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Universidad de Sevilla/Facultad de Geografía e Historia

Course S-05

**INITIATION TO THE PRACTICE OF FLAMENCO THROUGH
RHYTHM, DANCE, SINGING AND GUITAR**

(45 class hours – Language of instruction: English)

Lecturer: Prof. Alejandro Varela (varelartes@gmail.com)

INTRODUCTION

The flamenco-appreciative audience is not usually a mere passive spectator. To fully understand and enjoy a flamenco performance, or even to participate in an improvised get-together, it is essential to be knowledgeable, with regard to its practical dimension, about the language of song (cante), dance (baile) and guitar music (toque). We will approach flamenco music not only as an art form but as a shared cultural expression of the Andalusian identity, history, and spirit.

Accordingly, in this course, we will learn about the rich legacy of all the different cultures involved in the creation and evolution of this genre.

In this journey, we will discover that Flamenco roots trace back to the blending of Moorish, Jewish, Roma, and indigenous Andalusian traditions, each of which shaped the unique sound, emotional depth, and improvisational nature of flamenco music, dance, and song.

One of the exclusive characteristics of flamenco is its percussive accompaniment with hand-clapping by using one's palms, as well as feet tapping, where the performer participant has to master the complex rhythmic language of this Andalusian art. In the course of a performance, the hand-clappers have the function of maintaining the base-line of the rhythm (rhythmic cycles), while, at the same time, they must be able to react to the stretches of improvisation in which the other performers (the singer, the guitarist, and the dancer) may become involved, since it is those same handclappers constitute the link among the three disciplines.

OBJECTIVES

One of the master keys to the understanding of the language of flamenco is that of rhythmic measure. Thus, it is that this Course has the following objectives:

1. To bring the student closer to the expression of this art through the practice of percussive accompaniment (hand-clapping by using one's palms, knocking sounds, whistling sounds, noisy back-up, etc.).
2. Understand the historical context and cultural influences that shaped flamenco music.

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3. To know the traditional structures of flamenco dance and understand the language and codes used by the different disciplines.
4. Explore the social and political changes in Spain that contributed to the evolution of flamenco.
5. To develop students' rhythmic and choreographic memory.
6. Identify and distinguish the various palos or flamenco forms based on their geographical origins and rhythmic structures.
7. To promote the ability to work as a team.

REQUIREMENTS

No prior knowledge of flamenco is required. No guitar is needed.

The use of some sort of recording device (an actual recorder, mobile phone, etc.) will be necessary.

METHODOLOGY

All the theoretical content of the Course is designed to facilitate its subsequent implementation by means of the following procedures:

1. Rhythm-based exercises using a metronome at different speeds.
2. Throughout the Course, accompanying invited artists with hand-clapping, while making use of one's palms, too.
3. The performance of simple choreographic fragments of dance.
4. The analysis of the melodic structures of basic singing styles, as well as of traditional flamenco guitar repertoire.

SYLLABUS

The syllabus content is organized in two blocks:

I. Theoretical content

1. Analyze flamenco as a socio-cultural phenomenon, recognizing the contributions of the various cultures and key figures involved in the creation of this artistic expression.
2. Study of the fundamental concepts of rhythm and rhythmic values, as well as binary, ternary, and combination measures.
3. Analysis of the traditional structure of the key dance types: explanation of the use and characteristics of the structural elements involved (waiting beats, rhythmic cadences, callings out loud, foot tapping, and final rhythmic cadences)

II. Practical content

1. To learn and practice the technique of palm-based hand-clapping (open and

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muffled) to achieve precision through:

- a clean and homogeneous sound
- coordination between hands and feet

2. Execution of the basic rhythmic values: black notes, quavers, semi-quavers, triplets and rests.

3. Identify the most common flamenco *palos* or styles by engaging with audio and video materials.

4. Understand the roll and the basic techniques associated with the flamenco guitar.

5.

Working on measures typical of tangos (binary), sevillanas (ternary), sure-measured *bulerías* and fast-time *alegrías* (as 12-beat combinations).

6. Approach to the popular dance styles of sevillanas and rumbas.

Bibliography

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Marín, L. F. (2004). *Teoría musical del flamenco: ritmo, armonía, melodía, forma*. Acordes Concert.

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ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

- Mid-way Exam: 20%
- End-of-Semester Exam: 30%
- Final Essay Assignment 20%
- Active Participation: 30%