





**MANUAL  
TO UNDERSTAND  
FLAMENCO**



FERNANDO BARROS LIROLA

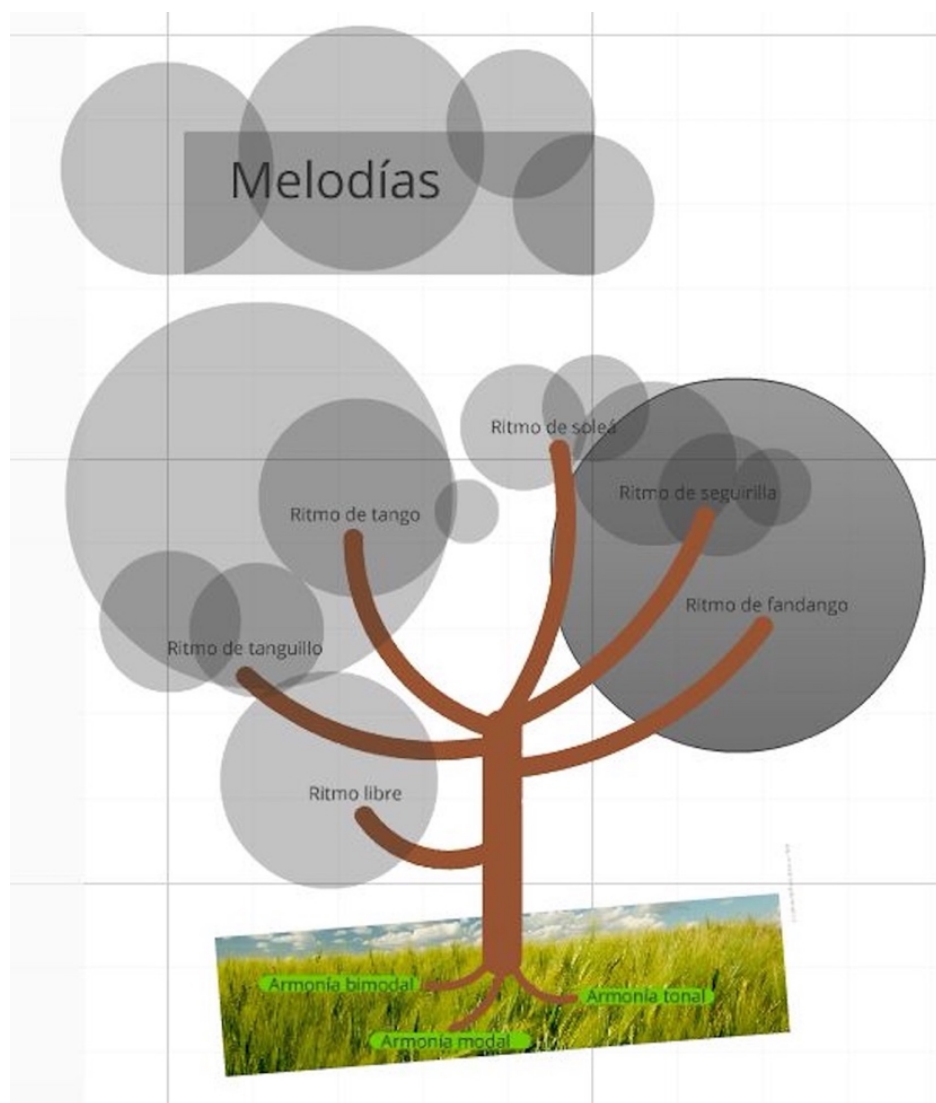
**MANUAL  
TO UNDERSTAND  
FLAMENCO**

*“The essence of flamenco is his music”*

TRANSLATED FROM SPANISH  
BY  
ASTRID ELENA MARQUEZ



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I, the flamenco, who they say I have art and express emotions of all kinds, I think I have much of bird, because I was impregnated with nomadism, with different colors in my skin. I also come from different continents, so I feel like a brother of all travelers who inhabit this planet.

So, please, do not cage me, leave me free to want to be enriched by other music, dances, instruments, and for me, in turn, to do the same with others.

Teach me as much as you can, and I will also enrich you.



To my son Javier Barros Castro  
and my grandsons Pablo and Luis



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## PROLOGUE



My friend Fernando Barros asked me to preface his new book *Manual for Understanding Flamenco*. Without hesitation I got down to work and started writing. According to the dictionary of the RAE, "the prologue is the speech before the body of a work in a book of any kind". This is an introduction to a book. It goes, therefore, beforehand, that this small speech wants to be an exordium or a preliminary chapter of an important work on the flamenco art.

With the desire to make some considerations of the author and his work, it is worth remembering that this book is the second one written by Fernando on flamenco art. The first, entitled *El flamenco en las Aulas*, was very well received and better recognized in flamenco circles beyond Granada and Andalusia.

I hope that this “*Manual para Comprender el Flamenco*” will have, at least, the same recognition and reception, being read, examined and, why not, criticized, with special attention and care. The worst thing that can happen to a book, to a work in general, is that it is forgotten, so I hope that once the book is read it will be criticized, which will prevent it from falling into oblivion.

I met Fernando in the early 70's of the last century, in other activities and activities very different from flamenco. The two of us, along with many other comrades, were fighting for freedom and for social and political change in Spain. Those were good times when we young people believed and fought to make utopia possible!

Years went by, and in 1995, when I was a teacher at the IES Luis Bueno Crespo, in Armilla-Ogíjares, I got in touch with Fernando because I found out through a mutual friend that he could sing flamenco, and I called him to sing at my high school. Fernando did not hesitate to come, as he has not hesitated to come to any activity for which I have requested his collaboration, most of the time totally disinterested. Fernando sang and did very well. Afterwards, every year he continued to come to that institute, and we continued to organize flamenco activities.

We redoubled the organization of flamenco activities in 2004 in the new high school where I was transferred, the IES Politécnico H. Lanz, in Granada, where with the support of its management team, especially its director, Raimundo Fornieles, we created a flamenco school, open to teachers and students.

The flamenco school, coordinated by Fernando Barros, organized multiple activities in its three specialties: singing, guitar playing and dancing. Thus, it has participated in several flamenco evenings (Día de Andalucía, Día de la Paz,

end of the school year, homage to Miguel Hernández, Antonio Machado, Federico García Lorca, etc.).

From the classrooms of the Hermenegildo Lanz Institute, Fernando's songs have flown to the classrooms of other primary and secondary schools (Armilla, Albolote, Granada, Pelíngros...), and to the adult classrooms of several schools in the province (Guadix, Almuñécar, Órgiva, Baza, etc.).

Also, at the same time it has been present in other institutions: through the councils of culture, it has sung in several towns (Tocón de Quéntar, Colomera, La Zubia, Motril, among others), in the Science Park, in the municipal libraries of Granada, etc. The musical artistic project "La voz

de los poetas" (Miguel de Cervantes, Miguel Hernández, Antonio Machado, Federico García Lorca, Federico García Lorca, Federico Mayor Zaragoza, and other medieval poets to whom he set to music) has been presented in several educational and cultural centers and in the events of the celebration of the millennium of the Nasrid Kingdom. He is currently working on two projects, one on the poetry of Cervantes and the other on the hybridization and metamorphosis of García Lorca and Leonard Cohen.

Fernando is a good cantaor (flamenco singer) and a connoisseur of the art of flamenco, but he was little known in the educational and cultural sphere. He was, as he likes to say, in a cave. He was only known by the fans of some flamenco peñas.

Some friends told him that he had to come out of the cave, and Fernando has come out and made himself known with a lot of hard work, effort, and tenacity. Today he is well known in the educational and cultural institutions of Granada and, if I may say so, of Andalusia, and even at the international level, having been appointed Member of the International Dance Council of UNESCO.

The two books he has written and the projects he has developed are proof of the effort made by Fernando to make himself known, offering the knowledge he has inside him about flamenco. But the most important thing is that he never stops thinking and researching it, as well as programming and organizing flamenco activities. Fernando lives flamenco and lives for flamenco, that art that is at the roots of the Andalusian culture, which is an essential part of it and that with justice, has been recognized, in 2010, by UNESCO as "Intangible Heritage of Humanity".

It is not necessary to justify the importance of flamenco in the evolution of Andalusian culture, because it is present in the ins and outs of multiple activities and manifestations of the Andalusian people.

Flamenco belongs, by right, to the culture and memory of Andalusia. It is a universal art that has arisen in Andalusia and has given it a solid and robust identity as a people.

The Statute of Andalusia considers flamenco to be one of the greatest exponents of Andalusian cultural identity and defines it as a "unique element of Andalusian cultural heritage" and grants the Junta de Andalucía exclusive

competence in matters of knowledge, conservation, research, training, promotion, and dissemination of flamenco.

Through music, especially flamenco, the Andalusian people have manifested -and manifest- their joys and sorrows, their laughter and tears, their loves and heartbreaks, their work and leisure, their worldviews on life and death.... The songs of the Andalusian people, in the mouths of distinguished poets, are also the history of Andalusia.

Fernando, in accordance with the Statute of Autonomy of Andalusia, with this book makes known, investigates, preserves, promotes, and spreads flamenco, "the primitive art of the Andalusian people", in the words of García Lorca.

The reading of this book should help us in the understanding and knowledge of the different rhythms, harmonies, and melodies of flamenco art, recognizing and distinguishing its different styles or families, identifying them through the sound of the guitar.

It should also help us to understand the musicality and rhythm of the poems that serve as lyrics in the singing, mastering the technique of reading and declamation.

Understanding flamenco art also means knowing how to situate its genesis and evolution in its historical, social, economic, political, and cultural context. Finally, it should help us to appreciate flamenco as one of the most unique features of the cultural heritage of Andalusia, valuing it as one of the exponents of Andalusian cultural identity.

Luis Ruiz Jiménez

Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at IES and flamenco amateur.



## POEM CANTE HONDO

Beautiful and profound description of the art of flamenco. It indicates with great precision how accurate is the touch so characteristic of flamenco to transmit human emotions and, at the same time, to place us in flamenco music. The guitar as the hallmark of the art of flamenco resounds through the window, chanting a magical song from Andalusia.



*I was meditating absorbed,  
reeling the threads of boredom and sadness when it came to my ear,  
through the window of my room,  
open to a hot summer night,  
the playing of a sleepy  
couplet broken by the somber  
tremolos of the magic music of my land. ... And it*