

NEW YORK CITY CENTER
EDUCATION

FLAMENCO FESTIVAL

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BEHIND THE CURTAIN: FLAMENCO FESTIVAL

Your personal guide to the production.



Photo by Saratana de Yepes

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THE HISTORY OF FLAMENCO

BY JOSE SOLÍS



When you think about Spain, your mind most likely conjures images of men and women in flamenco attire: *bailadoras* (dancers) decked in body-hugging dresses that blossom into a cascade of ruffles at the bottom, and men (*bailadores*) in slightly more restrained outfits comprised of dark pants, fabric belts, and loose-fitting shirts. As you imagine these outfits, you're probably listening to slow claps (*palmas*) and the clicking of castanets, setting a beat that will soon be flooded by a stirring guitar, and the voice of a Gypsy singing about longing and heartbreak, or profound happiness.

Although it is now considered the quintessential Spanish art form—declared one of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2010—flamenco rose as a form of expression for the Romani people who had been persecuted by Christians since their arrival in the Iberian Peninsula.

For more than three centuries, the Spanish attempted to remove the Romani, since they were faithful to the cultural traditions they had brought with them. Many perished under decrees imposed by the monarchy, including the 18th century's Gran Redada, which had the purpose of extinguishing them. You only need to read Miguel de Cervantes' *The Little Gypsy Girl* to understand how the Romani were seen.

Although there is no evidence of when exactly flamenco started, historical records mention how gypsies would often sing, which makes researchers believe the singing (*cante*) is the egg from which dance (*baile*) and guitar (*guitarra*) hatched. Flamenco singers sang to themselves, trying to make sense of the unwelcoming world around them—"cantando la pena se olvida" (singing makes sorrow go away)—and when this was highlighted by the emotions of a guitar and the power conveyed with dance moves, the art form slowly popularized throughout the country, aided greatly by the Gypsies' nomadic nature.

In the 19th century, as flamenco became more popular (New York City's first flamenco performance occurred in the 1840s), it also became the center of debate between various political factions in Spain. Nationalists, aided by the Catholic Church, deemed it too foreign an art form to convey Spanish identity, while progressives believed flamenco and bullfighting were backwards practices, keeping Spain from moving forward. Despite the demonization of the art form across history, flamenco has become a symbol of the Romani people's resilience, not to mention proof that the beat of castanets is nothing more but the heartbeat of a people who survived and kept creating beauty.

Under Francisco Franco's dictatorship, flamenco went from being appropriated as a symbol of nationalism to becoming a form of protest once radical poets and writers realized the power contained in the form. Can you think of other musical styles and art forms that have achieved something similar? American jazz, with which flamenco shares many traits, comes to mind.

Since the 1970s and all the way to today, movements led by young artists have shown that flamenco isn't just your grandparents' music. Artists like Paco de Lucía y Camarón de la Isla (referenced by Rosalía in "Con altura") began fusing flamenco with other genres like rock, bossa nova, and Arabic music. Pata Negra, a band that infuses flamenco with blues, similarly reinvigorates the tradition.

Pinning down what flamenco is today would be futile, given that the art form has branched out to make room for artists who cherish the flamenco of yore (Rosario Flores, Estrella Morente, Paco de Lucía) and those who push the form into the future through experimentation (Rosalía, La Mala Rodríguez, or MAKKA). Flamenco is a spring that will always feed the thirsty—"Como el agua" (like water) as sung by Camarón back in 1981—an unstoppable force of nature that always makes its way to where its most needed.

GLOSSARY

Click the links below to watch these moves in action.
[Hear from Teaching Artist Xianix Barrera.](#)

Baile: Flamenco dancing

Bailadoras/Bailadores: Dancers

Braceo: Arm work - movement of the arms during the flamenco dance

Cajón: A box-shaped percussion instrument

Cante: Flamenco singing

Compás: Rhythmic cycle of beats, measures and rhythms

Farruca: A form of flamenco music that is traditionally danced to only by men

Floreo: Handwork, the movement a dancer makes with their hands while dancing. In Spanish means “to flower”

Guitarra: Guitar

Jaleo: A chorus in which dancers and the singer clap. It can also be words or expressions of encouragement

Juerga: A lively and communal flamenco celebration, often involving a “jam session” or “free-style” movements

Llamada: A call, or dance break to signal the change of a section

Marcaje: Marking step, it is particularly used when the singer is singing

Palmas: A style of handclapping used in flamenco music, an essential form of percussion to help punctuate and accentuate the song and dance

Palmas Claras: Louder, higher-pitched claps, created when the fingers of the strong hand land into the open palm of the weak hand.

Palmas Sordas: Softer, low pitched or muted clapping done with cupped hands, often by the singer

Percusión Corporeal: Body percussion

Pitos: Finger snapping

Redoble: Rhythmic patterns with double beats; redobles are usually used in the dance to provide dynamic accents.

Taconeo: Footwork associated chiefly with the heel, involving rhythmic patterns.

Tangos: A lively dynamic dance and song form within the flamenco style

Toque: Flamenco guitar

Vueltas: Flamenco turns

The origin of the word “flamenco” is a mystery! One theory, proposed by Andalusian historian Blas Infante, suggests that the word comes from the Hispano-Arabic phrase *fellah mengu*, meaning “expelled peasant”.



FLOREO



BRACEO



PALMAS CLARAS



PITOS



PALMAS SORDAS

FLAMENCO CROSSWORD

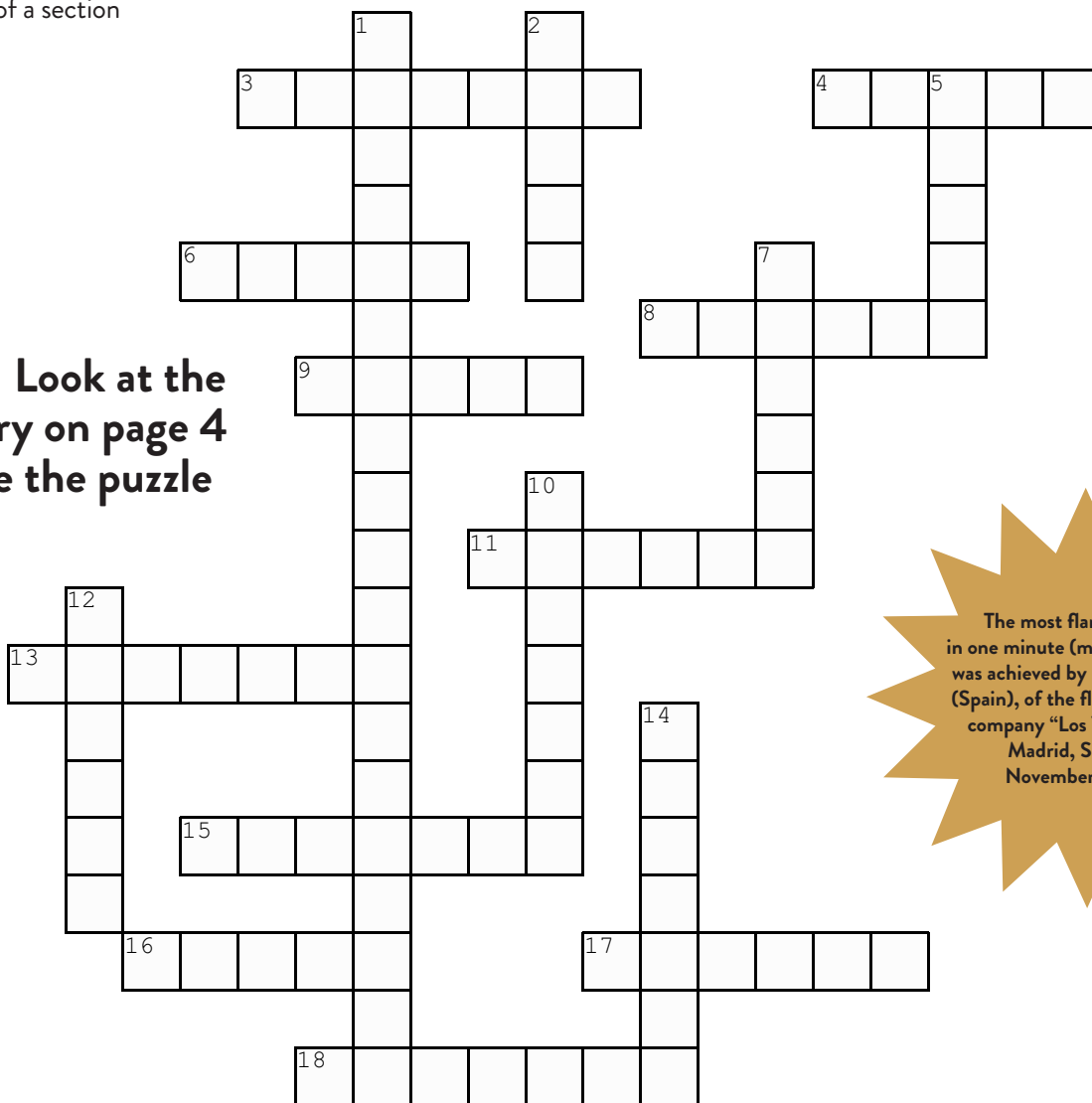
ACROSS

3. Flamenco turns
4. A box-shaped percussion instrument
6. Flamenco guitar
8. Handwork, in Spanish means “to flower”
9. Finger snapping
11. A lively dynamic dance and song form within the flamenco style
13. Footwork associated chiefly with the heel
15. Rhythmic patterns with double beats
16. Flamenco singing
17. A lively and communal flamenco celebration
18. A call, or dance break to signal the change of a section

DOWN

1. Body percussion
2. Flamenco dancing
5. A chorus in which dancers and the singer clap
7. Rhythmic cycle of beats and rhythms
10. A marking step
12. A style of hand-clapping used in flamenco music
14. A form of flamenco music that is traditionally danced to only by men

HINT: Look at the Glossary on page 4 to solve the puzzle



(Answer Key on page 12)

Career Page:

LIGHTING DESIGNER



MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES

| Researching your design vision

| Drafting light plots (a lighting design blueprint) and additional paperwork (rental lists, shop orders, etc.) that communicate the technical requirements of the design to the production and electrics team

| Focusing the lights in the space; unless it is a moving light, each light needs to be manually focused to its intended spot

| Programming the light cues on the console so that the looks can be recalled sequentially and with the correct time during the event

Behind the Curtain provide audiences with a deeper understanding of the creative process and the world of the production.

Alejandro Fajardo is a Colombian lighting designer based in Lenapehoking/Brooklyn. Alejandro strongly believes that art and imagination can help guide our communities through the current crises we face, and build a new future that centers community care and growth. Alejandro has designed lighting for a variety of experiences including opera, theater, dance, music festivals, New York Fashion Week shows, and even escape rooms. He is also one of the associate lighting designers for New York City Center's Fall for Dance Festival. Learn more about his work at www.alejofaj.com and read this conversation with Alejandro to learn more about careers in lighting design.

What does a lighting designer do? How do they contribute to a production?

My primary responsibility as a lighting designer is to direct the audience's focus to the performance happening on stage. Each production needs its own specific design, based on the story we are telling: where and how we tell it. I collaborate with the rest of the creative team to find the right design, and then use the tools of intensity, angle, color, texture, and movement to build it.

I work with the director and other designers to start imagining a world and develop a design vocabulary to build it. I then create a series of light plots, drawings, and paperwork to communicate the design to the head electrician and lighting crew, who install it and help me focus it. During the technical rehearsals I work with a programmer to set the cues, levels, and timing. We spend a lot of time watching the show in different ways during rehearsals and previews to refine the design until we open. It really takes a huge team to put on a performance or event.

What influences your decisions about lighting? Does the design process differ between art forms (dance/musical theater/concerts/fashion)?

I take a lot of things into consideration as I build a design. The context and scale of the performance are huge factors; a regional theater play has very different lighting needs than a fashion show or a music festival site. Although the scale changes, the main goal is the same: Where do people need to look, and what should they feel? I like to think of the overall flow of any performance from the moment the audience enters the venue until they leave, and to set the tone that the production calls for.

As I develop the design for a specific production, I look at all the information that is already set: What is the budget and the schedule? What have the other designers already created? I start building up a mental image of what the different moments feel like. What colors come to mind for different scenes or characters? How much brightness or shadow do we need? How many people are onstage on any given moment? I can dream as big as I want but many things are dependent on

logistics and there will only be so much money, time, and equipment.

Each performance style has different design frameworks that I build from. For example, in dance the performance is built around the movement of the dancers on the stage. The lighting needs to help the dancers pop out from the background so that we can clearly see how their bodies move. Music is naturally abstract, so a concert invites bold lighting that offers a visual interpretation of what we hear. I try to build as much atmosphere as I can while maintaining a clear composition in the design.

What is the best part of your job? What is the most challenging?

I enjoy creating lighting that is not just seen but felt. Lighting has a lot of power in transforming our sense of space and time; it can transport the audience.

On the other hand, this can be a stressful job! Lighting cues will always have to be adjusted live during tech, which is often already on a limited schedule. This means I have to be able to work quickly and efficiently to get the lighting set so that we can get through the rest of the show. I also spend a lot of time on the road, often traveling every couple of weeks to a different place for a different project. I have had to develop a lot of stress management tools to develop a routine while I am on the road.

What advice do you have for aspiring lighting designers?

Lighting design is a big field! Our work is seen not just on stage but on film and TV, at concerts and events, conferences, restaurants, bars: everywhere. Look around and you will always see lighting being used. Many design schools put a lot of focus on a successful career—meaning that you are working on Broadway—but it's important to remember that that theater is only one of the many places our skills are used. There is creative and financial value to spreading out to a variety of industries.

Practice your composition and design skills! We are constantly making visual frames in our lighting design work. It is important to practice observing how light exists naturally in the world, and how to frame visual elements to create an interesting and exciting composition.

See a lot of work and pay close attention to the work that inspires and excites you! Reach out to designers or directors whose work you find interesting. Pay attention to the tools they use so that you can be constantly expanding your design toolkit. Ask people if you can get coffee with them or visit them in tech. We are a small community, and there are a lot of great people willing to share their knowledge and experiences.

Remember: Lighting happens with a whole team. There are viable careers in many different elements of lighting, from production electricians to stagehands, programmers, assistants, and associates. Many of these jobs are protected by strong unions and have much more financial stability than the freelance design career.

RELEVANT SKILLS & INTERESTS

Design & Composition Skills

(photography, graphic design, video design, art, painting, rendering)

Data Management & Organization

“We keep track of a lot of data. Be familiar with spreadsheets and Computer Aided Design (CAD) software.”

An Eye For Color

“Many lighting designers have natural connections between color and emotion that they can translate to lighting on stage.”

Computer Programming & Digital Skills

“Our lighting design consoles are just specialized computers. Having a good understanding of how to program simple commands will translate to skills in lighting programming.”

CAREER PATHWAYS

See a lot of work! It is an important step to start shaping your personal visual aesthetic. Seeing others' work and getting a sense of how they use lighting may inspire you and help you see lighting differently.

Find local theaters and try to get to know the people working in the production departments. They may also have internship programs or work opportunities that can provide hands-on training.

Get a sense of the technology being used. There are a handful of brands that create much of the technology we used in the field. Understanding their products is an important part of knowing how to use them.

Try to get a sense of the working lighting designers in your area. Research colleges and universities with lighting programs and you can get a sense of who is working near you. Then reach out to them!

Networking is the most important way of getting work! Build a design community around you!

ACTIVITY 1

New York City Center’s 2023 Flamenco Festival features flamenco choreographer Sara Baras and her work, *Alma*. Baras uses her father’s favorite music, *bolero* (a style of music that originated in Cuba), as the musical score for her flamenco choreography in place of traditional flamenco music.

Boleros are popular throughout Latin America and are often love songs; they have a smooth danceable style that is in sharp contrast to the bold, high-energy music that is usually heard with flamenco. For Sara Baras, *bolero* music has personal meaning connected to memories of her father. Combining her flamenco movement with this “memory” music is an homage to him.

What happens when we combine our own memory music with an unexpected art form? Check out the activity below to explore!

In the following activity, you will

STEP 1 Choose a piece of music

STEP 2 Share your songs

STEP 3 Review

STEP 4 Experiment

STEP 5 Final Performance!

STEP 1 Choose a piece of music that holds a special memory for you.

You can choose:

- a song that connects to a past time or event
- a song that suggests a memory of someone/something important
- a song that connects to your personal identity

STEP 2 Share your songs (1 - 2 minutes) with a partner using headphones, phones, Bluetooth speakers, or other devices.

After listening to each other's songs, write several words that describe your partner's music in the space below. What does your partner's music make you think of?



Now, compare and contrast your music and your partner's music:
In what two ways are the songs similar?

In what two ways are the songs different?

Next, share the notes you wrote about your partner's song with them and read the notes they wrote about yours.
How are your responses similar? How are they different?

STEP 3 Review the flamenco movements you've learned.

These movements include rhythms of the feet, curving movements of the arms, hand clapping and body percussion, walking and turns.

Working with your partner, create a short dance phrase with the flamenco movements. The phrase should include:

- four different movements in any sequence
- a clear beginning and ending

Note: Movements may also be repeated or done with different body part.

Practice your new flamenco phrase to traditional flamenco music; when you're ready, share it with the class!

STEP 4 Experiment with the dance/music connection by performing your new flamenco phrase to the two special music pieces that you and your partner brought for the lesson.

After practicing with both songs, choose one of musical selections to accompany your flamenco phrase.

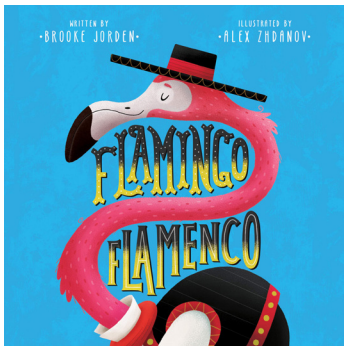
STEP 5 Final Performance!

Share your new combinations of flamenco movement and music with your class. After all the duets are performed, reflect on the following questions, and write your responses below:

- How is the movement changed when it is danced to new or unexpected music?
- How is the music affected when it is paired with flamenco movement?
- How do we experience the music that has special meaning to us when it is combined with movement?



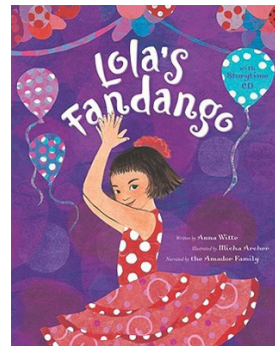
RECOMMENDED DANCE BOOKS



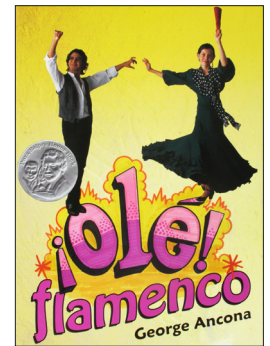
Flamingo Flamenco
by Brooke Jordan



I Want to Dance Flamenco!
by Azucena Huidobro



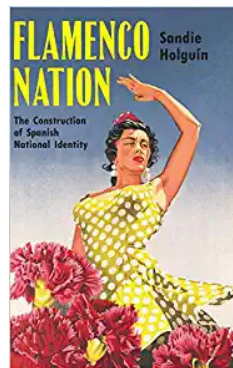
Lola's Fandango
by Anne Witte



OLE Flamenco
by George Ancona



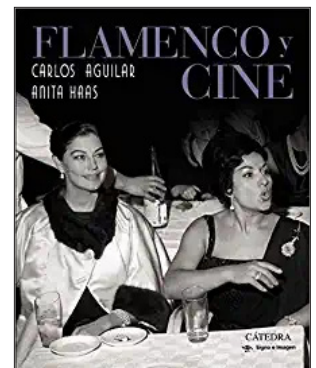
Flamenco: An Englishman's Passion
by Tony Bryant



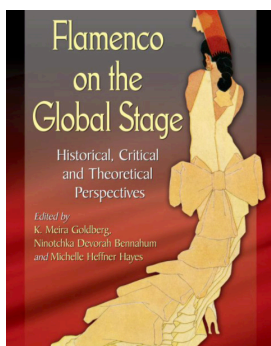
Flamenco Nation: The Construction of Spanish National Identity
by Sandie Holguín



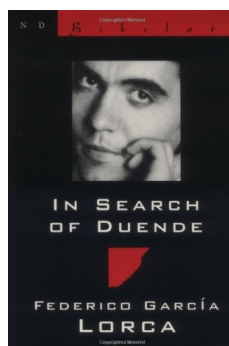
América en el Flamenco
by Faustino Núñez



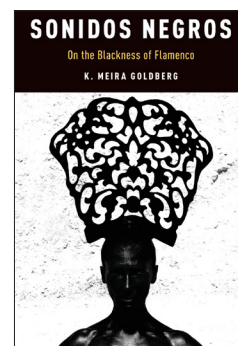
Flamenco y Cine
by Carlos Aguilar and Anita Haas



Flamenco on the Global Stage: Historical, Critical and Theoretical Perspectives
Edited by K. Meira Goldberg,
Ninotchka Devorah Bennahum
and Michelle Heffner Hayes



In Search of Duende
by Federico García Lorca



Sonidos Negros
by K. Meira Goldberg

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



FLAMENCO ARTISTS WHO HAVE PERFORMED AT NEW YORK CITY CENTER

Ballet Flamenco de Andalucía

| juntadeandalucia.es/cultura/flamenco/content/ballet_flamenco_de_andaluc%C3%ADa

Eva Yerbabuena | evayerbabuena.com/

Farruquito | farruquito.es/

Flamenco Vivo Carlota Santana | flamenco-vivo.org/home/

Manuel Liñán | manuellinan.com

Maria Pages | mariapages.com/

Olga Pericet | olgapericet.es/en/

Patricia Guerrero | patricia-guerrero.es/

Rocio Molina | rociomolina.net

Sara Baras | sarabaras.com/

Soledad Barrios and Noche Flamenca

| soledadbarrioandnocheflamenca.com/

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

(page 3)

Answer Key

ACROSS

3. Vueltas
4. Cajón
6. Toque
8. Floreo
9. Pitos
11. Tangos
13. Taconeo
15. Redoble
16. Cante
17. Juerga
18. Llamada

DOWN

1. Percusión Corporeal
2. Baile
5. Jaleo
7. Compás
10. Marcaje
12. Palmas
14. Farruca



NEW YORK CITY CENTER EDUCATION

VISION STATEMENT

The mission of New York City Center Education is to ignite an appreciation of the performing arts, cultivate the creative mind, and create a culture of inquiry and exploration. Committed to drawing inspiration from works on the mainstage, New York City Center Education strives to provide innovative, accessible arts education to schools and communities across New York City.

ABOUT NEW YORK CITY CENTER EDUCATION

Each year City Center reaches over 11,000 students from NYC public and private schools, kindergarten to grade 12, through dance and musical theater performances and in-school workshops. In-depth residencies engage young people in building technical and expressive skills, personal voice, and collaborative spirit. Innovative workshops are crafted for families, seniors, and other special groups that express an interest in collaborating with City Center.

Through the Introduction to Performing Arts program, students have the opportunity to view live performing arts at City Center. At the Workshop level, students receive two in-school workshops in addition to attending a live performance. Residencies provide in-depth multi-week study around one of the productions presented during the season. During the 2019-2020 Season, City Center Education offers students the opportunity to study dance and musical theater productions from City Center's mainstage.

