

# Flamenco workshop

Ian Davies



## Soleá or Soleares Part 1

I have chosen to begin with this *toque* for various reasons: it is one of the most ancient of all, in the Phrygian mode, with a *compás* of twelve-beat bars, and generally an example of totally pure Flamenco without ever having been influenced by Spanish folklore. Although there are many different types of soleá, they differ only in the *cante*, being named after the towns or villages from which specific styles emerged; or even after particular *cantaores* who created very personal styles. Most come from areas in the province of Sevilla, probably as this was where the greatest number of gypsies had settled, therefore it is quite reasonable to say that Sevilla is the centre of flamenco art. Nowadays Madrid has really become the centre but only due to the fact that so many of the prominent artistes have moved there taking up residence due to the quantity of employment opportunities available. This has been good for two reasons. For the *aficionado* it is possible to attend one *tablao* in Madrid and be able to see and hear styles from all over the country on the same night, and also for the professionals, who working together have influenced each other. For the guitarist however, the differing styles only affect him whilst accompanying the *cante* and even then it is basically a matter of how long each chord is held and sounded. The rule is never to change chords before the *cante* has done so. The chord change must occur after the vocal so as to allow the *cantaor* complete freedom to stretch out any line of his verse should he feel inspired to do so, thus creating an element of suspense, as the listener knows where he must go and is anticipating his arrival. The guitar virtually fades away in these passages, simply marking the *compás* until the phrase is resolved by the *cantaor*, and the chord change is emphasised releasing the preceding tension. The release of tension is often the factor that produces a cry of "óle" from the listener. As can be seen, it is necessary for the guitarist to channel all his attention towards the *cante*, leaving his hands to play independently as if automated, which requires a total familiarity with the *compás*.

### The Compás

Only yesterday I read in the August issue of *G.I.* a letter from P. Brown of N. Ireland who amongst other things says:

"The thing that made Paco de Lucía so good is not just perfect playing and beautiful music, we have in him perfect *compás*". It is true that he does have perfect *compás*, but so does every other professional *flamenco* in Spain, and I mean *all* of them, without exception. If your *compás* is faulty, you will not work! That does not mean, of course, that just because you may have dominated *compás* you can produce good flamenco, I'm afraid it's not as simple as that.

"In the *Soleá* the *compás* has twelve beats with accents on 3,6,8,10,12 thus producing 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12."

This is the way it always has been shown to us, and admittedly the method serves its purpose but I will now confuse the issue after so many years by saying that it is *wrong*.

In the *Soleá* the *compás* has *ten* beats with accents on 3,6,8,10; the 11 and 12 are simply two rests that can be used as a bridge or link between successive *compás*s. The only equivalent I can think of in our own music would be when we use the word "and" e.g. 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and, the last "and" equalling 11, 12. If you count to yourself 1,2,3,4 and 1,2,3,4 and, the use of the "and" totally commits you to "and" tends to be accentuated; well, this is the accent we have normally called 12. You will also be aware that if you count 2,3,4,5 and, the use of the "and" totally commits you to another following bar: in the flamenco *compás* the same applies with any use of 11 or 12, so the attitude to take is that of compases being counted 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 1 and 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 or possibly more conveniently 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 1 2 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

It is interesting to point out that flamenco dance teachers in Spain use this method of counting although probably for a different reason. In Spanish the words for eleven and twelve are *once* and *doce* which having two syllables can become a bit of a mouthful at speed; but so do the words for 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, (*cuatro, cinco, siete, ocho, nueve*). So there still remains a possibility that their use of *un, dos* rather than *once, doce* can stem from a subconscious attitude of the two beats being a rest between *compás*s. On the guitar the two beats are normally filled by a type of tail on the end of the *falseta*, e.g.

E x I

The tail, called the *cierre* (close) can be varied in complexity to blend with the preceding or succeeding *falseta* but one thing they all have in common is the tap or *golpe* (by the third finger) on beat 2. After explaining how beats 1 and 2 of the *cierre* are so insignificant, so much so that they can be left in complete silence, I now cannot stress enough the simple detail of a tap on beat 2. It is the tap, even if alone, which links one *compás* to another, as important to the close of one as to the

opening of the next; it therefore needs to be executed with absolute precision as its misplacement in tempo would ruin completely the effect of *falsetas* on either side. It doesn't have to be a loud tap, but it must be sharp, so sharp as to have an explosive quality that reverberates through the whole body, allowing tension, built up during a *falseta*, to escape. I think the following examples will say much more than any words:

Ex 2

The musical examples consist of five staves of notation. Each staff shows a sequence of notes and rests over ten beats, followed by a 'golpe' on the second beat of the next measure. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and performance instructions like 'golpe', 'rasgueado', and 'ras.'.

To add sharpness to the *golpe*, it is useful to dampen or cut any sounding strings.

Line 1: Beat number 10 only lasts for two counts.

Line 2: It is highly effective at the moment of the *golpe* to dampen the previously sounding strings with the little finger of the left hand.

Line 3: The *golpe* commits you to proceed into another *compás*.

Line 4: This *golpe* would commit a singer to make an entrance on the following beat number one. Line four is an example of what is known as a *Llamada* (call), mainly due to its simplicity, especially on beats 1, 2, 3 and the absence of notes in the *cierre*.

Line 5: Another *Llamada*; this time no-one is committed to continue at all, simply because the *golpe* on beat two of the *cierre* has been omitted. If it had been included however, it would bring in the singer in exactly the same way as line four. He would hear the sound of the *llamada* on 1, 2, 3, then the

definite end to the *compás* on 10, the silence on beat one of the *cierre*, take a breath on beat two (as you go 'tap') and come in on 1 of the following *compás*. The experienced professional is conditioned to do this (a bit like Pavlov's dogs) and it's very difficult for him not to; as long as you give him the signs clearly on the guitar. The importance of beat 2 in the *cierre* does not only apply to the guitar; the same exists for the dancer, the steps being constructed in a similar way to *falsetas*. The equivalent to our tap can be the silent (but sharp) lifting of a foot, the flick of a wrist, a twitch of the shoulder, etc. The *llamadas* must be very clear, not forgetting that the guitarists, singers and *palmeros* need to know whether to continue, to finish on 10, to sing or to vary in tempo which is another thing that should be stated during the *cierre*. This is what I mean when I say that rehearsals amongst professionals are not necessary as the information is contained in the dance (or music) itself.

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## Soleá or Soleares Part 2

### A note on the Rasgueado

Many guitarists devise their own particular way of playing the rasgueado, all with the aim of producing a nice smooth, round, drumroll effect. In the past and still evident in older performers, a technique was used utilizing the whole hand more or less as follows:

P \* a m i P    P \* a m i P    \*The little finger can be included here.  
 ▼ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲    ▼ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲

Nowadays, virtually all of the younger players use a method created by Juan Maya "Marote" using only the thumb and one finger. Juan once told me that he produced this through his own necessity as he could not manage the old style — something to do with his short fingers he said. It caught on immediately, being so versatile, clear, powerful and razor sharp in short bursts:

P m P    P m P  
 ▼ ▲ ▲    ▼ ▲ ▲

As you can see it is just a simplification of the older technique, but its effectiveness lies in the use of such short units and a flick of the finger which (played fast) produce the desired smooth roll when strung together (a), and a "short, sharp, shock" when used individually (b)

Music ex. 3

The middle finger can be exchanged for the annular, or m and a together, whichever feels most comfortable to you. This rasgueado is particularly useful to accompany dance as it is powerful and loud, but for the *cante*, something a little lighter is more suitable. I remember when I first started to work at the "Café de Chinitas" in Madrid, how one *cantaor* complained to me about my rasgueado being too heavy, so I soon accustomed

myself to using only the fingers, which was much less obtrusive and a great improvement.

For a continuous roll: little a m i i l a m i i etc.,  
 ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▼ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▼

For short bursts: l a m i i or · l a m i  
 ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▼    ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲

### The Soleá on paper

I must admit that I very rarely put anything down on paper, only when I have to, but when the occasion arises the main consideration is to make the accents of the flamenco *compás* as clear as possible using a musical notation designed for western european music. There are inevitable problems: the fact that beat one is not an accent creates the first. We know that the accents of the *soleá* fall as follows: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 1 (2<sup>nd</sup>) so this is what I have always done:

Music ex. 4

It does look a bit strange, but not so much when you replace the numbers by notes. Remember as I said earlier, any use of beats 1 or 2 in the *cierre* (previously known as 11, 12) commit you to continue into another *compás*, but you can leave beat 10 ringing. Curiously enough it is general practice and most effective to leave only beat 10 ringing for two crotchets therefore accenting beat 2 of the *cierre* (now the first beat of the compound time) with a silence (a deafening silence) or that thunderous little tap. If the *compases* of compound time are written on the paper, one directly above the other, they are not at all confusing to read, and the accents fall naturally.

The *soleá* can be played either *Por arriba* or *Por medio* and that means using as tonic chord E major or A major respectively. "Por arriba" literally means "up on the top" and "Por medio" "in the middle" and refers to where the chords are on the fingerboard, seen through the eyes of the singer. He won't know what key he sings in but he'll know it when he sees it! Other amusing terms are "Posición escalera" = "Stair position" = C major, although now it is more often called "Tono de caracoles" as the caracoles (a type of alegrías) is always played in that key, and "Tono Flamenco" which means using the Phrygian mode. So "Al dos por medio en tono Flamenco" is understood as being with the *Cejilla* (capo) on 2, using A major as tonic chord in the phrygian mode which for the musician is simply E minor. Guitar solos for *Soleá* are normally played using the phrygian mode based on E major (key of A minor) although this is definitely not a rule. I will finish with a few simple but very flamenco bars of *Soleá*.

### Correction to October issue

Careless proofreading caused confusing setting to remain in Ian's text p 24, col 2, para 4 should read: "If you count to yourself 1-2-3-4 and 1-2-3-4 and 1-2 etc for a while you will notice that the word 'and' tends to be accentuated; well this is the accent we normally have called 12. You will also be aware that if you count 1-2-3-4 and, the use of the 'and' totally commits you to another following bar." Sorry Ian.

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# Soléa

By Ian Davies

$\text{♩} = 92(\text{approx.})$

Musical staff 1: Treble clef, 3/4 time signature. The piece begins with a series of chords and a melodic line. The first measure contains a chord with a sharp sign. The melody consists of eighth notes and quarter notes, with some notes beamed together.

Musical staff 2: Treble clef, 3/4 time signature. Continuation of the piece with similar rhythmic patterns and chordal accompaniment.

Musical staff 3: Treble clef, 3/4 time signature. This staff introduces fingerings: 2 and 3 for the first two notes, 0, 2, 0, 0, 3 for the next five notes. The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes.

Musical staff 4: Treble clef, 3/4 time signature. Fingerings 2, 3, 0, 0, 3 are indicated above the notes. A 5 is written below the bass line notes. The piece continues with a mix of eighth and quarter notes.

Musical staff 5: Treble clef, 3/4 time signature. A dashed line labeled 'CIII-' spans the first two measures. Fingerings 2, 3, and 3 are shown. A 'p' (piano) dynamic marking is present at the end of the staff.

Musical staff 6: Treble clef, 3/4 time signature. A fingering of 2 is shown above a note. The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes.

Musical staff 7: Treble clef, 3/4 time signature. Fingerings 3, 6, and 6 are shown above notes. A 5 is written below a note in the bass line. The piece concludes with a final chord and melodic phrase.

Musical staff 1: Treble clef, 2/4 time signature. Features a sequence of eighth notes with fingerings 5 and 6. Includes a double bar line and a key signature change to one sharp (F#).

Musical staff 2: Treble clef, 3/4 time signature. Features eighth notes with fingerings 6 and 5. Includes the lyrics "i m a m i" and a key signature change to two sharps (F# and C#).

Musical staff 3: Treble clef, 3/4 time signature. Features eighth notes with fingerings 6 and 5. Includes a key signature change to one sharp (F#).

Musical staff 4: Treble clef, 2/4 time signature. Features eighth notes with a fingering of 6. Includes a key signature change to one sharp (F#).

Musical staff 5: Treble clef, 3/4 time signature. Features eighth notes with a fingering of 3. Includes a key signature change to two sharps (F# and C#).

Musical staff 6: Treble clef, 3/4 time signature. Starts with the instruction "Stacc.". Features eighth notes with a fingering of 3. Includes a key signature change to one sharp (F#).

Musical staff 7: Treble clef, 2/4 time signature. Features eighth notes with a fingering of 3. Includes a key signature change to one sharp (F#).

Musical staff 8: Treble clef, 2/4 time signature. Features eighth notes with a fingering of 3. Includes a key signature change to one sharp (F#).