

¡Qué Pasa!

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Flamenco de la Isla Society Newsletter



Photo: Steve Switzer

One Night in Sevilla

by **Lori Garcia-Meredith**

I've been asked to write about "my visit to Spain," but after a little over three weeks in Spain, most of it during the Flamenco Bienal, I could write a whole book about my experiences: the shows, the school, the food, the places... So instead of trying to encapsulate it all, I'm just going to talk about a single evening, which I think captures the overall flavour of my whole experience.

After I'd been in Sevilla for a while, it began to feel normal to sit down to dinner at 10:30 p.m. or so. One night, I think it was a Wednesday, we (I was travelling with Tammy Ishikawa and her husband Joji) walked down to Triana after dinner to check out some of the flamenco tablaos recommended by our school.

After wandering for over an hour, passing places that were obviously closed, we found one called *Madruga* that was just opening. It was 11:30 at night. They were still pulling chairs off of the tables and said we could come in, but the music wouldn't start for another hour. So, feeling like the nerds we were for showing up so early, we at least had our choice of seats next to the stage. But it also meant that we had a long wait ahead to nurse our 6-Euro German beers.

The music started maybe 20 minutes late, but they were pretty good. A *cantaor*, *cantaora*, a guy on the *cajón* and a guitarist wearing a t-shirt advertising a punk rock group. The first set lasted about half an hour. The music was

lively and I didn't even recognize that one of the songs was a *sevillanas*, until a bunch of pairs of girls started dancing with each other.

There was no room to dance, most were wearing stiletto heels, hip-hugger jeans, skimpy tops and a sexy attitude that reminded me more of pole dancing than of the cutesy *sevillanas* version I was accustomed to. The air was so thick with smoke, that the bar had the atmosphere of an overdone Hollywood movie.

Joji asked why Tammy and I didn't get up to join in, since we knew the dance, but Tammy said something about just wanting to witness *sevillanas* in Triana, and I just felt totally outclassed.

Close to the end of the set, the gypsies arrived. Cue Darth Vader musical theme.

The bar had a roped-off section reserved for them. Around 30 dark-haired guys came in as a group, none over 5'6" and none who had been to a barber in a few years.

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Sevilla

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Their costume: first four buttons of the shirt left undone, mandatory heavy gold chains and slicked-down hair. An unopened bottle of hard liquor immediately made its way to their table. If Hollywood made a movie with gypsies so characterized, critics would blast it for stereotyping.

When the musicians started their second set, a woman from one of the gypsy tables got up to dance. I think it was a *tangos*, but it really didn't matter what it was -- she wasn't a flamenco dancer, she just knew how to move. Her girlfriend got up with her, but just as quickly gave up and sat down.

The guys with the gold chains immediately turned their focus to the dancer. First, a guy who looked like Danny DeVito chased her around, and for someone shaped like a gourd, he could really dance. The pair did a give-and-take worthy of any professional performance, until the man surrendered and let the next fellow have his turn.

Three or four men took turns dancing with the woman, and the fire they all displayed made

me ashamed for how little I had to show after five years in the dance studio. No one had nails in their shoes. They all kept *compás* with *palmas* that held burning cigarettes.

I felt like an anthropologist -- or maybe just a voyeur. I guess we *were* voyeurs, and I bet it took less time for Jane Goodall to be accepted by the chimps, than it would ever take for us to be accepted behind those ropes. Or more likely, never. My gender and my nature would keep me out.

Besides I'd always be arriving two hours too early and nursing that lone beer.



Tammy Ishikawa modelling her new dress in one of the many flamenco costume stores in Sevilla's shopping district. Photo: Lori Garcia-Meredith

A Feria to Remember by Irena Jazwinski

The annual Flamenco de la Isla Society Feria on October 18th took place in a new venue this year -- the Marriot Hotel, and it turned out to be an excellent choice. The Pacific Ballroom was very beautiful, the food was delicious, and the staff, excellent.



Photo: Ian Indridson

The Feria was wonderful and there was lots of excitement and positive comments from the people attending. The fashion show, hosted

this year by Lori Garcia-Meredith, was well received as usual, and the costume parade contest was won by a young lady who bought her beautiful turquoise and black flamenco dress in Spain! The wonderful dancers from Alma de España, Amity, Rem, Estelle, Gloria, Carolyn, Gwyneth and Veronica thrilled the audience; Gareth and Harry's guitar playing was fabulous.

The auction was very successful and the funds raised will help to continue the Flamenco de la Isla Society's work in helping to promote the wonderful art of flamenco. A big *gracias* to all the volunteers who made this a night

to remember, and especially to Paul Palmer, for emceeing. Thanks also to the staff of the Victoria Marriot Hotel for all their hard work. Hope to see everyone at next year's feria!

More Flamenco Coming to Victoria!

Embrace the true passion of flamenco with some of its most captivating ambassadors. Hailed internationally for its soulful and authentic performances, the award-winning Noche Flamenca brings to the stage this complex, mysterious and irresistible blend of dance, music and song.



Promo shots

Noche Flamenca was founded in Madrid in 1993 by artistic director Martin Santangelo and his wife Soledad Barrio, its lead dancer and a Bessie Award winner. Today, it is recognized as one of Spain's most successful flamenco companies and is hailed by critics everywhere for its transcendent and deeply emotional performances. The award-winning Noche Flamenca has successfully brought to the stage the essence, purity and integrity of one of the world's most complex and mysterious art forms without the use of tricks or gimmicks. All aspects of flamenco; dance, song and music, are interrelated and given equal weight in Noche Flamenca, creating a truly communal spirit within the company, which is the very heart and soul of flamenco.

"(Dancer Soledad Barrio's) technique is flawless, her feet faster than any woman, her turns and arms and arched back, perfection...No tricks, no artifice, no faking, this is Flamenco."

-Dance Insider

"Since starting as chief dance critic here in April, I have encountered many dance companies, and many more individual dancers. ...Of these there has been none I have been so glad to discover as Noche Flamenca and, above all, its lead dancer, Soledad Barrio. I can think of no current ballet dancer in the world as marvelous as she."

- Alastair Macaulay, *The New York Times*

Noche Flamenca performs at the University of Victoria Auditorium on Saturday, Feb. 7, 2009. Information and tickets: UVic Ticket Centre: 250 721-8480 or email ticket@uvic.ca

Upcoming Flamenco de la Isla Society Events:

Gareth Owen Flamenco Guitar CD Launch
Saturday, February 28, 2009
Victoria Event Centre
1415 Broad Street
Victoria, B.C.

Flamenco Tablao with Alma de España
Sunday, January 25, 2009
8:00 p.m. (doors at 7:30)
Church of Truth
111 Superior Street
Victoria, B.C.
Tickets \$18 general, \$15 members

Info and tickets for both events: 250 384-8832

Flamenco de La Isla Society

Membership Form

To renew or apply for a new membership, please fill in the information below and mail to:

2560 Vancouver Street, Victoria, B.C., V8T 4A7

Name: _____

Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

Amount enclosed: \$20 Individual Annual
 \$40 Family Annual

For further details, visit www.almadeespana.com or call Dale Hunter at 250 380-3927
(please make cheques or money orders payable to Flamenco de la Isla Society)

Thank you for supporting the art of flamenco!

Society Board of Directors

Lynne Bain	Chair	250 385-0876
Norah Garyali	Secretary	250 479-7539
Irena Jazwinski	Treasurer	250 388-9757
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Kathy Switzer	Member at large	250 475-1703
Non-Voting Members		
Veronica Maguire	Advisor	250 384-8832
Harry Owen	Advisor	250 384-8832

Website Update

Now it's easier than ever to find the Flamenco de La Isla Society on the web!

Just log on to www.flamencodelaisla.org or email us at info@flamencodelaisla.org

Flamenco Scholarship 2009

- Submissions for the Flamenco de la Isla Society's Annual Flamenco Scholarship are now open, with a deadline of May 1, 2009.
- Guidelines and details can be found at www.flamencodelaisla.org

Questions? Ideas? Suggestions?

iQué Pasa! is a co-operative effort!

Submit flamenco-related stories, adventures or recipes (400 words max.) to Gloria, newsletter editor, at moonglowitch@yahoo.com (please write 'newsletter submission' in the subject line)

We'd love to hear from you!

New additions to our DVD library

Queen of the Gypsies, a documentary on the life of flamenco pioneer, Carmen Amaya.

Gypsy Heart, a short tribute to Carman Amaya by her great-niece, Omayra Amaya.

Latcho Drome ("safe journey"), a musical history of the Roma (Gypsy) people spanning 1,000 years.

Carmen (Carlos Saura's legendary version, featuring flamenco icon Antonio Gades).

FLAMENCO REVIEWS WANTED!

Seen a good flamenco movie or video -- perhaps from our growing DVD library? Or maybe you've read an illuminating book on the art and culture of flamenco, or found a particularly useful or enjoyable CD, website or audio-visual resource on flamenco art, music, shoes or costumes?

Why not share your discovery with all your flamenco friends?

Submit your book, movie, CD or website review for publication in *iQué Pasa!*