work was not differentiated. As a good recorder player in my primary school, I was so bored and didn't enjoy music at all. I was shocked to learn that Spanish music lessons in secondary school were very similar to the ones I had had all those years ago, where all the children played recorder, and the subject was considered a joke by most children!

There was an option for those interested in their music to join one of the music conservatoires, where they did get to play in ensembles and there were performing opportunities. However, the actual lessons were very narrow. Miguel (clarinet) and Darius (saxophone) had a massive book of technical exercises which they went over and over again in their lessons. I learnt from some of the English teachers in the Nelson Music Academy, Los Boliches, that the teachers in the Conservatoire were treated with great respect, and that everything they said was carefully adhered to by students and parents alike!

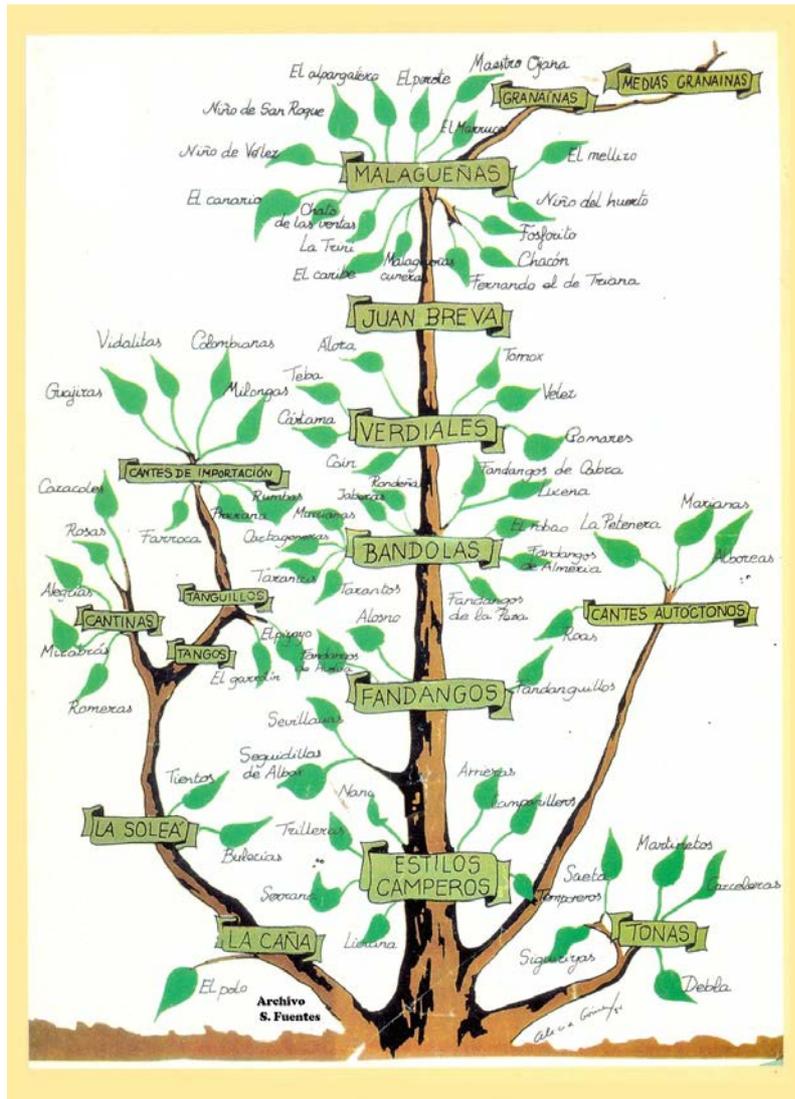
On my first evening in Malaga when walking around the park, I had chanced upon an outdoor performance by the Municipal band of Malaga, a concert band. I had never experienced such a brilliantly technical performance before which lacked any emotion or feeling. It seemed very strange to me, but when I later learnt of the rigorous conservatoire training, it all seemed to make sense. The Nelson Music Academy was set up by English teachers and attempts to redress the balance, teaching various genres of music, and making music fun for children and adults alike. They do have Spanish teachers as well, such as Fermin, who taught me. They provide instrumental and vocal tuition, and also have a variety of ensembles, such as their community choir.



The Youth orchestra in Malaga, which I chanced upon in the Museo Carmen Thyssen were rehearsing for a concert and can be seen here working on Tchaikovsky's violin concerto. My hope was restored after feeling that young people studying music were fed on a diet only of technical exercises in the music conservatoires and recorders in the schools. This conductor was full of passion in getting these young people to feel the power of the piece, as can be heard here:

Part Two: Flamenco Styles

When I first started working with Fermin, it was clear that my knowledge of Spanish Music was more limited than I ever could have imagined. He presented me with an image of this tree, depicting the huge range of genres in Spanish Flamenco.



I decided to concentrate on 6 styles, tona, cante jondo, copla, sevillanas, solea and buleria. I was also interested in the development of flamenco from the latter part of the 20th century to present day.

Fermin explained the history of Flamenco to me- for Spanish speakers, the actual video can be enjoyed here:



Fermin explained how there are many historical and musical influences in Spanish Flamenco from various villages in Spain. Flamenco started in the countryside of Andelucia. For example, in Triana, a district of Seville where the gitanos (gypsies) lived, Cadiz and Rhonda .

Before 1492, the rulers of Spain were Arabic, and there was a mixture of cultures whose musical influences grew together over the next 400 years to form flamenco, e.g Arabic, Jewish, Christian and “gitanos” gypsy, as well as Russian. A lot of artists today are gypsies, e.g. Cameron de Isla.

When the gypsies came to Spain, there were Jews whose singing was very similar to that of flamenco, using the harmonic minor scale. The Arabic tradition used quarter/micro tones.

There were many more influences outside Spain on the development of Flamenco. For example, Cantes de Ida y Vuelta were developed when Spaniards went to America and then returned to Spain. This gave rise to styles of Flamenco such as Rhumba and Milonga.

Tona

Tona, a type of flamenco song (cante) was developed from this mix of musical traditions. This is a capella, similar to the singing heard at Semana Santa and other religious festivals. The development of tona is also linked to oppression, very similar to slaves of America who sang negro spirituals, the Spaniards working in mines sang to alleviate their suffering and poverty. “ Tonas can be divided into martinets, (the blacksmiths forge) the deblas , and the carcelea, the prison song. An example of tona can be found on Youtube – “Antonio Mairena, Martinet de Tona y Triana”. Antonio was a gypsy who had been working as a metalworker and the rhythm is the tap on the anvil accompanied with a capella singing.

The Carcelera speaks of 500 years of persecution of gypsies and their culture. The words to a typical carcelea are as follows:

The bell for silence has rung already ; all I could do to pass the time/now they order quiet.

The carcelera , with its lament of all that was cruel and harsh in prison, continues to influence much of flamenco. I experienced this in the streets of Malaga, where beggars cried out, almost without music, and then their cries were turned into song, but with the same longing and trauma in their singing.

Cante Jondo

This is a Flamenco song literally “like the grave”- very dark. The poet Garcia Lorca presented a conference in 1931 devoted to keeping the rich tradition of the Cante Jondo alive. From his notes we can see the passion that he feels about this very dark song:

The "cante jondo" approaches the rhythm of the birds and the natural music of the black poplar and the waves; it is simple in oldness and style. It is also a rare

example of primitive song, the oldest of all Europe, where the ruins of history, the lyrical fragment eaten by the sand, appear live like the first morning of its life. The illustrious Falla, who studied the question attentively, affirms that the gypsy "siguriya" is the song type of the group "cante jondo" and declares that it is the only song on our continent that has been conserved in its pure form, because of its composition and its style and the qualities it has in itself, the primitive songs of the oriental people.

Copla

An example of this can be found on Youtube,- "Enrique Morrente BFN". He was flamenco copla singer born in 1942 who was very influential in developing the genre, but whilst still being true to the historical beginnings of Flamenco singing. This is demonstrated by the following quotes:



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"The cante (song) begins inside you when you listen to the villager's singing, to people in their birthplace. Groups of people that meet in a tavern and start singing, and then you listen to them and start singing as well: you learn that at family parties where everybody sings and everybody drinks, and everybody dances and... Apart from that, it turns out that, of course, you need a technique, you need a school, you need to learn. In order to achieve this, what you need... the main help you can get is to have a liking for it; and then the skill to know who to learn from, and from what sources, where to find the good. Then you are on."

However, this appreciation for the popular side of flamenco does not mean that he considers flamenco as just "an art of the people". A flamenco artist, for him, needs technique and dedication:

"It is us, the professional artists of flamenco, who have to make cante flamenco, and nobody else, Flamenco, like any other art, is an art of professionals, although there are many people who peer at us, with a look as if to say: What interesting little creatures! or maybe: Oh! What music the people are playing! and so on. And people often think that maybe you have to have fingers swollen from picking potatoes to be able to play the guitar with feeling. Look, picking potatoes is every bit as worthy as playing a guitar. But I can tell you that a man -with fine, sensitive fingers is not going to be able to make a go of picking potatoes: and I can also tell you that a man with fingers swollen from picking potatoes is not going to be able to play a guitar because he hasn't got the manual dexterity and he hasn't got the dedication. This is a profession like any other which you have to dedicate yourself to completely. It is an art of professionals."

I had the opportunity to hear this song in the streets of Malaga, and it was like no singing I had ever heard before. One man came up to the restaurant I was eating in . When he started, I was not even sure if he was singing, it was so full of angst and raw emotion. I later found this quote which sums up the emotion I felt so amazingly portrayed:

The singer who sings leaves in each linea piece of his soul; and, if not, he is deceiving the listener, perhaps even himself. If there is one style to which the singer has to give everything, has to give every bit of himself..... I have seen José Menese completely overcome, broken, a literal wreck after doing this song and I believe that if the singer sometimes reaches the kind of state of grace that the Gypsies call *duende* - and I don't know yet what that is - it is in these unique and unrepeatable moments.

— Ángel Álvaro Caballero, Historia del Cante Flamenco

Solea and Buleria

Cante Jondo uses the Solea compass rhythm , which I spent some time mastering. According to my palmas instructor, Solea is one of the most basic forms of Flamenco. When singers sing it they have varying coplas, or verses with differing melodic phrases. There is some room for improvisation, and the content of each copla can have a different subject matter, they are not always on the same subject throughout the song.

The Solea is a very serious song, and the vocal timbre is normally trying to convey painful emotions. Buleria is much faster and lighter in feel. The song has three or four lines, all with eight syllables. There is also a style called Solea por Buleria , which Fermin explained starts with the slower Solea, and then goes into the happier Buleria midway through the song. An instrumental example of this can be found on Youtube, "Vincente Amigo- El directo desde Cordoba", where he speeds up eight minutes into the song.

Palmas y Compas

I have long been fascinated by the clapping that accompanies Flamenco; often fast and furious- was this improvised, or did certain patterns have to be learnt?



Forgive a second –hand explanation at this point, but it is clear and worthy of inclusion. More information can be found in the text book I worked through with my compas tutor- "Indicacion al Piano Flamenco"- Palos Fundamentales del Grupo de la Solea- ISBN 978-88-50705-87-0

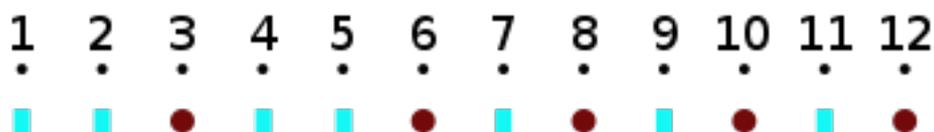
All Palmas y Compas (clapping) in Flamenco is based on groups of 12 beats over 4 bar phrases. In Flamenco is in $\frac{3}{4}$ time and musicians clap on the 1st, 4th, 7th, 9th and 11th beats of a four bar cycle

Metre (compass)

The metre or "compás" of the soleá is one of the most widely used in Flamenco. The soleá can be played *rubato*, that is, slowing down and speeding up the *tempo*

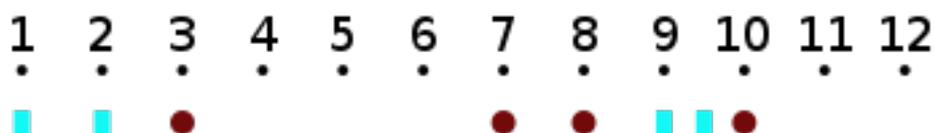
to enrich its expressive quality. Of course regular tempo is mandatory when it is played and sung to accompany a dancer.

Other palos (styles) have derived their compás from the soleá, including **Bulerías por soleá**, the palos in the **Cantiñas** group, (like **Alegrías**, **Romerías**, **Mirabrás** and **Caracoles**) and, to a certain extent, **Bulerías**. It consists of 12 beats, and could be described as a combination of triple and duple beat bars, so it's a polymetre form, with strong beats at the end of each bar. The basic "skeleton" of the soleá rhythm, thus, follows this pattern:



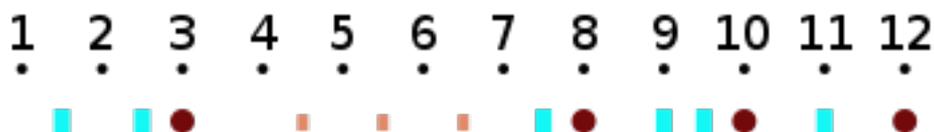
(Each number represents a beat. Blue squares mean weak beats, while big brown dots are strong beats.)

Nevertheless, this is just an underlying structure, like a foundation, a kind of grid where flamenco artists creatively draw the rhythm by means of subdivisions, articulation, and less commonly, **syncopation** and accent displacement. The first example of "palmas" is a very common, simple pattern:



Notice that palmas are often (though by no means always) silent during beats 4 to 6, even if beat number 6 is a "strong one". This is specially true when no dancing takes place: the main interest there is the singing (or playing) and too much percussion can take attention away from the music. Those beats though are often marked when there is dance, or when performing other palos in the same metre like **Alegrías** or **Bulería por soleá**. However, these are not to be taken as hard-and-fast rules, but just as general guidelines.

A more complex example.



The small orange squares should be played extremely softly.

The above are just two examples among the variety of variations. When there are two or more people playing palmas, one of them usually plays a bass pattern, emphasizing the regular beats, while another plays the upbeats (the "contras", short for "contratiempos").

I visited a bar in Malaga where I saw a good example of Compas used in Fandango, another type of Flamenco. A typical rhythm which I had heard before but never seen, is a fast and furious semiquaver figure, but the dancer and musicians clap alternately. One on the beat and one off, with amazing precision! The group I saw can be seen doing this rhythm on the following clip:



Sevillanas

Sevillanas is based on folklore from Andelucía, especially Seville. Sevillanas was the other main palo(style) that I studied. Fermin explained that this was the “Party Flamenco” , as opposed to the solemn “Solea”. It is not accepted by some as a type of Flamenco, but the influences are clear in the music.



The time signature is always $\frac{3}{4}$, and the violin is used as a melody instrument , so from listening to Flamenco, I could now experience it firsthand. As we worked together, I realized the huge chasm between the rigid learning of the technical exercises in the conservatoires and the aural tradition of Flamenco, The Sevillanas was a real challenge for me, as it was learning 3 sections of melody from memory, not so easy for a classical musician, and then trying to work

with a guitarist on the timing by feeling the rhythm. It was a real achievement to finally be able to play this , as can be seen from the following clip,which is a “Sevillanas para conquistar”.

Development of Flamenco in the 20th Century

In the 1950's the gitanos were moved from the district of Triana in Seville to Las Tres Mil, a huge housing development where 1 in every 12 Sevillanos live. The gypsies grew up here with new musical influences, such as rock, pop, and later hip hop, and world music. Flamenquillo was born, which plays everywhere in Las Tres Mil.

Flamenco underwent a huge development in the 20th century ; for example, in the 1930's music began to be mixed with other forms, e.g. Jazz, Cuban and Celtic Music.

Musicians such as Paco de Lucia started to work with Al di Meela and John Mclaughlin, mixing Flamenco and Jazz. An example of this can be seen on Youtube where he works with Paco de Lucia on a piece called “Mediterranean Sundance”. Chario Dominguez from Cadiz is another musician who mixes Buleria with Flamenco in his piece to be found on Youtube, entitled “Flamenco Jazz”. This is an amazing fusion of Flamenco singing with jazz piano, with palmas rhythms, and later double bass. These two styles are so diverse that it seems they would not work together, but the resulting genre is very successful.

Although guitar had been the principal chordal instrument in Flamenco for hundreds of years, in the 1980's piano started to be used with Flamenco. There is an example of this on You tube, "Cameron- La Leyenda del tiempo" This starts with flute and guitar, but goes onto a flamenco and compas section early on in the track, followed by copla-style singing.

Flamenco artists such as Enrique Morente started to work with Jazz musicians such as Chick Corea . An example of his work in this style can be seen on Youtube, "Enrique Morrente al 30 Festival de Jazz - Vittoria Gastez 2006." Fermin showed me many examples of flamenco mixed with different styles. For me as a violinist the most strange and haunting one was Morrente Fandango de morocco, where the amazing sound of Enriques voice was mixed with a violin played as a viol- and then his daughter, named Solea joins in with her voice to form this most incredible trio. Youtube has this clip under Jakal Chekara, Enrique Morrente and Solea Morrente. For me this summed up my discovery into the previously unknown world of Flamenco: Mysterious, suprising, haunting, an amazing mix of emotions, yet bringing together father and daughter in the struggle of life through music, and somehow throughout finding a peace and stability in that family sharing.

In this short time of 3 weeks spent in Malaga, I learnt much about the diverse music learnt by a child in Spain, and the differing ways in which this take place. I really felt that Spanish families take much pride in their musical traditions and place much importance in passing on music to their children, seeing it as essential for one's life.

I was most surprised by the music in educational establishments, as I presumed music education to be similar throughout Europe, but it is very different in Spain. The massive wealth and variety of Flamenco was the biggest find, and discovering the way it has maintained its tradition, whilst at the same time some musicians have developed it in a huge variety of ways.

I felt privileged and honoured to be given some insight into the mystery that was for me, Flamenco, and to see how this tradition is enjoyed by all generations, and passed on as a precious "Musical Heirloom"

Helen Dixon

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