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Flamenco

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Bailaora (dancer) of Flamenco Belén Maya, photograph taken by [Gilles Larrain](#) at his studio, 2001

Flamenco is one of the great European non-academic musical genres. More than simply a type of folk music, flamenco embodies a complex musical and cultural tradition. Although considered part of the culture of [Spain](#) in general, flamenco actually originates from one region —[Andalusia](#). However, other areas, mainly [Extremadura](#) and [Murcia](#), have contributed to the development of several flamenco musical forms, and a great number of outstanding flamenco artists have been born in other territories of the state. There are many questions remaining about the roots of flamenco, but it is generally acknowledged that flamenco grew out of the unique interplay of native [Andalusian](#), [Islamic](#), [Sephardic](#), and [Gypsy](#) cultures that existed in Andalusia prior to and after the [Reconquest](#). [Latin American](#) and especially [Cuban](#) influences have also been important to shape several flamenco [musical forms](#).

Once the seeds of flamenco were planted in Andalusia, it grew as a separate subculture, first centered in the provinces of [Seville](#), [Cádiz](#) and part of [Málaga](#) —the area known as *Baja Andalucía* (Lower Andalusia) — but soon spreading to the rest of Andalusia, incorporating and transforming local folk music forms. As the popularity of flamenco extended to other areas, other local Spanish musical traditions (i.e. the [Castilian traditional music](#)) would also influence, and be influenced by, the traditional flamenco styles.

Flamenco

Stylistic origins:	Andalusian , Gitano , Mozarabic , Moorish , Sephardic
Cultural origins:	Andalusia
Typical instruments:	Guitar , hand clapping and the addition of the Peruvian cajon
Mainstream popularity:	Sporadic except among Andalusians and Gitanos, mostly popular in Spain

Subgenres

[Alegrías](#) - [Bulerías](#) - [Tangos](#) - [Fandangos](#) - [Farruca](#) - [Guajiras](#) - [Peteneras](#) - [Sevillana](#) - [Siguiriyas](#) - [Soleares](#) - [Tientos](#) - [Zambra](#) - and many others, see the [palos list](#) below.

Fusion genres

[New Flamenco](#)

Other topics

[Music of Spain](#)

[Cante Chico](#) - [Cante Jondo](#) - [Cante Intermedio](#) - [Falseta](#)

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[\[edit\]](#) **Overview**

Many of the details of the development of flamenco are lost in [Spanish history](#). There are several reasons for this lack of historical evidence:

- Flamenco sprang from the lower levels of Andalusian society, and thus lacked the prestige of art forms among the middle and higher classes. Flamenco music also slipped in and out of fashion several times during its existence. Many of the songs in flamenco still reflect the spirit of desperation, struggle, hope, and pride of the people during this time of persecution.
- The turbulent times of the people involved in flamenco culture. The [Moors](#), the [Gitanos](#) and the [Jews](#) were all [persecuted](#) and [expelled](#) by the [Spanish Inquisition](#) in 1492.
- The Gitanos have been fundamental in maintaining this art form, but they have an [oral culture](#). Their [folk songs](#) were passed on to new generations by repeated performances in their social community. The non-gypsy Andalusian poorer classes, in general, were also illiterate.
- A certain degree subject. "Flamencologists" have usually been flamenco [connoisseurs](#) of diverse professions (a high number of them, like Félix Grande, Caballero Bonald or Ricardo Molina, have been poets), with no specific academic training in the fields of history or musicology. They have tended to rely on a limited number of sources (mainly the writings of [19th century](#) folklorist [Demófilo](#), notes by foreign travellers like [George Borrow](#), a few accounts by writers and the [oral tradition](#)), and they have often ignored other data. Nationalistic or ethnic bias has also been frequent in flamencology. This started to change in the [1980s](#), when flamenco slowly started to be included in music conservatories, and a growing number of musicologists and historians began to carry out more rigorous research. Since then, some new data have shed new light on it. (Ríos Ruiz, 1997:14)

There are questions not only about the origins of the music and dances of flamenco, but also about the origins of the very word *flamenco*. Whatever the origins of the word, in the early 19th century it began to be used to describe a way of life centered around this music and usually involving Gypsies (in his 1842 book "Zincali," George Borrow writes that the word *flemenc* [sic] is synonymous with "Gypsy").

[Blas Infante](#), in his book *Orígenes de lo flamenco y secreto del cante jondo*, controversially argued that the word *flamenco* comes from Hispano-[Arabic](#) word *fellahmengu*, which would mean "expelled peasant"^[1]. Yet there is a problem with this theory, how does a new term, drawn from Arabic, arise three centuries after the end of the Moorish reign? Infante links the term to the ethnic Andalusians of [Muslim](#) faith, the [Moriscos](#), who would have mixed with the Gypsy newcomers in order to avoid religious persecution. Other hypotheses concerning the term's etymology include connections with [Flanders](#) (*flamenco* also means [Flemish](#) in Spanish), believed by Spanish people to be the origin of the Gypsies, or the *flameante* (arduous) execution by the performers, or the [flamingos](#)^[2].

[[edit](#)] Background

For a complete picture of the possible influences that gave rise to flamenco, attention must be paid to the cultural and musical background of the [Iberian Peninsula](#) since Ancient times. Long before the [Moorish](#) invasion in 711, [Visigothic](#) Spain had adopted its own liturgic musical forms, the Visigothic or [Mozarabic rite](#), strongly influenced by [Byzantium](#). The Mozarabic rite survived the [Gregorian reform](#) and the Moorish invasion, and remained alive at least until the 10th or 11th century. Some theories, started by Spanish classical musician [Manuel de Falla](#), link the melismatic forms and the presence of Greek [Dorian mode](#) (in modern times called "[Phrygian mode](#)") in flamenco to the long existence of this separate Catholic rite. Unfortunately, owing to the type of musical notation in which these Mozarabic chants were written, it is not possible to determine what this music really sounded like, so the theory remains unproved.

The appearance of the Moors in [711](#) helped to shape particular music forms in Spain. They called the Iberian Peninsula "[Al-Andalus](#)", from which the name of [Andalusia](#) derives. The Moorish and Arab invaders brought their musical forms to the Peninsula and, at the same time, probably gathered some native influence in

their music. The Emirate, and later [Caliphate of Córdoba](#) became a center of influence in both the [Muslim](#) and [Christian](#) worlds and it attracted musicians from all Islamic countries. One of those musicians was [Zyriab](#), who imported forms of the [Persian music](#), revolutionized the shape and playing techniques of the [Lute](#) (which centuries later evolved into the [vihuela](#) and the [guitar](#)) adding a fifth string to it, and set the foundations for the [Andalusian nuba](#), the style of music in [suite](#) form still performed in [North African](#) countries.

The presence of the Moors was also decisive in shaping the cultural diversity of Spain: owing to the extraordinary length of the [Reconquest](#) started in the North as early as [722](#) and completed in [1492](#) with the conquest of [Granada](#), the degree of Moorish influence on culture, customs and even language varies enormously between the North and the South. Music cannot have been alien to that process: while music in the North of the Peninsula has a clear Celtic influence which dates to pre-Roman times, Southern music is certainly reminiscent of Eastern influences. To what extent this Eastern flavour is owed to the Moors, the Jews, the Mozarabic rite (with its [Byzantine music](#) influence), or the Gypsies has not been clearly determined.

During the Reconquest, another important cultural influence was present in Al-Andalus: the Jews. Enjoying a relative religious and ethnic tolerance in comparison to Christian countries, they formed an important ethnic group, with their own traditions, rites, and music, and probably reinforced the middle-Eastern element in the culture and music forms of Al-Andalus. Certain flamenco "palos" like the [Peteneras](#) have been attributed a direct Jewish origin (Rossy 1966).

[[edit](#)] Andalusia after the Reconquest: social environment and implications on music

The [15th century](#) marked a revolution in the culture and society of Southern Spain. We must highlight the following landmarks, all with future implications on the development of flamenco: first, the arrival of nomad [Gypsies](#) in the [Iberian Peninsula](#) in [1425](#) (Grande, 2001). Later on, the conquest of [Granada](#), the discovery of [America](#) and the expulsion of the Jews, all of them in [1492](#).

In the [13th century](#), the Christian [Crown of Castile](#) had already conquered most of Andalusia. Although Castilian kings favoured a policy of repopulation of the newly conquered lands with Christians, part of the [Muslim](#) population remained in the areas as a religious and ethnic minority, called "[mudéjares](#)".

[Granada](#), the last [Muslim](#) stronghold in the Iberian Peninsula, fell in 1492 when the [armies](#) of the [Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand II of Aragon](#) and queen [Isabella of Castile](#) reconquered this city after about 800 years of Moorish rule. The [Treaty of Granada](#) guaranteed [religious tolerance](#), and this paved the way for the Moors to [surrender](#) peacefully. Months after, the [Spanish Inquisition](#) used its influence to convince Ferdinand and Isabella to break the [treaty](#) and force the Moors and Jews to either [convert](#) to [Christianity](#) or leave Spain. The [Alhambra decree](#) of March 31, 1492 ordered the expulsion of all non-converted Jews from Spain and its territories and possessions by July 31, 1492, on charges that they were trying to convert the Christian population to [Judaism](#). Some chose to adopt the [Catholic religion](#) ([Conversos](#)), but they often kept their Judaic beliefs privately. For this reason, they were closely watched by the [Spanish Inquisition](#), and accusations of being false converts often lead them to suffer torture and death.

In 1499, about 50,000 *Moriscos* were coerced into taking part in mass [baptism](#). During the [uprising](#) that followed, people who refused the choices of baptism or [deportation](#) to [Africa](#) were systematically eliminated. What followed was a mass [exodus](#) of Moors, [Sephardi Jews](#) and Gitanos from Granada city and the villages into the surrounding [Sierra Nevada](#) mountain region (and its hills) and the [rural](#) country. Many Moors, now known as [Moriscos](#), officially converted to Christianity, but kept practising their religion in private and also preserved their language, dress and customs. The Moriscos uprose on several occasions during the [16th century](#), and were finally expelled from Spain at the beginning of the [17th century](#).

The conquest of Andalusia implied a strong penetration of Castilian culture in Andalusia, which surely influenced the music and folklore. The expulsion of the

[Sephardi Jews](#) and [Moriscos](#) could have led to a weakening of middle-Eastern influence on Andalusian culture. However, during the [15th century](#) groups of [Roma people](#), known as [Gitanos](#) in Spain, entered the [Iberian Peninsula](#). At the beginning, they were well-tolerated. The Spanish nobles enjoyed their dances and music, and they were regularly employed to entertain guests at private parties. The Gypsies, therefore, were in touch (at least geographically) with the Morisco population until the expulsion of the latter in the 16th century. According to some theories, suggested by authors like George Borrow and Blas Infante and supported other flamenco historians like Mairena and Molina, many moriscos even joined the Gypsy nomad tribes and eventually became undistinguishable from them. This has not been proved scientifically. It is though generally accepted that the [Zambra](#) of the Gypsies of Granada, still performed nowadays, is derived from the original Moorish Zambra.

The clash between Gypsy and the Spanish would be manifest by the end of the century. For centuries, the Spanish monarchy tried to force the Gypsies to abandon their language, customs and music. During the Reconquista, tolerance towards Gypsies ended as they were put into ghettos. This isolation helped them retain the purity of their music and dance. In 1782, the Leniency Edict of Charles III restored some freedoms to the Spanish gypsies. Their music and dance was reintroduced and adopted by the general population of Spain. This resulted in a period of great exploration and evolution within the art form. Nomadic Gypsies became social outcasts and were in many cases the victims of persecution. This is reflected in many lyrics of "palos" like [seguiriyas](#), in which references to hunger, prison and discrimination abound.

[\[edit\]](#) The influence of the New World

Recent research has revealed a major influence of [Sub-Saharan](#) African music on flamenco's prehistory. This developed from the music and dance of African slaves held by the Spanish in the [New World](#). There are 16th and 17th century manuscripts of classical compositions that are possibly based on African folk forms, such as "[negrillas](#)", "[zarambeques](#)", and "[chaconas](#)". We also find mentions to the *fandango indiano* (*Indiano* meaning from the [Americas](#), but not necessarily [Native American](#)). Some critics support that the names of flamenco palos like the [tangos](#) or even the [fandango](#) are derived from [Bantoid languages](#)^[3], and most theories state that the rhythm of the [tangos](#) was imported from Cuba.

It is likely that in that stay in the New World, the fandango picked up dance steps deemed too inappropriate for European tastes. Thus, the dance for fandango, for chacon, and for [zarabanda](#), were all banned in [Europe](#) at one time or another. References to Gypsy dancers can be found in the lyrics of some of these forms, e.g., the chacon. Indeed, Gypsy dancers are often mentioned in Spanish literary and musical works from the 1500s on. However, the zarabandas and [jácaras](#) are the oldest written musical forms in Spain to use the 12-beat [metre](#) as a combination of terciary and binary rhythms. The basic rhythm of the zarabanda and the jácara is 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12. The [soleá](#) and the [Seguiriya](#), are variations on this: they just start the metre in a different beat.

[\[edit\]](#) The [18th century](#): the fandango and the *Escuela Bolera*

During this period of development, the "[flamenco fiesta](#)" developed. More than just a party where flamenco is performed, the fiesta, either unpaid (reunion) or paid, sometimes lasting for days, has an internal etiquette with a complex set of musical and social rules. In fact, some might argue that the cultural phenomenon of the flamenco fiesta is the basic cultural "unit" of flamenco.

A turning point in flamenco appears to have come about with a change of instruments. In the late 18th Century the favoured guitar became the 6 string single-coursed [guitar](#) which replaced the double-coursed 5 string guitar in popularity. It is the 6 string guitar to which flamenco music is inextricably tied. Flamenco became married to the 6 string guitar.

[\[edit\]](#) The rise of flamenco

During the late-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries, flamenco took on a number of unique characteristics which separated it from local folk music and prepared the way to a higher professionalization and technical excellence of flamenco performers, to the diversification of flamenco styles (by gradually incorporating songs derived from folklore or even other sources), and to the popularization of the genre outside Andalusia.

The first time flamenco is mentioned in [literature](#) is in 1774 in the book [Cartas Marruecas](#) by [José Cadalso](#). During this period, according to some authors, there is little news about flamenco except for a few scattered references from travellers. This led traditional flamencologists, like Molina and Mairena, to call the period of 1780 to 1850 as "The Hermetic Period" or the "private stage of flamenco". According to these flamencologists, flamenco, at this time was something like a private ritual, secretly kept in the Gypsy homes of some towns in the Seville and Cádiz area. This theory started to fall out of favour in the 1990s. José Blas Vega has denied the absence of evidences for this period:

Nowadays, we know that there are hundreds and hundreds of data which allow us to know in detail what flamenco was like from 1760 until 1860, and there we have the document sources: the theatre movement of *sainetes* and *tonadillas*, the popular songbooks and song sheets, the narrations and descriptions from travellers describing customs, the technical studies of dances and *toques*, the musical scores, the newspapers, the graphic documents in paintings and engravings; and all of this with no interruptions, in continuous evolution together with the rhythm, the poetic stanzas, and the ambience. (Quoted by Ríos Ruiz 1997)

Álvarez Caballero (1998) goes further, stating that if there are no news about flamenco previous to its late 1780 mentions, it is because flamenco simply did not exist. The whole theory about a *hermetic stage* would then be a fantasy, caused by the aura of mystery surrounding Gypsy culture.

There is disagreement as to whether primitive flamenco was accompanied by any instrument or not. For traditional flamencology, flamenco consisted of unaccompanied [singing](#) (*cante*). Later, the songs were [accompanied](#) by [flamenco guitar](#) (*toque*), rhythmic [hand clapping](#) (*palmas*), rhythmic feet stomping (*zapateado*) and [dance](#) (*baile*). Later theories claim that this is false. While some cante forms are sung unaccompanied (*a palo seco*), it is likely that other forms were accompanied if and when instruments were available. [19th century](#) writer Estébanez Calderón already described a flamenco *fiesta* (party) in which the singing was accompanied not only by guitars, but also [bandurria](#) and [tambourine](#).

[\[edit\]](#) The Golden Age

During the so-called **Golden Age of Flamenco**, between 1869-1910, flamenco music developed rapidly in music cafés called *cafés cantantes*, a new type of venue with ticketed public performances. This was the beginning of the "cafe cantante" period. Flamenco was developed here to its definitive form. Flamenco dancers also became the major public attraction in those cafés. Along with the development of flamenco dance, guitar players supporting the dancers increasingly gained a [reputation](#), and so flamenco guitar as an art form by itself was born. A most important artist in this development was [Silverio Franconetti](#), a non-Gypsy rob seaman of Italian descent. He is reported to be the first "encyclopedic" singer, that is, the first who was able to sing well in all the *palos*, instead of specializing on a few of them, as was usual at the time. He opened his own *café cantante*, where he sang himself or invited other artists to perform, and many other venues of this kind were created in all Andalusia and Spain.

Traditional views on flamenco, starting with [Demófilo](#) have often accused this period as the start of the commercial debasement of flamenco. The traditional flamenco fiesta is crowded if more than 20 people are present. Moreover, there is no telling when a fiesta will begin or end, or assurance that the better artists invited will perform well. And, if they do perform, it may not be until the morning after a fiesta that began the night before. By contrast, the cafe cantante offered set performances at set hours and top artists were contracted to perform. For some, this professionalization led to commercialism, while for others it stimulated healthy competition and therefore, more creativity and technical proficiency. In fact, most traditional flamenco forms were created or developed during this time or, at least, have been attributed to singers of this period like [El Loco Mateo](#), [El Nitri](#), [Rojo el Alpargatero](#), [Enrique el Mellizo](#), [Paquirri El Guanté](#), or [La Serneta](#), among many others. Some

of them were professionals, while others sang only at private gatherings but their songs were learned and divulged by professional singers.

In the 19th century, both flamenco and its association with Gypsies started to become popular throughout Europe, even into [Russia](#). Composers wrote music and [operas](#) on what they thought were Gypsy-flamenco themes. Any traveler through Spain “had” to see the Gypsies perform flamenco. Spain - often to the chagrin of non-Andalucian Spaniards - became associated with flamenco and Gypsies. This interest was in keeping with the European fascination with folklore during those decades.

In 1922, one of Spain's greatest [writers](#), [Federico García Lorca](#), and renowned composer [Manuel de Falla](#), organised the [Concurso de Cante Jondo](#), a folk music festival dedicated to *cante jondo* ("deep song"). They did this to stimulate interest in some styles of flamenco, which were falling into oblivion as they were regarded uncommercial and, therefore, not apt the *café cantante*. Two of Lorca's most important [poetic](#) works, *Poema del Cante Jondo* and *Romancero Gitano*, show Lorca's fascination with flamenco and appreciation of Spanish folk culture. However, the initiative was not very influential, and the derivations of fandango and other styles kept gaining popularity while the more difficult styles like [siguiriyas](#) and, especially, [tonás](#) were usually only performed in private parties.

[edit] The "theatrical" period: 1892-1956

The stage after the *Concurso de Cante Jondo* in 1922 is known as **Etapa teatral** (Theatrical period) or **Ópera flamenca** (Flamenco Opera) period. The name *Ópera flamenca* was due to the custom, started by impresario Vedrines to call these shows *opera*, as opera performances enjoyed lower taxes. The *café cantante* entered a period of decadence and were gradually replaced by larger venues like theatres or bullrings. This led to an immense popularity of flamenco but, according to traditionalist critics, also caused it to fall victim to commercialism and economic interests. New types of flamenco shown were born, where flamenco was mixed with other music genres and theatre interludes portraying picturesque scenes by Gitanos and Andalusians.

The dominant *palos* of this era were the *personal fandango*, the [cantes de ida y vuelta](#) (songs of Latin American origin) and the song in bulería style. Personal fandangos were based on Huelva traditional styles with a free rhythm (as a [cante libre](#)) and with a high density of virtuoso variations. The song in bulería style (*Canción por bulerías*) adapted any popular or commercial song to the bulería rhythm. This period also saw the birth of a new genre, sometimes called *copla andaluza* (Andalusian [couplet](#)) or *canción española* (Spanish song), a type of ballads with influences from [zarzuela](#), Andalusian folk songs, and flamenco, usually accompanied with orchestra, which enjoyed great popularity and was performed both by flamenco and non-flamenco artists. Owing to its links with flamenco shows, many people consider this genre as "flamenco".

The leading artist at the time was [Pepe Marchena](#), who sang in a sweet falsetto voice, using spectacular vocal runs reminding of [bel canto coloratura](#). A whole generation of singers was influenced by him and some of them, like [Pepe Pinto](#), or [Juan Valderrama](#) also reached immense celebrity. Many classical flamenco singers who had grown with the *café cantante* fell into oblivion. Others, like [Tomás Pavón](#) or [Aurelio Sellé](#), found refuge in private parties. The rest adapted (though often did not completely surrender) to the new tastes: they took part in those mass flamenco shows, but kept singing the old styles, although introducing some of the new ones in their repertoire: it is the case of [La Niña de los Peines](#), [Manolo Caracol](#), [Manuel Vallejo](#), [El Carbonerillo](#) and many others.

This period has been considered by the most traditionalist critics as a time of complete commercial debasement. According to them, the [opera flamenca](#) became a "dictatorship" (Álvarez Caballero 1998), where bad *personal fandangos* and *copla andaluza* practically caused traditional flamenco to disappear. Other critics consider this view to be unbalanced (See Ríos Ruiz 1997:40-43): great figures of traditional cante like [La Niña de los Peines](#) or [Manolo Caracol](#) enjoyed great success, and *palos* like [siguiriyas](#) or [soleá](#) were never completely abandoned, not even by the most representative singers of the *ópera flamenca* style like Marchena or Valderrama.

Typical singers of the period like Marchena, Valderrama, Pepe Pinto or El Pena, have also been reappraised. Starting with singers like Luis de Córdoba, [Enrique Morente](#) or [Mayte Martín](#), who recorded songs they created or made popular, a high number of singers started to rescue their repertoire, a CD in homage to

Valderrama was recorded, and new generations of singers claim their influence. Critics like Antonio Ortega or Ortiz Nuevo have also vindicated the artists of the *ópera flamenca* period.

[\[edit\]](#) The New Flamenco

"Nuevo Flamenco", or [New Flamenco](#), is a recent variant of flamenco which has been influenced by modern [musical genres](#), like [rumba](#), [salsa](#), [pop](#), [rock](#) and [jazz](#).

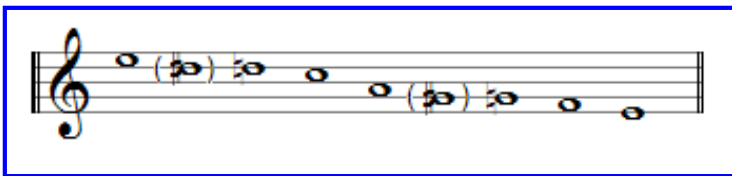
Other instruments have been introduced, such as the [castanets](#) (*castañuelas*), the Peruvian [cajón](#) (a wooden box used as a percussion instrument), introduced by [Paco de Lucía](#) in the 1970s and the electric bass.

[\[edit\]](#) Musical characteristics

[\[edit\]](#) Harmony

Whereas, in Western music, only the [major](#) and [minor](#) modes have remained, flamenco has also preserved the [Phrygian mode](#), commonly “[Dorian mode](#)” by flamencologists, referring to the Greek Dorian mode, and sometimes also "flamenco mode". The reason for preferring the term "Greek Dorian" is that, as in ancient Greek music, flamenco melodies are descending (instead of ascending as in usual Western melodic patterns). Some flamencologists, like Hipólito Rossy (Rossy 1998: 19–36) or guitarist [Manolo Sanlúcar](#)^[4], also consider this flamenco mode as a survival of the old Greek Dorian mode. The rest of the article, however, will use the term "Phrygian" to refer to this mode, as it is the most common denomination in English speaking countries.

The Phrygian mode is in fact the most common in the traditional palos of flamenco music, and it is used for [soleá](#), most [bulerías](#), [siguiriyas](#), [tangos](#) and [tientos](#), among other *palos* (Rossy 1998:82). The flamenco version of this mode contains two frequent [alterations](#) in the 7th and, even more often, the 3rd [degree](#) of the scale: if the scale is played in E Phrygian for example, G and D can be sharp.



Descending E Phrygian scale in flamenco music, with common alterations in parentheses

G sharp is compulsory for the tonic chord. Based on the Phrygian scale, a typical [cadence](#) is formed, usually called “[Andalusian cadence](#)”. The chords for this cadence in E Phrygian are Am–G–F–E. According to guitarist [Manolo Sanlúcar](#), in this flamenco Phrygian mode, E is the [tonic](#), F would take the [harmonic function](#) of [dominant](#), while Am and G assume the functions of [subdominant](#) and [mediant](#) respectively.^[5]

When playing in Phrygian mode, guitarists traditionally use only two basic positions for the [tonic chord \(music\)](#): E and A. However, they often transport these basic tones by using a [capo](#). Modern guitarists, starting with [Ramón Montoya](#), have also introduced other positions. Montoya himself started to use other chords for the tonic in the doric sections of several *palos*: F [sharp](#) for [tarantas](#), B for [granaína](#), A flat for the [minera](#), and he also created a new *palo* as solo piece for the guitar, the [rondeña](#),

in C sharp with [scordatura](#). Later guitarists have further extended the repertoire of [tonalities](#), chord positions and scordatura.^[6]

There are also palos in major mode, for example, most [cantiñas](#) and [alegrías](#), [guajiras](#), and some [bulerías](#) and [tonás](#), and the *cabales* (a major mode type of [siguiriyas](#)). The minor mode is less frequent and it is restricted to the [Farruca](#), the milongas (among [cantes de ida y vuelta](#)), and some styles of tangos, bulerías, etc. In general, traditional palos in major and minor mode are limited harmonically to the typical two-chord (tonic–dominant) or three-chord structure (tonic–subdominant–dominant) (Rossy 1998:92). However, modern guitarists have increased the traditional harmony by introducing [chord substitution](#), transition chords, and even [modulation](#).

[Fandangos](#) and the palos derived from it (e.g. [malagueñas](#), [tarantas](#), [cartageneras](#)) are bimodal. Guitar introductions are in Phrygian mode, while the singing develops in major mode, modulating to Phrygian mode at the end of the stanza. (Rossy 1998:92)

Traditionally, flamenco guitarists did not receive any formal training, so they just relied on their ear to find the chords on the guitar, disregarding the rules of Western [classical music](#). This led them to interesting harmonic findings, with unusual unresolved [dissonances](#) (Rossy 1998:88). Examples of this are the use of minor 9th chords for the tonic, the tonic chord of [tarantas](#), or the use of the 1st unpressed string as a kind of [pedal tone](#).

[\[edit\]](#) Melody

Dionisio Preciado, quoted by Sabas de Hoces^[7] established the following characteristics for the melodies of flamenco singing:

1. [Microtonality](#): presence of [intervals](#) smaller than the [semitone](#).
2. [Portamento](#): frequently, the change from one note to another is done in a smooth transition, rather than using discrete intervals.
3. Short [tessitura](#) or [range](#): The most traditional flamenco songs are usually limited to a range of a sixth (four tones and a half). The impression of vocal effort is the result of using different [timbres](#), and variety is accomplished by the use of microtones.
4. Use of [enharmonic scale](#). While in [equal temperament](#) scales, [enharmonics](#) are notes with identical name but different spellings (e.g. A flat and G sharp), in flamenco, as in [unequal temperament](#) scales, there is a microtonal intervalic difference between enharmonic notes.
5. Insistence on a note and its contiguous chromatic notes (also frequent in the guitar), producing a sense of urgency.
6. Baroque [ornamentation](#), with an expressive, rather than merely aesthetic function.
7. Greek [Dorian mode](#) (modern [Phrygian mode](#)) in the most traditional songs.
8. Apparent lack of regular rhythm, especially in the [siguiriyas](#): the melodic rhythm of the sung line is different from the metric rhythm of the accompaniment.
9. Most styles express sad and bitter feelings.
10. Melodic [improvisation](#). Although flamenco singing is not, properly speaking, improvised, but based on a relatively small number of traditional songs, singers add variations on the spur of the moment.

Musicologist Hipólito Rossy adds the following characteristics (Rossy 1998: 94):

- Flamenco melodies are also characterized by a descending tendency, as opposed to, for example, a typical [opera aria](#), they usually go from the higher pitches to the lower ones, and from [forte](#) to [piano](#), as it was usual in ancient Greek scales.
- In many styles, such as [soléa](#) or [siguiriya](#), the melody tends to proceed in contiguous [degrees](#) of the scale. [Skips](#) of a third or a fourth are rarer. However, in [fandangos](#) and fandango-derived styles, fourths and sixths can often be found, especially at the beginning of each line of verse. According to Rossy, this would be a proof of the more recent creation of this type of songs, which would be influenced by the Castilian [jota](#).

[[edit](#)] **Compás**

Compás is a Spanish word meaning both [metre](#) and [time signature](#) in [music theory](#). In flamenco, besides having these meanings, it can also refer to the rhythmic skill of a musician or dancer, or to the hand clapping or knuckle percussion.

Flamenco uses a variety of rhythms depending on the *palo* or musical form. There are also free-rhythm forms, not subject to any particular metre, including, among others, the palos in the group of the [tonás](#), the [saetas](#), [malagueñas](#), [tarantas](#), and some types of [fandangos](#).

- Rhythms in 2/4 or 4/4. These metres are used in forms like [tangos](#), [tientos](#), gypsy [rhumba](#), [zambra](#) and [tanguillos](#).
- Rhythms in 3/4. These are typical of [fandangos](#) and [sevillanas](#).
- 12-beat rhythms in [complex time signatures](#). These rhythms can be analysed as a combination of 6/4 and 3/4, and the earliest examples of them are found in [16th century](#) dances like [zarabanda](#) or [jácara](#). They are also common in Latin American countries.

12-beat complex metres are in fact the most common in flamenco. There are three types of these, which vary in the way they distribute their [downbeats](#), and each one of these comprises different palos:

1. [peteneras](#) and [guajiras](#): **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12**
2. [siguiriya](#), [liviana](#), [serrana](#), [toná liviana](#), [cabales](#): **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12**
3. [soleá](#), palos of the [cantiñas](#) group (including [alegrías](#)), soleá por bulería (also “[bulería por soleá](#)”): **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12**. For practical reasons, when transferring flamenco guitar music to sheet music, this rhythm is written as a regular 3/4. [Bulerías](#) also partly follow this rhythm, but often they alternate it with rhythms in 3/4.

The compás is expressed in a number of different ways. In private gatherings, if there is no guitarist available, the compás is rendered through hand clapping (*palmas*) or by hitting a table with the knuckles. This is also sometimes done in recordings especially for bulerías. The guitar also has an important function, using techniques like strumming (*rasgueado*) or hitting the [soundboard](#). Changes of chords also emphasize the most important downbeats. When a dancers are present, they use their feet as a percussion instrument.

[[edit](#)] **Forms of flamenco expression**

Flamenco is expressed through the *toque* -- the playing of the flamenco guitar, the *cante* (singing), and the *baile* (dancing)

[[edit](#)] **Toque**

Main article: [Flamenco guitar](#)

The flamenco guitar (and the very similar [classical guitar](#)) is a descendent from the [lute](#). The first guitars are thought to have originated in Spain in the 15th century. The traditional flamenco guitar is made of Spanish [cypress](#) and [spruce](#), and is lighter in weight and a bit smaller than a classical guitar, to give the output a 'sharper' sound. The flamenco guitar, in contrast to the classical, is also equipped with a barrier, called a [golpeador](#). This is often plastic, similar to a pick guard, and protects the

body of the guitar from the rhythmic finger taps, called [golpes](#). The flamenco guitar is also used in several different ways from the classical guitar, including different strumming patterns and styles, as well as the use of a [capo](#) in many circumstances.

[\[edit\]](#) Cante



Flamenco performance by the [La Primavera](#) group



Foreigners often think that the essence of flamenco is the dance. However, the heart of flamenco is the song (cante). Although to the uninitiated, flamenco seems totally extemporaneous, these cantes (songs) and bailes (dances) follow strict musical and poetic rules. The verses (coplas) of these songs often are beautiful and concise poems, and the style of the flamenco copla was often imitated by Andalusian poets. [Garcia Lorca](#) is perhaps the best known of these poets. In the 1920s he, along with the composer [Manuel de Falla](#) and other intellectuals, crusaded to raise the status of flamenco as an art form and preserve its purity. But the future of flamenco is uncertain. Flamenco is tied to the conditions and culture of Andalusia in the past, and as Spain modernizes and integrates into the European community, it is questionable whether flamenco can survive the social and economic changes.

Cante flamenco can be categorized in a number of ways. First, a cante may be categorized according to whether it follows a strict rhythmic pattern ("compas") or follows a free rhythm ("libre"). The cantes with compas fit one of four compas patterns. These compas-types are generally known by the name of the most important cante of the group. Thus

1. Solea
2. Siguriya
3. Tango
4. Fandango

The solea group includes the cantes: solea; romances, solea por bulerias, alegrías (cantinas); La Cana; El Polo

[\[edit\]](#) Baile

El baile flamenco is a highly-expressive solo dance, known for its emotional sweeping of the arms and rhythmic stomping of the feet. While flamenco dancers (*bailaors* and *bailaoras*) invest a considerable amount of study and practice into their art form, the dances are not choreographed, but are improvised along the *palo* or rhythm. In addition to the percussion provided by the heels of the dancers striking the floor, [castanets](#) are sometimes held in the hands and clicked together rapidly to the rhythm of the music. Sometimes, folding fans are used for visual effect.

[\[edit\]](#) Palos



Performers in [Seville](#)



Flamenco music styles are called *palos* in Spanish. There are over 50 different *palos* flamenco, although some of them are rarely performed. A *palo* can be defined as [musical form](#) of flamenco. Flamenco songs are classified into palos based on several musical and non-musical criteria such as its basic [rhythmic pattern](#), [mode](#), [chord progression](#), form of the [stanza](#), or geographic origin. The rhythmic patterns of the palos are also often called *compás*. A *compás* (the Spanish normal word for either [time signature](#) or [bar](#)) is characterised by a recurring pattern of beats and accents.

To really understand the different palos, it is also important to understand their musical and cultural context:

- The mood intention of the palo (for example, dancing - [Alegrías](#), consolation - [Soleá](#), fun - [Buleria](#), etc.). Although *palos* are associated with type of feeling or mood, this is by no means rigid.
- The set of typical melodic phrases, called *falsetas*, which are often used in performances of a certain palo.
- The relation to similar palos.
- Cultural traditions associated with a palo (ie: men's dance - [Farruca](#))

Some of the forms are sung unaccompanied, while others usually have a guitar and sometimes other accompaniment. Some forms are danced while others traditionally are not. Amongst both the songs and the dances, some are traditionally the reserve of men and others of women, while still others could be performed by either sex. Many of these traditional distinctions are now breaking down; for example, the *Farruca* is traditionally a man's dance, but is now commonly performed by women too. Many flamenco artists, including some considered to be amongst the greatest, have specialised in a single flamenco form.

The classification of flamenco *palos* is not entirely uncontentious, but a common traditional classification is into three groups. The deepest, most serious forms are known as *cante jondo* (or *cante grande*), while relatively light, frivolous forms are called *cante chico*. Other non-musical considerations often factor into this classification, such as whether the origin of the *palo* is considered to be gypsy or not. Forms which do not fit into either category but lie somewhere between them are classified as *cante intermedio*. However, there is no general agreement on how to classify each *palo*. Whereas there is general agreement that the [soleá](#), [seguriya](#) and

the [tonás](#) must be considered *cante jondo*, there is wide controversy on where to place cantes like the [fandango](#), [malagueña](#), or [tientos](#). Many flamenco fans tend to disregard this classification as highly subjective, or else they considered that, whatever makes a song *cante grande* is not the song itself but the depth of the interpreter.

The classification below reflects another traditional classification of cantes more based on rhythmic pattern, but also taking the origin into account.

[[edit](#)] **Toná Palos (usually known as [Cantes a palo seco](#))**

- [Debla](#)
- [Martinetes](#)
- [Carceleras](#)
- [Saetas](#)
- [Tonás](#)
- [Trilla](#)

[[edit](#)] **Palos based on the [Soleá](#) rhythm**

- [Alboreá](#)
- [Bulerías](#) - [Bulerías](#) (*Luis Maravilla. 31 seconds,133Kb*) and [Jaleos](#) from [extremadura](#) (a variety of [Bulerías](#))
- The related palos [Caña](#) and [Polo \(flamenco palo\)](#)
- The [Cantiñas](#) group, including:
 - [Alegrías](#)
 - [Caracoles](#)
 - [Mirabrás](#)
 - [Romerías](#)
 - other [Cantiñas](#)
- [Peteneras](#)
- [Romances](#)
- [Soleá](#) - [Soleares](#) (*Juan Serrano. 30 seconds,118Kb*) and [Bulerías por Soleá](#).

[[edit](#)] **Palos derived from Fandango**

- [Fandangos](#) de Huelva
- [Fandangos orientales](#) (from Eastern Andalusia and Murcia)
 - [Fandangos abandolaos](#), including:
 - [Verdiales](#)
 - [Rondeñas](#)
 - [Jabera](#)
 - [Fandangos libres](#) (free of rhythmic pattern):
 - [Granaínas](#)

- [Media Granaína](#)
- [Malagueñas](#)
- [Cantes de las minas](#) (songs originated in mining areas): [Minera](#), [Tarantos](#), [Tarantas](#), [Cartageneras](#), [Murciana](#), [Levántica](#), [Cantes de madrugá](#)
- Fandangos personales (personal creations)

[\[edit\]](#) Seguiriya Palos

- [Cabales](#)
- [Livianas](#)
- [Siguiriyas](#) - (also *seguiriyas*) [Siguiriyas](#) ([Carlos Montoya](#). 30 seconds,135Kb)
- [Serrana](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Palos with a Tango rhythm

- [Farruca](#) - [Farruca](#) ([Sabicas](#). 35 seconds,147Kb)
- [Garrotín](#)
- [Marianas](#)
- [Tarantos](#) (when played for dance).
- [Tientos](#)
- [Tanguillos](#)
- [Tango](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Palos de "Ida y vuelta"

Other palos with a tango rhythm are often considered as "Ida y vuelta", that is, originated in Spanish America.

- Colombianas
- [Guajiras](#) - [Guajiras](#) ([Sabicas](#). 35 seconds,158Kb)
- [Milonga](#)
- [Rumba](#)
- [Vidalitas](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Other palos of difficult classification

- [Campanilleros](#)
- [Bambera](#)
- [Sevillanas](#)
- [Nanas](#)
- [Zambras](#)

- [Zorongo](#)

[[edit](#)] Flamenco artists

Flamenco occurs in two types of settings. The first, the *juerga* is an informal gathering where people are free to join in creating music. This can include dancing, singing, *palmas* (hand clapping), or simply pounding in rhythm on an old orange crate or a table. Flamenco, in this context, is very dynamic: it adapts to the local talent, instrumentation, and mood of the audience. One tradition remains firmly in place: singers are the most important part.

The professional concert is more formal and organized. The traditional singing performance has only a singer and one guitar, while a dancing performance usually included two or three guitars, one or more singers (singing in turns, as in traditional flamenco singers always sing ([solo](#)), and one or more dancers. A guitar concert used to include a single guitarist, with no other support, though this is now extremely rare except for a few guitarists like [Dylan Hunt](#) or, occasionally, [Gerardo Núñez](#). The so-called [New flamenco](#) has included other instruments, like the now ubiquitous [cajón](#), [flutes](#) or [saxophones](#), piano or other keyboards, or even the [bass guitar](#) and the [electric guitar](#). Examples of this can be heard in Rafael's (another guitarist, and fine exponent of this art) beautiful piece called “Mezquita” downloadable at his official site [www.flamencoguitarist.com].

A great number of flamenco artists are not capable of performing in both settings at the same level. There are still many artists, and some of them with a good level, who only perform in *juergas*, or at most in private parties with a small audience. As to their training in the art, traditional flamenco artists never received any formal training: they learnt in the context of the family, by listening and watching their relations, friends and neighbours. Since the appearance of recordings, though, they have relied more and more on audiovisual materials to learn from other famous artists. Nowadays, dancers and guitarists (and sometimes even singers) take lessons in schools or in short courses organized by famous performers. Some guitarists can even read music or learn from teachers in others styles like [classical guitar](#) or [jazz](#), and many dancers take courses in [contemporary dance](#) or [Classical Spanish ballet](#).

An overview of the various flamenco artists can be found in the following categories:

- [Category: Flamenco singers](#)
- [Category: Flamenco guitarists](#)
- [Category: Flamenco dancers](#)
- [Category: Flamenco bands](#)

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[[edit](#)] See also

- [Paco de Lucia](#)
- [Flamenco guitar](#)
- [Golden age of Jewish culture in Spain](#)
- [La Convivencia](#)
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