
DEAR READER,

THE TWO JUANS

Flamenco is a wonderful artistic form of mankind and UNESCO in 2010 justifiably declared it one of the *Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity*. Combining singing (*cante*), dance (*baile*), guitar (*toque*), and handclapping and finger snapping (*jaleo*) it is an art form that can invoke the deepest human feelings. Born and evolved in Andalusia, it was nurtured in a traditional and organic way by people belonging to different cultures. In the 20th century it became popular all around the world, which is a positive side of globalization.

In the same time, beginning with the 1960s flamenco came under commercial pressure as practically every art form. Interestingly, mainly the artists in Spain gave in to the pressure of commercialization. Some went so far as to alter its basic tenets so much that flamenco lost all its characteristics in the artistic output of these people.

Luckily, there are always a handful of serious artists who despite all commercial pressure maintain their artistic integrity. I would like to highlight this using the example of the flamenco guitarists. *Toque* – the flamenco guitar - was in the beginning primarily an accompanying instrument to flamenco dancers and singers. During the 19th and 20th centuries though it evolved into an almost individual art form to such an extent that for many people the flamenco guitar is *par excellence* the flamenco art. Though this is in reality not true, the flamenco guitar made indeed a great journey. As I said previously, unfortunately the commercial pressure takes its toll and most of the output since the 1960s is junk or such a distorted flamenco that the question arises whether it can be called flamenco at all.

However, by God's grace, we have two Juans, namely Juan Martín (1948) and Juan Serrano (1935). Both were born in Andalusia, where they received their flamenco guitar training starting at an early age. Then they became acknowledged performers and what is really interesting to note is that both settled abroad, *outside* of Spain. Juan Martín settled in London (though also spending a considerable amount of time in his native town Málaga) and Juan Serrano in Florida, where he developed a flamenco guitar program at the California State University, where he also headed the guitar department until his retirement.

Both developed a wide range of repertoire with countless live concerts and recordings. I can recommend you all of them. What is common in the artistic output of both of them is that they significantly enlarged and widened the scope of flamenco guitar *without* breaking its structure. This is the apex of true art!

If this were the only achievement of these two gentlemen, that would be already far above average. However, they created in another field something that is at least as valuable as their artistic output. They are both great teachers as well! They created countless books with DVDs, CDs that can be used to learn flamenco guitar. Naturally, the ideal way is to learn from a master directly (preferably in Andalusia), but for all those who cannot afford that, learning from the great material of Juan Martín and Juan Serrano is the second best option. For the sake of completeness I need to mention a third great teacher, Gerhard

Graf-Martinez, who also created excellent books with videos and other supporting material. His case only reinforces the rule: he is based in Germany – also *outside* Spain.

As flamenco has become available globally, I think we are more than fortunate that the great artists who took the path of teaching a global audience in flamenco guitar, are those who enriched the art itself without destroying it. Juan Martín, Juan Serrano, and Gerhard Graf-Martinez, imbued with great humility have proved that the real artist is who also shares freely his talents, knowledge, and experience. Real art does not only mean producing one CD after the other but also educating the next generation of professional and amateur musicians, because it is community building. It is in their interest and in the interest of all of us.

Personally, as I took up flamenco guitar on my own this year, I am very thankful to these gentlemen. Despite living remotely from them I can attest that I have the greatest flamenco teachers in the world!

Flórián Farkas

Editor-in-Chief

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