Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series

Flamenco Music and National Identity in Spain

An **Ashgate** Book

William Washabaugh

ROUTLEDGE

FLAMENCO MUSIC AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN SPAIN

To Catherine, Kate, Bill, and Fritz

Flamenco Music and National Identity in Spain

WILLIAM WASHABAUGH
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, USA

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2012 by Ashgate Publishing

Published 2016 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Washabaugh, William.
Flamenco music and national identity in Spain. -- (Ashgate popular and folk music series)
1. Flamenco music--History and criticism. 2. Flamenco music--Social aspects--Spain--Andalusia. 3. Ethnology--Spain--Andalusia. 4. Music and state--Spain--Andalusia. 5. Nationalism in music.
I. Title II. Series
781.6'261'0468-dc23

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Washabaugh, William.
Flamenco music and national identity in Spain / William Washabaugh.
p. cm. -- (Ashgate Popular and folk music series)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-4094-3484-9 (hardcover)
1. Flamenco music--Spain--Andalusia--History and criticism. 2. Music--Political aspects--Spain--Andalusia. 3. Nationalism in music. I. Title.
ML3712.W38 2012
781.62'610468--dc23

2011035645

ISBN 9781409434849 (hbk)

Contents

This page has been left blank intentionally

List of Figures

This page has been left blank intentionally

General Editor's Preface

The upheaval that occurred in musicology during the last two decades of the twentieth century has created a new urgency for the study of popular music alongside the development of new critical and theoretical models. A relativistic outlook has replaced the universal perspective of modernism (the international ambitions of the 12-note style); the grand narrative of the evolution and dissolution of tonality has been challenged, and emphasis has shifted to cultural context, reception and subject position. Together, these have conspired to eat away at the status of canonical composers and categories of high and low in music. A need has arisen, also, to recognize and address the emergence of crossovers, mixed and new genres, to engage in debates concerning the vexed problem of what constitutes authenticity in music and to offer a critique of musical practice as the product of free, individual expression.

Popular musicology is now a vital and exciting area of scholarship, and the *Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series* presents some of the best research in the field. Authors are concerned with locating musical practices, values and meanings in cultural context, and draw upon methodologies and theories developed in cultural studies, semiotics, poststructuralism, psychology and sociology. The series focuses on popular musics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It is designed to embrace the world's popular musics from Acid Jazz to Zydeco, whether high tech or low tech, commercial or non-commercial, contemporary or traditional.

Professor Derek B. Scott
Professor of Critical Musicology
University of Leeds

This page has been left blank intentionally

Preface and Acknowledgements

> *We are beginning a fantastic journey toward the interpretation of our waking dream … We summon what is not, build into the blue, and build ourselves into the blue, and there seek the true, the real, where the merely factual disappears*. (Ernst Bloch)[1]

This book is about the extra-musical resonance of flamenco artistry. Rather than focusing on the music and dance for itself, it directs attention to the cultural and political reverberations that accompany flamenco performances. Given this aim, I will avoid offering evaluative interpretations, and I emphasize that this is not a work of art criticism. Such criticism is best left to Andalusian adepts and to the handful of expert outsiders gifted with deep insight and expansive vision, along with the resilience needed to deal with the heated reactions that aesthetic interpretations almost always attract.

Here, for my part, I claim no great artistic insight. However, I am able to explicate the linkages between performances and relevant institutional forces at work in Andalusian social life, showing that, although any particular flamenco performance may seem to be a product of a sublime talent that addresses a hallowed past, it is also significantly associated with institutional constraints that artists and experts interpreters rarely recognize. My contribution, which consists of explicating these associations, is oriented towards a promising future for both musicians and citizens. In this vein I hope that artists and policy-makers will use this project to clarify the ways in which their labors can contribute as much to the betterment of life in the future as to the appreciation of the past and the enjoyment of the present.

I thank Catherine Washabaugh for her support and assistance through every phase of this project. She has been a motor force in this research and an effective co-investigator. She helped to formulate interview plans, and she participated in meetings with flamenco artists, scholars, journalists, and government officers. Finally, she edited everything written here. A scholar in her own right, she has been my *non plus ultra* for many years, the wampeter of my karass. I also thank Buchmendel Dave Monroe whose fertile mind and bibliographic ken never cease to amaze me. And I thank Ilustrisimo Brook and Kristin Zern for their unflagging intellectual generosity and for their infectious embrace of, and support for, all things flamenco. But even with the help of these loving and generous people, this project could not have gotten off the ground without the contributions of José María Velázquez, Alfonso Eduardo Pérez Orozco, Estela Zatania, Steve Kahn,

[1] Ernst Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia* (Stanford, 2000), p. 3.

Gerhard Steingress, Ángeles Steingress, José Cenizo, Manuel Curao, Manuel Macías, Francisco Perujo, Juan del Gastor, Cristina Cruces, Olga de la Pascua, Fernando Iwasaki, Ángel Berlanga, Fernando González-Caballo, Julio de Vega López, Milagros Olcina and many other Andalusians for discussing the issues raised in this book. I am immensely appreciative of their gifts of time, energy, ideas and opinions. Finally, I want to acknowledge with gratitude the support provided by the Program for Cultural Cooperation between Spanish Ministries and US Universities.

Chapter 1
Heritage Music

If flamenco music had ever been considered quaint and exotic, it is no longer. Now in the twenty-first century, it has gone global, with the result that flamenco is arguably a world-music as much as it is Spanish style. More importantly, it has gone patrimonial. It is now a heritage style, a governmentally approved and supported musical genre that is intended to enrich and solidify a national citizenry. Given these changes, scholars are quickly learning that flamenco is something much more than an odd treasure. Its global appeal and its national value demand a more thoughtful characterization of its nature as a musical style and a more sophisticated appreciation of its role in current political developments.

Back in the twentieth century, flamenco scholarship focused attention on a relatively small and restricted set of issues. Scholars and aficionados described the situations of Spanish singers, dancers, and guitarists, many of whom were Gitanos, some not. But almost always, the scholarly focus was narrow,[1] and the issues addressed were assumed to be aesthetically autonomous, historically unique, and largely incomparable. As a result, flamenco scholarship had the feel of a greenhouse enterprise, where outside concerns were kept outside and where scholarly fertility was frequently inbred.

However, in the twenty-first century, such narrow scholarship is inadequate because of recent developments that have altered the whole flamenco scene. Flamenco is now an explicitly national music style, and this new status marks a change that changes everything. Nothing in flamenco is now quite the same as it was before the emergence of this 'flamenco nation'. 'Flamenco' now refers to 'heritage music', and it turns popular attention to musical history in a way that it never has before.

Although the term 'heritage' may remind nationalists of cultural loyalties, it should also prompt critical reflection. The idea of 'heritage' can no longer be accepted out of hand as it might have been when Ralph Vaughan Williams wrote—with nationalist movements surging forward in the early decades of the twentieth century—saying, 'style is ultimately national'.[2] He proposed that 'true style' or

---

[1] Exceptions to this narrowness include: Germán Herrero, *De Jerez a Nueva Orleans* (Granada, 1991); María T. Linares and Faustino Núñez, *La música entre Cuba y España* (Madrid, 1998); Romualdo Molina and Miguel Espín, *Flamenco de ida y vuelta* (Sevilla, 1992); José Luis Salinas Rodríguez, *Jazz, flamenco, tango* (Madrid, 1994); Gerhard Steingress, *Sociología del cante flamenco* (Sevilla, 2005); Brook Zern, 'Paralelismo y coíncidencia entre el cante megro y el cante gitano', *Revista Flamenca* 3 (1973): pp. 12–13.

[2] Ralph V. Williams, *National Music and Other Essays* (New York, 1963), p. 11.

'native taste' is born in the collective past and repeated in the present as a reflex of that now ancient birth. Such a proposal now seems simplistic at best, if not dangerously chauvinistic. Be that as it may, Williams's view of heritage music defined by past practices still reverberates in the literature about national musical styles, both within and beyond Spain, and it is these reverberations that have prompted this present work.[3] In the face of popular fascination with an allegedly magical past, I aim to direct attention toward flamenco in the future, not as a magical art, but, more simply, as an opportunity for realizing Andalusian solidarity and autonomy.

To shift gears in this way, from a fascination with the musical past to a concentration on a hopeful future, is difficult and not just for flamencos. Artists and scholars everywhere have found it challenging to rethink such fundamental notions as musical style and patrimonial heritage. As performances in different traditions contend for recognition and seek UNESCO authorization of their patrimoniality, their adepts and interpreters are hard at work reconceiving the nature and constitution of the 'true style' that allegedly satisfies 'native tastes'. As a result, a rich body of literature has emerged to wrestle with the idea of musical heritage-styles. Still in all, most of this literature continues to assume that a musical style is something that is aesthetically autonomous and is somehow rooted in the relatively unreflective past experiences of artists. As such, musical styles: (1) can facilitate resistance to opposing political forces;[4] (2) can be responsive to the marketplace[5] and to cosmopolitan interests;[6] (3) can facilitate the creation of cultural identities;[7] and (4) and can incorporate and reproduce entrenched social categories.[8] However, only a few studies have actually confronted the notion of musical style in and for itself. Only a few have questioned the autonomy of style

---

[3] Although national identity is commonly portrayed as a reflex of historical practices such as heritage music, critics of such a view argue for the significance of diverse contemporary practices shaped by ongoing material constraints (Tim Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture, and Everyday Life* (Oxford, 2002), p. 17; Maurice Roche, 'Citizenship, Popular Culture and Europe', in Nick Stevensen (ed.), *Culture and Citizenship* (London, 2001), p. 76; Engin Isin and Patricia Wood, *Citizenship and Identity* (London, 1999), p. 20. The current work pursues this latter line of argument.

[4] Lorraine Leu, *Brazilian Popular Music* (Hampshire, 2006); David Stowe, *Swing Changes* (Cambridge, 1994).

[5] David Grazian, *Blue Chicago* (Chicago, 2003); Gerhard Steingress, *Y Carmen se fue a Paris* (Córdoba, 2006).

[6] Michael Largey, *Vodou Nation* (Chicago, 2006); Thomas Turino, *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe* (Chicago, 2000).

[7] Rebecca Bryant, 'The soul danced into the body', *American Ethnologist* 35/2 (2005): pp. 222–238.

[8] Marc Schade-Poulsen, *Men and Popular Music in Algeria* (Austin, 1999); Hermano Vianna, *The Mystery of Samba* (Durham, 1999); Peter Wade, *Music, Race, and Nation* (Chicago, 2000).

by documenting the impact of external forces on musical performances.[9] And fewer still have suggested that a national musical style is not really definable or classifiable, and that a style cannot be either celebrated or marketed because it is not an object, not an 'it' of any kind.[10] The paucity of such studies may well be the result of an ambient fear that nationalist enterprises would be subverted by questioning the concreteness and objectivity of the musical styles that serve as national symbols.

Michael Ignatieff ran up against such fears when he tried to make sense of the conflicts between Serbs and Croats in the 1990s.[11] He unearthed deep-seated feelings and passionate commitments in both groups, but almost always with shaky foundations and uncertain grounding. The nationalists he spoke to all assumed that their traditions had sprung from the sacred past and that their traditional objects, right down to the cigarettes they smoked, were canonized by that same sacredness. So, for example, Serbs and Croats each embraced their cigarettes as patrimonial objects and as precious gifts from past generations. And they did so despite the fact that none could explain quite how the gifting came about. Although Ignatieff succeeded in documenting local convictions about these cherished cigarettes, he was unable to substantiate the alleged deep and hallowed roots that supported those convictions. The lesson learned is that tracking heritage-loyalties into the past is difficult at best, and likely to produce only wispy results.

What he did uncover were the developmental steps that made it possible for relatively insignificant objects like cigarettes to grow into important cultural symbols. It seems that, over the course of time, when one community finds it necessary to defend its value and dignity as it faces-off against others, it selects one or another object, ramps up its cultural significance, and puts it into play during cultural confrontations. Moreover, as time passes and as face-offs grow more intense, those objects grow more sacred and become, seemingly automatically, more clearly defined.

In other words, nationalist efforts to document heritage objects tend to assume that their deep histories render them natural and unique, a special gift for a special people. And accordingly, the people, who regard them as their special gifts, come to feel a sense of responsibility to preserve them and to honor their history. So, they teach about them, enshrine them, archive them, freeze them, trying desperately to keep them from changing; and, in the end, something like a cigarette becomes much more than just a cigarette. It becomes a patrimonial object and is transformed into a centering magnet that draws a community together. But, by the same token,

---

[9] Michelle Bigenho, *Sounding Indigenous* (New York, 2002); Jann Pasler, *Composing the Citizen* (Berkeley, 2009); Ronald Radano, *Lying Up a Nation* (Chicago, 2003); John Scannell, *James Brown: Apprehending a Minor Temporality* (Sydney, 2006).

[10] Michelle Bigenho, 'Outside the Music Box: A Manifesto', *Anthropology News* 52/1 (2011): p. 12.

[11] Michael Ignatieff, 'Nationalism and the Narcissism of Minor Differences', in Ronald Beiner (ed.), *Theorizing Nationalism* (Albany: 1999), pp. 91–102.

it also becomes a massive wall that separates communities from each other. The cigarette may carry endearing patriotic value, but it simultaneously inclines people to become resentful for all the times that such value has been disrespected. In sum, patrimonialization is a process that facilitates modern nation-building by fueling both pride and resentment.

This patrimonial process requires extraordinary political balance. Nationalists who advance a politics of identity must, it seems, affirm the historical importance of their heritage-objects, but, as they do, they must walk a fine line between using these objects to dignify themselves and fueling excessive resentment towards outsiders. Such balancing efforts characterize current nation-building initiatives among the Bretons in France, the Szeklers in Romania, the Walloons in Belgium, the Québécois in Canada, the Abkhazians in the Caucasus and the Lazistanis in Turkey, to mention just a few. Every one of these sitatios involves a tug of war. Promoting homeland-dignity is typically the explicit goal, but it is often achieved at the steep price of increasing resentments towards outsiders. Just so, as recounted in Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle*, internal solidarity for the island nation of San Lorenzo was purchased at the price of resentments directed toward outsiders. Indeed, the founding fathers of San Lorenzo were quite explicit about the need for such resentment, and so they—Corporal McCabe and Bokonon were in on this plan together—agreed to outlaw Bokonon, and legislated unusually harsh penalties for anyone caught practicing Bokononism (that is, death by 'the hook'). Such harsh measures helped to reinforce the productive resentment that this tiny island nation needed to establish its independent footing in the world.

No one is quite sure how to balance constructed solidarity with constructed resentment. Vonnegut's narrator, who witnessed the rise and fall of San Lorenzo, was, to understate the case, diffident about the possibilities for such a balance. Little wonder, then, that some political thinkers consider Janus-faced nationalism to be an unworkable assemblage of divergent forces, and, in consequence, they look towards some sort of post-national politics to supplant it. But despite such criticism, nationalism will probably persist because the nation-state, in practical terms, is the only game in town.[12] And so, the dialogue that aims to address and

[12] A few scholars contend that the notion of national identity, if not nation, should be discarded because 'it has no respectable contemporary uses' (Tony Judt, 'Edge People', *New York Review of Books* LVII/5 (2010): p. 11). Wielding a similar argument, I objected to Richard Rorty's unswerving focus on the nation-state during a discussion, in 1999, of his *Achieving Our Country.* He responded to me by saying succinctly, 'The nation-state is the only game in town,' a view that seems to be widely shared (Jeremy Gilbert, 'Against the Empire', *Paralla* 7/3 (2001): pp. 96–113 and Isin and Wood, *Citizenship and Identity*, p. 15). I understand this shared view to mean that, although some, like Tony Judt, might lambast 'nation' as a deeply flawed concept and practice, its centrality in our world demands that he—and I—provide a more promising alternative before dismissing 'nation' as unworkable and passé. And to-date, no feasible alternatives to the modern nation-state have gained any traction.

resolve the dangers associated with the patrimonialization of national objects must be pursued, and it must not fail to address the nature of those objects and their allegedly historical provenance.

Spain

Spain is a country that has been grappling with these very problems in new and dramatic ways since 1978. Specifically, the Spanish are tackling the most intransigent dilemmas associated with nationalism and patrimonialization, and they are doing so in a political atmosphere riddled with even deeper antagonisms than any of the examples referred to above—with the possible exception of San Lorenzo. This Spanish experiment is of monumental significance and deserves global attention because of the challenges it faces and because of the unprecedented ambitiousness of its vision.

In the wake of Francisco Franco's extreme centralist nationalism that dominated Spanish politics between 1939 and 1975, Spain's parliamentary monarchy, which was mapped out in the constitution of 1978, aimed to achieve a new kind of political balance by developing a quasi-federal union that unites Spain's seventeen autonomous regions. This new Spain, still under construction, is aiming to draw attention to cultural centers without rejecting outlying communities, and it is doing so by promoting centralizing forms of cultural heritage without generating overly antagonistic oppositions that might divide regions from each other. The dangers and uncertainties that accompany this experiment are evident in daily news reports from the Basque region, Cataluña and Galicia, the 'historic communities' where the temptation to build divisive walls is intensely felt and perennially debated.

In even more dramatic ways than these 'historic communities', Andalucía, the region in the south of Spain, is addressing the challenges of nation-building as it courses towards political autonomy. Unlike other Spanish communities, Andalusians are reinventing themselves politically by falling back on a curiously compromised patrimonial object, namely flamenco music. It is important to note, after all, that flamenco song and dance was conscripted by Franco for use as a symbol for Spanish national identity.[13] Now in the twenty-first century, its rescripting as a distinctly Andalusian symbol strikes some as awkward and others as deeply unsettling. The flamenco that was a Spanish national symbol not so very long ago is now being reconstructed as a distinctly non-national and emphatically regional cultural marker. Flamenco is currently being used to oppose the political interests that it once served.

The relevant facts are that the current government designated flamenco music as a patrimonial object and marker of Andalusian identity in 2007: 'Exclusive power is accorded to the autonomous community of Andalucía regarding the knowledge, conservation, investigation, formation, promotion and diffusion of

[13] William Washabaugh, *Flamenco* (Oxford, 1996).

flamenco as a singular element of Andalusian cultural patrimony'.[14] With this move, the Andalusian government aims to counter Franco's hyper-nationalism, which, as it happened, also leaned heavily on the patrimonial force of flamenco music. Ironically, then, one and the same cultural object has been conscripted into patrimonial service in two polar opposite interests. Flamenco has been used to emphasize the unity of all Spaniards on the one hand, and it has served to mark the distinctiveness of Andalusians on the other.

Clearly, the latter situation, with its strong emphasis on regional autonomy, has supplanted the hyper-nationalism of the first three quarters of the twentieth century. But memories of Franco's *nacional flamenquismo* persist. And so, everyone who is involved in the new politics of flamenco is keenly aware of pressures to both embrace and reject flamenco as a political symbol. Although Catalans can cling to their national dance, the sardana, with unqualified equanimity, knowing that it has been a longstanding symbol of resistance to Franco as much as a marker of Catalan identity,[15] the Andalusians who embrace flamenco cannot easily escape the fact that their patrimonial object was itself used by Franco, sometimes in ways that undermined Andalusian solidarity.

So the Andalusian autonomy movement faces a special challenge, namely, it must manage the development of patrimonial flamenco in such a way as to unite the eight different provinces of the region while simultaneously avoiding blowback from the fact that Franco's regime relied on this very same object. And, although the regional government, the Junta de Andalucía, is committed to distancing itself from the flamenco-reinforced cultural centralism of the Franco years, it is nevertheless using flamenco to support a kind of regional nation-building that curries nationalist loyalties but stops short of launching a 'perverted' new form of hyper-nationalism.[16]

Rendering this process even more complex is the fact that the government has avoided delimiting this patrimonial flamenco. Although it has pronounced it to be an identity-symbol, it has not accompanied this pronouncement with a definition. No one in the government has corralled this music, determined its constitution, or declared what exactly it is. Indeed, the author of the Junta's text confirmed to me that the Junta made an explicit decision *not* to define and delimit the style.

From an artist's point of view, this official reluctance is apposite. Artists tend to see music as something that should be performed rather than discussed. As Vladimir Jankélévitch argued, 'music is not made to be spoken of, but for one

---

[14] Junta de Andalucía, 'Estatuto de autonomía' (2007), Article #68, <http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/especiales/aj-nuevoestatuto-estatuto.html?idSeccion=1&idApartado=1&ctitulo=4#art68>.

[15] Stanley Brandes, 'Sardana: Catalan Dance and Catalan National Identity', *Journal of American Folklore* 103/47 (1999): pp. 24–41.

[16] Roger Abrahams, 'Phantoms of Romantic Nationalism in Folkloristics', *The Journal of American Folklore* 106/419 (1993): pp. 3–37.