

## TRADITIONAL SPANISH MUSICAL GENRES

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**Abstract**

A lot of references have been made during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries with regard to Andalusian pair-dances (bailes de candil), which are considered to be one of the main sources for flamenco. Similarities as well as differences exist between these bailes de candil and the first flamenco performances: in the bailes de candil, the focus of the whole fiesta was the pair-dance (especially fandango), whereas in flamenco the solo dancing and singing performance by a woman was the main point of interest. La fiesta flamenca was initially organized in patios, coffee houses, theatres, on improvised stages or at festivals and involved a greater or a smaller degree of professionalism and artistic elaboration.

A significant contribution in shaping the flamenco song has been brought by the models of the time (for example, caña, polo, various tonas, romances, playeras, serranas and fandangos – the malagueña and rondena types); in dancing, el bolero, among other solo types of dancing, such as cachucha, ole, jaleo, malagueña, torero and zapateado, represented an ambient whose elements have been adopted by flamenco aesthetics.

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Nevertheless, the first flamenco era can be established in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, though not before 1820, and placed in Sevilla, specifically in the Triana district (which was, in fact, closely tied to the rest of the city).

Various research studies led to the conclusion that the origins of flamenco could be traced in the old Andalusian dance festivals, known as *bailes de candil*, which have been referred to since the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Starting from the last third of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, significant documents appeared with regard to the “national” dances that have been performed on stage in Spanish theaters: *boléras* și *boléros* – as academic variants of the well-known *sequidillas sevillanas* or *fandangos* from the Andalusian dance festivals. These types of dancing have been considered by many foreign travellers as „*the true Spanish dance*”. Some of those travellers reached to that conclusion only because they had not been able to attend performances of *candil*, but only of *boléros* dancing in theaters. Others, instead, considered the *boléro* as the fashionable variant – between members of urban classes at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century - of the *old fandango*, performed only by the lower popular classes.

Documentary sources placed the starting of the decline of such gatherings in Southern Spain at around the middle of the 19th century.

In his book, „El flamenco y los románticos”, Rocío Plaza noticed that starting from 1830, foreigners passing through Sevilla have been recorded in their writings an original behaviour pattern for that period of time: high society people could afford organizing private parties in which singing and dancing performances were given by Gipsy groups. It has been, thus, recorded the advent of the first flamenco manifestations. For a performance to be identified as a flamenco representation or soiree, a simple pair-dance (baile de candil) performed by a significant number of Gipsy people was not enough; the performance should have emerged as a natural result of the need for self expression or it should have been happening within a ludic-festive ambience, at least.

1922 proved to be a beneficial year for flamenco, as Spanish intellectuals overtly embraced this type of performance by organizing a Song Contest in Granada. Working closely with Federico García Lorca, Manuel de Falla was the main producer of that great event.

Flamenco had thus the chance to take important steps forward, considering the traditions preserved within it and the multitude of authentic performers who emerged in the first decades of the 20th century: Manuel Torre, Paco Cepero, El Gloria, Aurelio de Cádiz, Juanito Mojama, Pepe Marchena, Manolo Caracol, Niña de los Peines, Cojo de Málaga, Carmen Amaya, Vicente Escudero or Sabicas. Yet, audiences and record companies preferred stylistic mixtures and spectacular stagings, in other words they were partial to what was perceived as flamenco at the respective moment.

Manuel de Falla's initiative was, even though not immediately, the key event in the future history of flamenco. For the first time, this type of art of popular origins received a crucial support from intellectuals, renowned artists – musicians, writers, and painters alike – and mass-media. De Falla had to fight the lack of understanding coming from the Granada “officials” (and not only from them), but the contest eventually took place with a great success. Through that contest, Manuel de Falla intended to revive a series of old popular songs, considered as extinct, and so he succeeded.

It is known that flamenco is built upon a series of classic musical forms of singing: soleares, seguirias, fandangos, alegrías etc.

The origin of songs to appear in the first flamenco performances is highly diverse and resides in:

- the traditional Andalusian songs (tonás), usually work songs (especially in their gipsy variants) – generically known as cañas or playeras, which means sad or melancholic songs, and not as seguiriyas, as they will appear later;
- the songs that have been inspired less by the tradition, but more directly by Andalusian author songs, very fashionable within the urban environment of the time: petenera, vito, guajira cubana, alegría;
- the songs that were traditionally linked with dancing, generically known as fandangos, but also tangos, jaleos, zapateado, manguindoy.

Musical trends of the time, along with Andalusian popular music, had a real contribution in shaping the form of the flamenco song. Broadly speaking, the song types

that prevailed in the first half of the 19th century were: caña, polo, various tonds, romances (corridos), playeras, serranas and fandangos (the malagueña and rondeña types).

Some of them can be easily compared to one another, in terms of their form. We shall briefly focus on the fandango. Depending on their place of origin, there are two types of folkloric fandangos; both have been sung as an accompaniment for a specific type of dancing and performed at Andalucian folkloric festivals, which were very popular at the end of the 19th century (los bailes de candil). We are talking about the fandango for dancing originating in Almonaster (Huelva) and the verdial fandango from the coastal zone between Granada and Malaga, known as the „malagueña”. Both of them have four or five octosyllabic verses organized in stanzas and are sung in the F Phrygian mode, with a ternary meter and a melismatic style, abundant in repeated seconds. Each of both types of fandango has six phrases of music, where the last one ends in a Phrygian cadence. Lastly, both can be accompanied by a chord sequence which is characteristic for the Southern Spain fandangos: E-C-F-C-G-C-F-E.

All the above-mentioned distinctive features apply to flamenco fandangos, too. In this respect, the musical material of one of Paco Toronjo's fandangos is related to that of the folkloric fandango from Almonaster, being in fact inspired by it, while another flamenco fandango, a „cante abandolao”, represents a kind of a social rewriting of folkloric verdial fandangos (which have been here previously described).

The above-mentioned examples belong to the class of „measured” flamenco fandangos. In the malagueña del Canario, measure or rhythm has been altered and the traditional fixed form has been redesigned, thus resulting a personal and more „artistic” form. Nevertheless, the six phrases of music, the melismatic style, the basic chord sequence and some other elements that formally links this type of song to its original „folkloric model” have been preserved.

In his book on flamenco, Alain Gobin indicated that interpreters as Chacon, Juan Brea, La Niña de Los Peines and many others made use of a pre-existent structure in the creation of their own songs. They all stylistically preserved the same structure as that of verdials or malagueñas. It was the genius of the interpreters that gave new life to their creations and changed a traditional song into a personal one; hence the name „fandangos personales”, used by singers with their own specific style. That transfer phenomenon is characteristic for flamenco, yet not exclusive to it; similar phenomena of redesigning traditional repertoires appeared in various places all over Spain: in Asturia – tonada or asturianada, in Valencia – cant d'estil, in Canare – folias, malagueñas etc., in Navarra and Aragon – jotas de estilo. It was flamenco, though, the one that gained popularity as an artistic phenomenon; the causes of that popularity may reside in the beauty of its dancing and musical forms or in the idiosyncrasy of Andalucian people. They might be also due to the fact that it was the Gipsy people – with a considerable lack of culture - the one who assumed the important role in developing the style of flamenco, or even to the climate. Most probably, the causes are a mixture of all those aspects.

The evolution of musical forms from the folkloric ones to those considered to be very „flamencas” cannot be historically traced in time. The place and the occasion

characteristic for flamenco singing and dancing were initially different from those that were characteristic for folklore singing; la fiesta flamenca was organized in patios, coffee houses, theaters, with improvised stages, at festivals etc. and included some degree of professionalism and artistic elaboration.

Instead, the occasions and places where traditional folkloric music and dancing - that influenced flamenco - were being performed, varied in accordance with their type and function: dancing melodies like fandangos were being performed at „bailes de candil” (dancing by candlelight); cantos de trabajo, saetas or nanas were being sung at the proper moment, respectively while working in the field, at the paraliturgical celebrations during Holy Week, or as lullabies, when mothers wanted their babies to go to sleep. None of these occasions, as diverse they might be, were ever linked to the idea of performance, staging or of any artistic endeavour.

Many have guessed in flamenco the presence of Andalusian folklore, but this idea has become blurred over the years due to the confusion that flamenco would have been an exclusively Gipsy-inspired form of art. Actually, the influences that flamenco received in time did not originate in Andalusian folklore only; they are a lot more complex and various in origins.

Starting with the 1920s, a very popular repertoire of „salon music” emerged, including tiranas, polos, tangos, habaneras, peteneras, malagueñas, guajiras etc., which can be easily considered as „author songs” that have been created on the basis of a traditional model; those songs determined the development of the new form of flamenco in the first half of the 20th century, when flamenco was in the process of formation.

Originating in a society more open to global trends, the flamenco of the 20th century reflects the mixing practices of the 8th decade, practices whose proportion grew among musical amateurs when traditional music started to be less and less tied to local national or racial entities and, consequently, began to circulate within a bricolage global de estilos, discursos y experiencias musicales. The trend became even stronger when new flamenco performers started receiving economically interesting proposals from recording companies to create fusions between flamenco and other musical styles. Although these performers had been listening to and singing tientos, soleares, bulerías și fandangos since early childhood, they educated themselves within another general environment and became, thus, well acquainted with the new musical “codes” - such as rock, pop, jazz, samba, salsa etc.

Regardless of how many standpoints and how unfavourable some of them might be, the art of flamenco will neither disappear, nor lose its identity.

It is already a certitude the fact that flamenco has ceased to be a minority phenomenon within the world of performing arts. One must admit that flamenco has become a genre at its peak.

True flamenco artists have preserved their respect for tradition, for classical forms and for the masters of past times; they learned to look back for inspiration and to project their originality into the future.

Consequently, the flamenco art at the end of the millenium could be defined as a particular and constant dialogue between tradition and contemporary times, as a dialectics through which tradition is being permanently reinvented and subjectively idealized by those who serve it with their mastery and commitment.

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