

MARCH 18, 2000 - Saturday in the Studio, Spain

We began our first day visiting the country of Spain. I always like to start the class by having everyone sit together in a circle. While in the circle we discussed Spain's location and geography. Next I gave the dancers a basic idea about how we would be moving that day, exploring basic arm movements, rhythms, and songs from Spanish Flamenco dance. They would also get the opportunity to make-up their own movement.

The Name Game

This is a game we played just about every week. It helps the dancers focus and it helps the teacher to learn all of the new names.

- The name game begins seated in a circle. Each person says their name and makes a simple movement gesture that best represents them. Then everyone else says their name and does the gesture. Continue this game until everyone has had a chance to say their name and create a gesture while everyone repeats. By the time everyone is finished you should know the dancer's names and the dancer's will be more comfortable and ready to move.

Warm-Up

Begin with all dancers standing in a circle. Take dancers through a series of warm up exercises based on traditional Latin dance. Including Flamenco Tango movements like *flores*, *rocas*, *braceo*, *taconeo*, and *palmas*. Every thing in the warm-up was taught separately and then ordered into a sequence of movement by stringing one thing after another. Each exercise being repeated "X" number of times (you choose) and then moving on to the next. In the end you will have made a warm-up dance.

- Flores - (flowers) Have all of the ladies do this one. Hold out both arms in front of you and begin to rotate both wrists to the inside (dentro). Next encourage the dancers to articulate the fingers by moving them one at a time in the direction of the circle. It's usually easier if you begin with the pinky or ring finger and then move towards the thumb. It is helpful to think of the fingers as petals on the flower. Next show the dancers how to circle their wrists to the outside (fuera). The fingers will also change directions. Lastly, dancers should try the flores by alternating directions between dentro and fuera.
- Rocas - (rocks) This is the masculine version of flores. Have all the gentlemen make strong fists and hold their arms in front of them. Try the circles dentro and then fuera. Now try dentro and fuera, dentro and fuera, etc.
- Braceo - (arm dance) There are many variations of the braceo. Here are a few to get you started.
- Variation #1: Begin with arms low and rounded in front of you (like your holding a giant egg). This will look like the ballet position en bas. Palms of hands should be facing away from the body. Initiate movement of the arms by pulling up at both elbows. The elbows continue to move the

- rounded arms through the center of the body (ballet position en avant) and up towards the head. The still rounded arms will pause for a moment as they frame the head (ballet position en haut). Finish this variation by taking the arms down through the side-space (through a second position) and back to the beginning position. Be sure to carve through the space with your fingertips and always keep the elbows lifted high while moving through the side-space.
- Variation #2: Similar to #1 except in reverse. Begin en bas but lift elbows and arms up through the side-space. When you get to the top, frame the face again and then move arms down through the center of body. Remember when moving down always keep elbows high and lead with the fingertips.
 - Variation #3: Similar to #1 and #2 except you only move one arm at a time. The arm that isn't moving should be en haut framing the face. Alternate moving the right arm/left arm high into moving the left arm/right arm high, etc. The moving arms may follow the direction of variation #1 or variation #2. Try both.
NOTE: After the basic braceos are learned, try to add on the flores/rocas in the wrists while doing these braceos.
 - Variation #4: I call this the manzana braceo. Manzana in Spanish means apple and I use apple imagery while teaching it. Dancers begin with arms held at the center of the chest, elbows bent, and palms open to the chest. Then simultaneously reach the right arm diagonally up and the left arm diagonally down. Pretend you are reaching for apples with both hands (this will give the look of flores/rocas). Then bring the apples back to your chest in the starting position to take a bite. Repeat diagonal with the left arm high and right arm low. Bring arms in and take a bite. Continue alternating right and left as you repeat.
 - Palmas - (clapping) The palma is a very specific type of clapping. It really is more of a musical instrument. You can make high-pitched claps (altas) or deep claps (gordas). You can clap straight on the beat or against it (contras). You can clap out specific rhythms in 4/4, 3/4, 6/8 time etc. But for this exercise the purpose is to introduce the idea of clapping as an instrument and to develop good listening skills. So, begin by clapping as quietly as possible, gradually getting louder and louder and louder. Then when the teacher/leader chooses begin again quietly. The dancers must listen carefully to be able to follow along and know which volume to clap. Body language in playing quietly and playing loudly also helps dancers predict volume.

Rhythmic Feet

- Still standing in your circle stomp out a simple rhythm with your feet. Stomping with the whole foot in Flamenco dance is called a *golpe*. Begin with something extremely simple like stomp left and stomp right. Other variations could be Stomp right, right, left; stomp right, left, right, right; or stomp left, left, left, right, left. Whatever variations you make be sure they

build in complexity. The dancers will repeat your *taconeo* (rhythmic foot dance) after each variation. They must listen closely to see if they can repeat each rhythm the teacher makes.

- For older dancers add a *planta* (ball of foot) and a *tacon* (heel). In Spanish Flamenco dance they make sounds with these specific parts of the foot as well as with the whole foot (*golpe*). Begin the *planta*, *tacon*, *golpe* variations very slowly then add speed or more complex variations.

Improvisation

- Encourage dancers to move around the room using the movement from the warm-up including the *braceo*, *flores*, *rocas*, *palmas*, and *taconeo*. Let the dancers choose their own order and timing.

Mirroring

- Divide everyone into partnerships. One person will be dancer #1 and the other dancer #2. Have the partners face one another.
- Dancer #1 will be the first leader. They will begin by doing any movements they choose from the improvisation (*braceo*, *flores*, *rocas*, *palmas*, or *taconeo*).
- Dancer #2 must pretend they are looking into a mirror and do everything dancer #1 does. After the dancers have enough time to explore this, switch leaders. I've found the best way to do this is to yell, "Freeze" and then call out , "Now dancer #2 lead". Repeat this mirroring dance at least two more times.

Bullfighter & Bull

- Expanding on the mirroring dance, start the same way with dancer #1 as the first leader. But this time instead of calling out a freeze, call out the word, "*toro*". *Toro* is the Spanish word for bull. At that time dancer #1 becomes the *toreador* (bullfighter) and dancer #2 becomes the *toro* (bull). The dancers enjoyed playing the part of each by pretending to have a big red cape in the case of the bullfighter, or by pretending to have horns and moving like a bull. The bull will run past the bullfighter under the pretend cape. Then both dancers will turn around themselves and face each other again. The dancers should have switched sides. Then start the dance over again with dancer #2 leading.

Saturday in the Studio Flamenco Song

Next we all sat down together and learned a Spanish song. This song is based on a Flamenco tango rhythm which can be counted in 4/4 time. You may make up your own tune.

Spanish

*Me gusta jugar con mis amigos
y comemos
tortas chocolates*

a la dulceria

English Translation

I like to play with my friends
and (we) eat
chocolate cake
at the sweet shop

Spanish Cuadro

A *cuadro* is a group of flamenco singers, musicians, and dancers that perform together.

- Divide the dancers into three groups. Group #1 will be the singers. Group #2 will do palmas (clapping). Group #3 will do a simple taconeo (stomping).
- Begin with group three and have them stomp on the one and the three of four beats (**one**, two, **three**, four). It helps to give them imagery of giant elephant steps in order to keep from rushing the beat.
- Next bring in Group #2. They will clap on the two, three, and four (one, **two**, **three**, **four**). Group #1 and Group #2 should be making a good rhythm together.
- Finally, once the rhythm is established add in Group #3. They will sing the Spanish song to the rhythm that their fellow dancers provide. Once the song is completed, switch groups so that everyone has the chance to experience each part.

Cool Down

- For the cool down I brought everyone together facing the mirror. I did some slow *braceo* and had them try to follow me. Then I finished with a slow roll down the spine to touch my toes, and then a slow roll up to reach for the ceiling.