

Osaamista ja oivallusta tulevaisuuden tekemiseen

Javier Sanchez Perez

# Role of the bass in New Flamenco Music:

# A Holistic Perspective

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In this thesis, I present my own compositions, arrangements and the methods I use during my creative process. I emphasize analysing the role of the bass in new flamenco music. I introduce this idea through an in-depht analysis of selecting excerpts from musical pieces I have composed following my artistic vision. As a result of the analysis, I have found a crucial element in the development of my musical identity and a path I aim to further develop in the future through my professional music career practice.

I also reflect on my thinking process and leadership while performing my music in a wide variety of ensemble contexts to international audiences during the last two years. I also elaborate on my motivation for this work, at a personal level and for its relevance in the current music scene.

I wanted to develop this study in an international environment in order to provide future directions of new flamenco music through its development in an international context. I think this is an important fact since the inclusion of the bass is a result of the internationalization process of new flamenco music.



I believe that as an international student at UAS the needs of the study have been met. During this experience, I have learned how to keep an open-minded attitude what comes to approaching different musical cultures by being able to broad my knowledge by gaining a better understanding of a musical culture. Simultaneously, I have been aware of the connections with my own culture.

During this project, I focused on the process of integrating my instrument in a new flamen-co ensemble. I have found this path a crucial source of inspiration for the composition and a relevant topic to analyze, both in terms of my own development and for the benefit of others. I focused my final project on this topic, wishing to develop my own artist identity as a musician through the discovering process that this path will open. With all this, I seek to influence to consolidate the role of the bass in new flamenco music.

Through applying this artistic vision in my own compositions, I have found an identity and a worthwhile musical message to create music that does sounds natural and organic to me. I am hoping that this work will have an impact on the music community, inside and outside the academic environment. I also believe that my artistic work will contribute to hasten the development of traditional music styles by connecting them to contemporary musicians and audiences that are unfamiliar with the styles.

Keywords	New flamenco music, bass, holistic perspective
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### 1 Introduction

The study objective is to provide an insight to the role of the bass in new flamenco music by presenting double bass, electric bass and fretless bass as sharing an instrumental role<sup>1</sup>. By unifying the concepts of sound, harmony, composition and improvisation, I will present the adaptation of flamenco techniques for the bass and the interaction of the instrument in the new flamenco ensembles. Through this process, I will analyze the influence of instrumentation on the evolution of the style.

Flamenco is a primarily aurally transmitted musical tradition. Therefore, profound understanding of the style and its reflection on the new flamenco music can only be obtained through assimilation of the traditional source. This process of creation and transmission through new music works is the method to achieve this. For that reason, I propose the creation and performance of the new music, which assimilates and transmits the style, while incorporating new approaches to the bass as the investigative method for my study. With this method, I refer to the symbiotic process of assimilation, creation and transmission of a source into new music works, using the instrument as a tool to canalize my artistic vision.

This holistic perspective is a principle tenet of my study and a suitable method for the investigation, because it allows for the inherent idiosyncrasy of new flamenco music as a transcultural hybrid and is a representative of my approaches towards bass playing in this style.

Therefore, I believe that the use of this perspective in my study will provide a solid artistic result and will facilitate its conception in the academic community.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Being these bass instruments the most featured in new flamenco music.

Until now, most of the musical researches about flamenco have focused on its traditional performance and its historical development from a musicological point of view<sup>2</sup>. There have also been studies about flamenco dance from an analytical perspective<sup>3</sup>. However, music and dance embody different roles in flamenco; in dance, the importance of the individual artist during its performance is more relevant than in flamenco music, while the development of the music has influenced the whole style, including the dance form. Consequently, I believe that the subject of my study will greatly benefit the academic community, as it will offer a new direction on the research of new flamenco music.

Ultimately, this study will emphasize my experience in an international music environment. Being this internationalization process, a fundamental element on the birth of new flamenco music as the compound of global musical influences melted into the heritage of flamenco music. This collaborative approach will be further analyzed through its reflection in new music works that are part of my study.

## 2 Reasons for this study

The origin of this research was born through my personal need of finding a substantial message in contemporary music composition outside western classical music, Jazz and mainstream music styles. Through the use of traditional source material in my own compositions I have found an identity and a worthwhile musical message to create music that does sounds natural and organic to me. I aim that by using a multidisciplinary and multifaceted music approach I will achieve the development of a useful and struc-

<sup>2</sup> Grimaldos 2010, Hidalgo Gomez 2010, Machin-Autenrieth 2017 and Malefyt 1998, to name a few. <sup>3</sup> Alvarez Caballero 1998, Brao Martin 2004, Coral 2007 and Cordowinus 2008, to name a few.

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tured methodology for the further use of other artists. I am hoping that this work will make an impact on the music community, inside and outside the academic environment.

This is a path that has already been established by a wide number of composers and artists in their legacy. Therefore, I believe that the further analysis of methods for integrating traditional source material in a multidisciplinary contemporary musical process will greatly benefit the music community by making traditional music styles accessible to contemporary musicians. I also believe that my artistic work will contribute to hasten the development of traditional music styles by connecting them to contemporary musicians and audiences that are unfamiliar with the styles.

## 2. 1 Motivation and background

Since I started my musical studies, I have felt fascinated by traditional and popular music styles. I have studied flamenco music and popular music during my childhood playing clarinet in a local band. As a teenager, I started playing bass in different types of ensembles. I was always trying to study as many diverse musical genres as I had access to, with the goal of learning from all the musicians and music that I found around me.

I have always kept an open-minded attitude about mixing rhythms, styles and genres. I have found this a very relevant skill for me as an electric bass player, since playing an instrument that is relatively new in the music world has led me to different situations where traditional music was not designed to be played with such a new instrument. I believe that this challenge has allowed me to find different ways of approaching a wide diversity of musical genres. During the growth of my music career I have found this, a crucial element on the development of a versatile musician.

My interest on contemporary musical genres and composition drove me to study at Ateneo Jazz Madrid with the well know Spanish contemporary musician and composer Felix Santos Guindel. I continued my musical studies at Escuela de Musica Creativa and I graduated from Music Education at University Complutense of Madrid.

Later on I got a scholarship to study at Berklee College of Music through the Berklee College of Music Mediterranean Institute. I lived in Boston three years where I focused on developing my musicianship as composer and arranger at the Jazz Composition and Contemporary Writing and Production departments. During my studies I developed methods to arrange and compose for a wide diversity of musical genres. I have also led the production of three records under the Berklee College of Music Mediterranean Institute label.

I graduated from the Nordic Master in Global Music two years ago and started my master studies at Metropolia on 2017. During this time I have combined my academic activity with my artistic work as an active participant in the local community. As long with other projects, I have formed the flamenco production Imperfecto and I have developed two music projects in collaboration with refugee musicians and local musicians. These projects had led me to organize the local festival Helsinki Arabic Arts and collaborate with the Middle East Jam festival. I have also released my solo record and leading my ensemble, a project I will aim to further develop in future.

At the beginning of my studies I was especially interested on the process of integrating my instrument in a new flamenco ensemble. I have found this path a crucial source of inspiration for composition and a relevant topic to analyze, both in terms of my own development and for the benefit of others. I focused my thesis on this topic, wishing to develop my own artist identity as a musician through the discovering process that this path will open.

## 2. 2 Research questions

The focus of my study will be underlined by a main research question:

- In what ways does the role of the bass as a non-traditional flamenco instrument affect the development of new flamenco music as a style?

More specific areas of interest are implicit on this main research question. Technical, arrangement and sound aspects of the instrumental performance, including the influence of the ensemble setting, the relevance of the international context and the multiple angles presented by using a holistic perspective as an artistic method. According to this, the following sub questions will be formed:

- What types of instrumental techniques and sound resources can be applied to bass playing in order to effectively blend the instrument in a new flamenco ensemble?
- How does the integration of the bass in a new flamenco ensemble affect the performance approaches of traditional flamenco instruments?
- How can we influence to consolidate the role of the bass in new flamenco music by using a holistic perspective through the process of assimilation, creation and transmission of a musical source into new composition works?
- Being the inclusion of the bass a result of the internationalization process of new flamenco music, what are the future directions of the style through its development in an international context?

### 3 New flamenco music

Somewhat controversial concept of new flamenco was introduced during the late 1980s and 1990s by the work of the Spanish record label Nuevos Medios, which featured a generation of young artists that blended flamenco with other musical genres. The most representative influences were those styles that had a connection with flamenco sound and those which were popular at that time; Jazz, Blues, Rock, Afro-Cuban, Middle Eastern and Brazilian styles to name a few. Despite of its fusion with other musical genres, it was still based on the traditional flamenco form<sup>4</sup>.

Although, the term new flamenco music is commonly accepted nowadays by most purists, it was highly criticized by flamenco audiences in Spain at its origin. In contrast, it was very popular among international audiences. The exposure of the style to an international environment was the trigger of the musical innovations originated by their artists. Sergio Pamies Rodriguez (2016) reflects the importance of the internationalization process on the development of new flamenco music through the inclusion of different instruments by their artists:

"Paco de Lucia is responsible for the majority of the great innovations that flamenco music went through in the second half of the twentieth century. He was responsible for introducing instruments such as electric bass, flute, and percussion into a flamenco performance setting, among other innovations... He was not thinking of Spanish audiences. Thus, the internationalization of his music...

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> More information about new flamenco: <a href="https://flamenco.one/en/flamenco/flamenco-flamenco-nowadays/">https://flamenco.one/en/flamenco-flamenco-flamenco-nowadays/</a> (Accessed on 15<sup>th</sup> of January 2019)

resulted in these changes that affected flamenco enormously." (Pamies Rodriguez 2016, 89–90.)

This internationalization phenomenon was a big success on the commercialization of new flamenco and responsible of the new directions on the development of the style. Due to its acclaim, the influence of flamenco in other global musical genres was as common as the influence of other genres in flamenco at that time<sup>5</sup>.

The international component of flamenco has been very strong during the last decades. Silvia Calado Olivo (2007) mention its importance in her investigation of the flamenco business by reflecting the fact that 69,6% of the participants of the well-known flamenco festival Bienal de Sevilla in 2004 came from outside Spain. Francisco Aix Gracia points out the importance of flamenco communities outside Spain, in his sociological research he expresses: "against all essentialist and purist speeches around flamenco, we must recognize the anthropological richness of international flamenco" (Aix Gracia 2014, 497). Consequently, we can understand the internationalization of flamenco as an increasing phenomenon nowadays, which serves the development of new flamenco music in the future.

In order to acquire a better understanding of the topic, we should look at the origins of flamenco music. Although it is accepted that it was born as the result of the cultural mix of Romani Gypsies settling in Spain between the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the style form as we currently know it was established during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This occurred at the same time than other similar Mediterranean music styles that belong to the popular culture such as Fado, Neapolitan song, Rebetika, Arabeske or Ughniya, to name a few. The development of those Mediterranean styles was partly influenced by

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> The result of this influence can be seen in Flamenco Jazz, Andalusian Rock and Rumba Catalana, among other popular music genres. (Pamies Rodriguez: 3-5)

the structural changes in society that occurred at that time, including the demand of new forms of entertainment through the creation of new spaces for the musical performances and the discovering of new ways of communicating and reproducing the sound. (Fernandez 2012, 11–17.)

In this context, we can understand the birth of flamenco as a transcultural hybrid<sup>6</sup>. A product of cross-cultural hybridization<sup>7</sup> were cultural elements changed their meaning or original structure to be transformed into a new form of expression. During this process, the traditional agrarian culture was transformed into the current urban folklore, or the popular religiosity was transformed into spectacle and mercantile value. Flamenco precisely arose from the disobedience and abandonment of the musical patterns established by previous generations of interpreters of national songs and dances. (Casas 2015, 18–20.)

I believe that the blend of flamenco with other musical genres is inherent to its hybrid essence. Gerhard Steingress (2007) emphasizes the idea of flamenco as a hybrid: "Flamenco not only produces hybrids, it was born as a hybrid, it is a hybrid, and it seems that it will continue to be so in the near future" (Steingress 2007, 163). This conception of flamenco as a hybrid serves as a basis for the posterior development of new flamenco music, which from our current perspective can be understood as an ultimate hybrid born from the flamenco tradition. Steingress (2007) explain the history of flamenco as series of fusions from its origins until the globalization, in which flamenco comes to form part of the global industry of World Music through a transcultural hybridization process. In his study, *Postmodern flamenco: between tradition and heterodoxy:* a sociomusicological diagnosis he alludes to five periods of hybridization, each of them

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Steingress defines this phenomenon as: "interprets cultural contacts as the source of a syncretism that is established in a third space and generates a new kind of identity and otherness" (Steingress 2004, 187).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> According to Pelinski we can apply this term in to describe "fusion music, deterritorialized and post-ethnic" (Pelinski 2000, 156).

beginning with a transgression to the popular style and finishing with the superposition of a new esthetic formula. The last period will end on the 1990s with the turning point between new flamenco and traditional flamenco. "Since then, public discussion and the polemics surrounding flamenco has become more intense at the same time as flamenco-fusion and creativity have grown" (Steingress 2007, 184). This reflects the controversial status of new flamenco from its origins since it made a turning point from the tradition.

I believe this turning point allowed the possibility for the further evolvement of the tradition through artistic work by giving artists freedom of expressing their view about the music style. About the development of flamenco, Steingress explains: "Flamenco will only survive as an art in continuous process. All that of the flamenco that does not adapt to this basic requirement, will be conserved as an ethnological souvenir in the musical museums or in some manifestation of the folklore." (Steingress 2007, 109). This attitude will set the basis of my study; I aim to develop future directions and possibilities for the evolvement of new flamenco music through the influence of non-traditional instrumentation.

### 4 Role of the bass in flamenco

Flamenco has had little place for bass as an instrument during its history<sup>8</sup>. However, it is my belief that the role of bass is inherent in the style by both the harmonic and rhythmic elements that are implicit in the music. To understand the traditional bass role in flamenco one must first assimilate the musical content performed by its traditional instrumentation; which features guitar, voice and dance. The tradition has been passing on to generations of musicians through aural transmission, developing during this

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> First flamenco recordings including bass dates from the 1970s.

process, the unique techniques that are featured on this instrumentation. The analysis of this traditional source is therefore the basis of the development of new flamenco music through the expansion of its musical features into a non-traditional instrumental ensemble.

Due to its instrumental similarities, one of the main references for the establishment of the bass role in new flamenco music is the interaction with flamenco guitar and the translation of its techniques into bass<sup>9</sup>. The guitar is used as a polyphonic instrument that is capable of playing either harmony or independent melodic lines. The bass can therefore serve as a continuation of the guitar in that melodic and harmonic content. In other words, the bass can reach places that the guitar cannot and vice versa. This implies the use of counterpoint bass lines that are supporting the guitar playing when featuring both instruments in a music ensemble. There are also techniques that are unique to flamenco guitar and can be effectively transferred to bass playing. Some examples are rasgueado<sup>10</sup>, tremolo<sup>11</sup> or alzapua<sup>12</sup>. During my study, I explore ways of emulating those effects and adapting them to the idiosyncrasy of my instrument.

The transference of flamenco singing into bass playing will be also a fundamental element for its feature as a solo or melodic instrument in new flamenco music. Flamenco singing presents a very particular way of phrasing the melodic parts. Singers anticipate or delay rhythms over the pulse according to its personal interpretation of the music. This phenomenon adds a dramatic component that is generally related with the content of the lyrics and the genre that is performed. The personal interpretation of the flamen-

<sup>9</sup> This is especially relevant when featuring bass guitar.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Rasgueado features the guitar as a rhythmic element by strumming the muted strings and creating a similar effect to a percussion instrument pattern.

Tremolo is generally executed by plucking a single pitch multiple times with distinct fingers in combination with a bass line or counter melody played with the thumb.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Alzapua is a technique consisting of thumbed upstrokes and downstrokes forming a melody on the bass strings with rhythmic counterpoint on the trebles.

co vocal style is often represented through its melismatic<sup>13</sup> way of singing. One of the characteristic elements of this way of singing is the use of microtones<sup>14</sup> in certain passages, this can frequently be found at the highest points in a dramatic musical phrase. The use of microtones in flamenco is generally presented by flattening tones<sup>15</sup> of the given mode. This melismatic way of singing and its use of microtones can be transferred to bass playing due to its nature as a string instrument and its capacity to sustain a note and modify its sound<sup>16</sup>.

From my point of view, flamenco dance can be understood as a rhythmical parameter in the ensemble. The rhythmical figures coming from the dancer's feet interact with the ensemble in a very deep level, since the musicians are responsible for enhancing the dance and supporting its performance. The impact of the dance element in the ensemble performance can be clearly reflected in the structure form of the song, the dynamic level and tempo modulation. This interaction between the music and dance affects the role of bass as a link between the harmonic and rhythmical content of the music.

## 5 A holistic perspective

This study uses artistic research<sup>17</sup> as a qualitative method. Meaning that the actual making of art and its process of creation will be examined to gain broader experience and understanding of the subject. Within this study, an emphasis on the interdisciplinary and holistic dimension of the artistic research model will be made. Being both terms implicit to the essence of the art form. Julian Klein stresses the importance of the interdisciplinary phenomenon in artistic research:

<sup>13</sup> Melismatic interjections are more common and more elaborate in the style of seguiriyas and solea.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Although there is no concrete evidence of this connection, this can be understood as the historical influence of Arabic culture on the Spanish gypsies.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> In contrast to the more complex use of microtones in Arabic music.

This technique can be acutely applied to the use of bow technique in double bass.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Understood as a research through artistic practice or research into artistic practice (Rubidge, 2004).

"If art is but a mode of perception is, also artistic research must be the mode of a process. Therefore, there can be no categorical distinction between scientific and artistic research, because the attributes independently modulate a common carrier, namely, the aim for knowledge within research. Artistic research can therefore always also be scientific research (Ladd 1979). Include in references For this reason, many artistic research projects are genuinely interdisciplinary" (Klein 2010, 4.)

The interdisciplinary nature of my study goes under the umbrella of this research type. The interaction between those interdisciplinary parameters that are part of my research can be understood through the holistic dimension of this model. According to this idea, the results of my artistic research will be considered as series of interconnected parts that are coexisting and inherent to each other. Elaine C. Collins emphasizes on the holistic element of artistic research, as it is implicit in the essence of art itself: importance of the interdisciplinary phenomenon in artistic research:

"Although helpful as heuristics for thinking about qualitative research, traditional models do not take into consideration the dynamic relationship between the researcher and research document, thereby negating the holistic nature of the art form" (Collins 1992, 181.)

In the context of my research, this holistic perspective alludes to the organic symbiosis between those parameters that are involved in the creation process. The parameters that are subject of my research are the musical source, assimilation, creation and transmission process. I understand the use of these parameters as an already common practice for musicians during their artistic work. Therefore, I believe that its formulation with this structured systemic process will provide a practical dimension for the future practice of artistic work.

I would like to reflect this perception through the appliance of Ken Wilberg's holistic model, which consists on a graphical representation of his Integral Theory (Esbjörn-Hargens 2010, 8-9.) A graphic representation of Ken Wilberg's holistic model looks as follows (figure1):

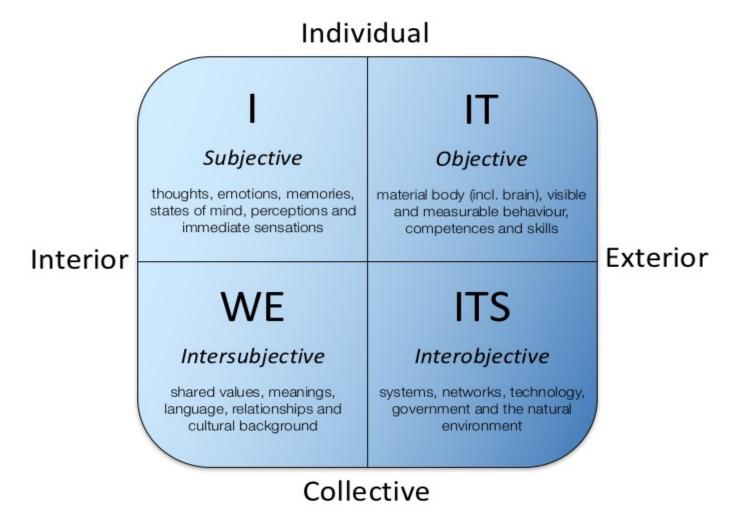


Figure 1: Graphic representation of Ken Wilberg's holistic model

In this model, different dimensions that are interconnected to each other are represented. Inside the graphic, the quadrants below refer to the collective level and the ones above to the individual level. The quadrants on the right examine the mechanical process or external part and the ones on the left examine the internalization process or interior part.



In the right top quadrant, we study the external objective phenomena, the material body, visible and measurable behaviour, competences and skills. In the bottom right quadrant we find the systemic approaches of concepts such as environment, government, media and technology. The left quadrants refer to what are human feelings, emotions, thoughts and states of mind. The upper left quadrant refers to the individual component of those elements, which are subjective and different from one person to another. The lower left quadrant refers to the collective dimension, what we consider as culture. The different quadrants are considered as a group of entities working together in a symbiotic system. This means that the quadrants cannot act as individual entities or ignore the coexistence of each other. An integration of this holistic model in artistic research could look as follows (figure 2):

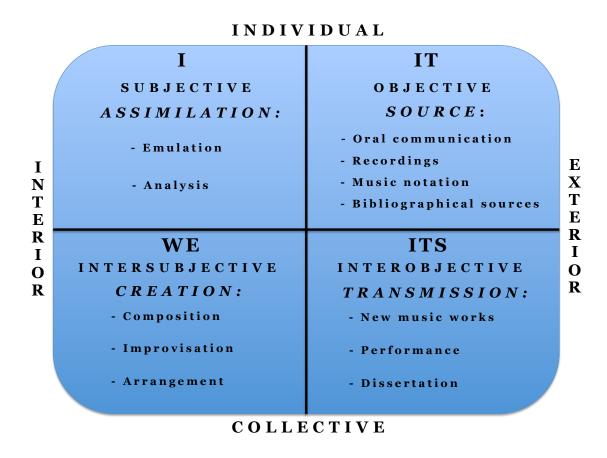


Figure 2: Ken Wilberg's holistic model integrated in artistic research



In this visual analogy of my study, the right top quadrant represents the source subject of research. It will be obtained through oral communication, recordings, music notation and bibliographical sources. The left top quadrant represents the assimilation process, performed through emulation and analysis of the source material. The left below quadrant represent the creation of new music works as a result of the composing, improvising and arranging process. The right below quadrant will represent the transmission of the new musical material presented in new music works, performances and the written part of this study.

As a summary, the symbiotic compound of subjective (I), objective (It), intersubjective (We) and interobjective (Its) is represented by the interaction of these quadrants in the model. According to Wilber, a holistic model is obtained if there is a balance between all these quadrants. For the purpose of my research, we can define it as an ideal attempt to balance and cohesion all the diverse angles of my investigation. Clearly, is not possible to obtain an "absolute holism". This is rather an analytical model, which presents an ideal scenario for my research.

The appliance of this holistic model can be also used to understand the phenomenon of flamenco and the interaction between the different elements that form it. We can synthesize four elements that are inherent on the style: Compás. Armonía, Cultura and Duende. The concept of "compás" describes the behaviour of the performers. This is expressed as technical and rhythmical elements of the music featured in cante, toque and baile (singing, playing and dancing). "Armonía" describes the social interaction between the performers, expressed in concepts such as co-creation, call and response or instant musical reaction. "Cultura" describes all the cultural elements that belong to the style, expressed in concepts like the dialogue implicit in the content of the text, its poetry and interaction with the audience. Above all its characteristics, flamenco has a

relevant spiritual component, which makes it different from other music styles. This spiritual component is reflected in the concept of "Duende". An integration of Ken Wilberg's holistic model in the phenomenon of flamenco could look as follows (figure 3):

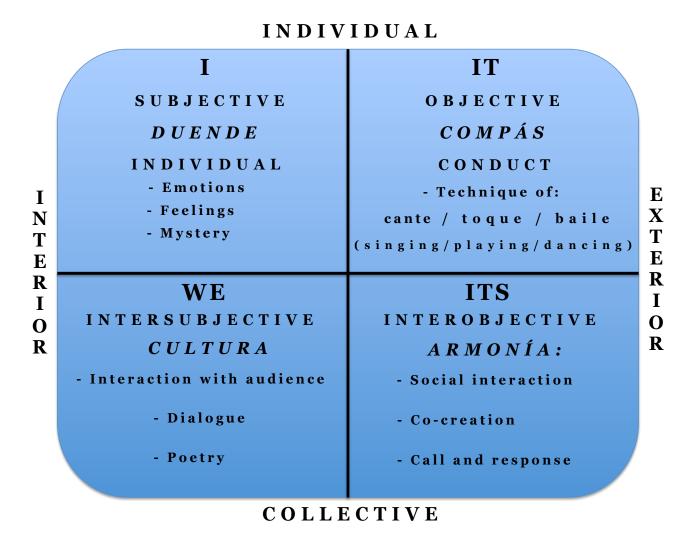


Figure 3: integration of Ken Wilberg's holistic model in the phenomenon of flamenco

According to this holistic concept we can say that a good flamenco performance will have the four quadrants present. As an example, a performance of flamenco that only has the individual-exterior quadrant will only have the technique of cante, toque and baile. This performance is lacking the input of the rest of the quadrants in order to be



complete. Meaning that without the cultural elements and content of the text the message will not connect with the audience in the same way. We will also need the social interaction, co-creation and collective-exterior input. Ultimately, the presence of duende is necessary to provide a spark in the fire of flamenco. Duende is a term that is used to describe the emotions, feelings and mysteries that are part of the style. The author Federico García Lorca describes the mysticality of the concept of Duende:

"Those dark sounds are the mystery, the roots that cling to the mire that we all know, that we all ignore, but from which comes the very substance of art. 'Dark sounds' said the man of the Spanish people, agreeing with Goethe, who in speaking of Paganini hit on a definition of the *duende*: 'A mysterious force that everyone feels and no philosopher has explained. So, then, the *duende* is a force not a labour, a struggle not a thought. I heard an old *maestro* of the guitar say: 'the *duende* is not in the throat: the *duende* surges up, inside, from the soles of the feet.' Meaning, it's not a question of skill, but of a style that's truly alive: meaning, it's in the veins: meaning, it's of the most ancient culture of immediate creation." (Lorca 1933,1.)

Lorca defines the concept of duende in flamenco as a spirit that climbs up inside the performer and produces an inspired performance. A kind of Dionysian force closely connected with anguish, mystery and death, which takes over the artist and produces an extraordinary performance. This power explains the feeling of suffering inside the performer, like something has broke inside him or her and manifests in the performance. Duende represents the struggle and it becomes more intense when the artist is facing fear and trouble. Duende has also a collective component as a phenomenon that is created inside a community. And artist by himself is unable to create that given

force. Therefore, duende manifests as the interaction between performers and audience.

"All the arts are capable of *duende*, but where it naturally creates most space, is in music, dance and spoken poetry, the living flesh is needed to interpret them, since they have forms that are born and die, perpetually, and raise their contours above the precise present." (Lorca 1933, 3.)

Music, dance and spoken poetry are inherent to the essence of flamenco. Understood as a multidisciplinary art form that is born as a result of merging a diversity of musical cultures. The holistic component of flamenco allows the grown of the spirit of duende.

## 6 Compositions features

When approaching musical writing, I have took care of using the harmonic material that belongs to that tradition as much as I could. This artistic approach has also been very relevant for me when needed to break the block in my musical writing. By searching through the traditional music source I have found answers and solutions that I have established as a ground point from where to continue and move on in my writing process. I further summarize in this chapter the most relevant elements that arre featured in my musical compositions.

# 6. 1 Taking from the dance

When working with flamenco dancers I have realized about the vast amount of musical information that is contained in the dance. In flamenco, the dance can be considered as a percussion instrument in an ensemble. The rhythmic elements coming from the dance are unlimited and vary a lot from the context and the personal approach of the dancers. When performing flamenco music, I sometimes made the mistake of looking

too much to the guitar player's fingerboard or cajón player hands. This is a defect acquired as a bass player, since I tend to look at those instruments and play together with them as much as I can. Experienced flamenco musicians have emphasized that comment when giving feedback of my playing. The fact of stop watching the musicians but looking at the feet of the dancer has made me feel liberated and free to perform rhythms in my own way.

This is one of the biggest challenges of flamenco music. Since there is a hierarchy in the ensemble, in which the dancer is in the top of the scale. The guitarist looks at their feet and gets the rhythmic material from there. I have found this magical interacting phenomenon a big source of inspiration when approaching the challenge of writing music inspired in a certain musical tradition.

One of the difficulties I have found when I started to just look at the dancer's feet has been the fact that the rhythmic material coming from the feet work can be understood in different ways. I sometimes have understood the rhythmic material from the dancer in a different way than the guitarists. But, the most challenging part in this case is the way you connect the chord changes in connection with the voice melodies with the dancers feet work. Meaning that, flamenco music is an ancient tradition with a vast repertoire that is usually performed in a certain way. I don't consider myself a great expert on the tradition and sometimes the chord changes that comes naturally from me are different from the guitarist point of view. This conflict has occurred many times during performances. I also believe that the tension created through he different harmonic approaches is part of the tension inherent at flamenco music styles.

During a flamenco lesson I look through a recording of Paco de Lucia with his brother, in that recording there is a part where they both perform a different chord that can be appropriated for that specific melody. Besides the tension created and the fact that fundamental harmonic rules have been broken, the result was surprisingly good and

put a lot of character into their music. In my opinion, this rough sound is a big part of flamenco music and a reason why the passion and energy is inherent in the music.

## 6. 2 Rhythmics

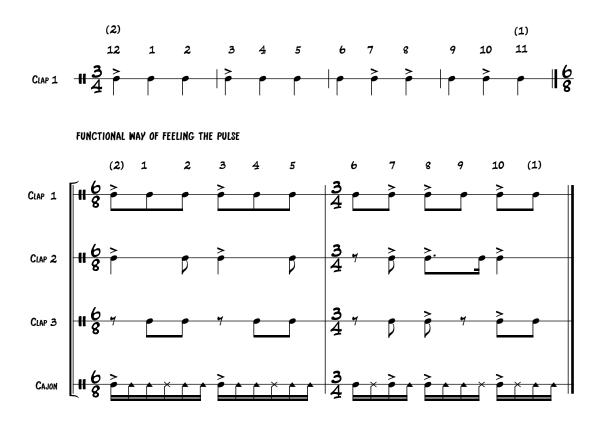
One of the most remarkable features that I have developed in my own writing is the process of mixing two rhythms in the composition. Meaning that the grooves will change from different sections. This has been a crucial element in my writing and a fascinating process to me, since I have discovered new paths for making music through the process of connecting different rhythms and finding links between each other.

When composing new music material, I have always found complicated the fact of finding a new musical section and not knowing how to continue from there. Meaning that, you can end up with a great A section but no clue of how to move on to the B section. When alternating grooves between different sections, the chances of finding new musical material will increase since the rhythms will give you inputs for your musical writing. Therefore, the process of mixing different rhythms has allowed me to find a source of inspiration for making a new section.

A fascinating challenge I faced during my music writing process is that most of the traditional music styles I worked with were not mean to be written in music scores. A relevant example of this phenomenon is the way of writing flamenco rhythms and melodies in the top of those rhythms. During this process I have found that flamenco 12 bar rhythms rhythm can be written in a four bar phrase of ¾ or in a two bar phrase of ¾. There are different opinions about how to write those flamenco rhythms, in most of the cases the reasons to made flamenco rhythms in one way or another came from the characteristics of the instrument that is written for.

During the process of writing for different instruments, I have also realized that usually flamenco guitarists prefer to see the rhythms written in a four bar phrase. This is due to the rhythmical subdivisions that are part of the style and due to the tempo of the song. However, is usually better for melodic instruments to see the patterns in a two bar phrase. The pattern consists on alternating a 6/8 in the first bar and a 3/4 in the second bar. I have found this second option the best choice for my own musical writing. Since the two bars phrase pattern that is generated is more familiar for western trained musicians.

In fact, I always start the explanation of this rhythm with the example of the chorus of Leonard Bernstein's "America" from the musical West side story. This example has also helped a lot to break the ice and release the tension generated when presenting new musical material that is unknown for new musicians. In the following graphic you can appreciate the differences between writing flamenco rhythms in a two bar phrase or in a four phrase:



Due to its origins as dance form, flamenco music has a particular way of counting. The way the beats are counting makes sense for dancers but it does not make sense for western trained musicians. That is why it turns out to be confusing and complicated to work with musicians that are not familiar with those music styles. At the beginning of my flamenco studies I realized that is necessary to communicate the way flamenco musicians do in order to feel the music in the right way. Even though I have mixed feelings about the flamenco count, I have found fascinating the idea of learning new ways of feeling the pulse.

The reason why is a twelve beat count is an interesting discussion and there are many arguments about it. In my opinion, the most coherent explanation I have found is that flamenco dancers usually practice in a dance studio where there is always a mirror and clock. Since clock has twelve numbers that is the reason why they found useful to count the patterns according to that resource. The number twelve is in the top of the mirror and it is take as the downbeat and beginning of the cycle. Depending on where you start the cycle and where you put the accents different flamenco rhythms will be generated.

## 6. 3 Round-trip

The musical focus of my artistic work is inspired by the connection of Latin America and The Middle East in contemporary flamenco music. This unique cultural mix is the key source of inspiration for my project. The term "ida y vuelta" (round-trip) is used in flamenco to classify those styles, which has its origins in Latin America as a result of the interplay between Spanish musical traditions, African slaves and Native Americans. These styles developed into renewed musical forms that were reintroduced in Spain, mainly during the return of Spanish emigrants back to Spain at the end of the nineteenth century.

There is also a strong connection with music styles from The Middle East, since flamenco has its origins in the mixture between Arabic, Jewish and Christian cultures that happened in Spain for more than five hundred years. Therefore, we can understand flamenco as a linkage between cultures, which have been mixing together for hundreds of years through the migration and cultural assimilation process. In that sense, the term New Flamenco refers to the foster development of an ancient music tradition, originally born through the fusion of various cultures sharing the same land. I wish to follow this path and contribute to its development with my artistic work.

## 6. 4 Melody and harmony

From a melodic point of view; I have been very inspired by the process of transcribing from a signing tradition. This is also a very characteristic way of learning flamenco music and a useful tool to understand the phrasing of a certain music style. I have also found a big inspiration on exploring the diversity of reharmonization possibilities of the Spanish Phrygian scale. This scale it can also be called Prhygian major, Mixolidyan b9 b13 for a Jazz point of view or Hijazz in Arabic and Mediterranean music. It is commonly featured in Flamenco music through the use of the Andalusian cadence, which is a common chord progression used in the music from that region. It consists on a diatonic descending line from the sixth degree of a major scale until the third degree of the same scale. The chord from the third degree of the scale becomes a dominant major chord by raising its third a half step up. This harmonic movement creates the Spanish Phrygian scale. This will be the chord progression created:

VI-7 V7 IVMaj7 V7/VI

Ex. A-7 G7 Fmaj7 E7(b9,b13)

The possibilities of reharmonization of the Spanish Phrygian scale seems unlimited for me. It can be consider as modal music and borrow chords and elements from both major and minor parallel scale. It can also be considered as the fifth degree of the harmonic minor scale, this approach will lead to a wide diversity of reharmonization possibilities since it can borrow chords from both eolian and harmonic minor scale. It will also allow to go a bit further away and be considered as the fifth degree of the melodic minor scale. Then, the reharmonization possibilities are totally different and the character of the music will differ a lot. Another option will be to consider all the possibilities from the rest of minor scales, diminish scales, symmetric scales. We can also borrow chords from major scales going even further away.

Something that I like to explore in my compositions is taken the consideration of the Andalusian cadence from the fourth degree. Meaning that Andalusian cadence starts from Am7, G7, Fmaj7 and E7(b9) then we can use the same movement from the fourth degree, modulating in this way: Dmin7, C7, Bbmaj7 and A7(b9) I use a lot pivot chords to execute this modulation. For example in this case it will be very smooth to use a triton substitution with Bb7(#11) chord going to A7(b9) which will resolve over Dmin7. Another will be to use a Lydian chord Bbmaj7(#11) going to A7(b9) which has almost the same characteristics than a Mixolydian #11 chord that is commonly used in triton substitutions. The II-V modulation can be used as well, although it does not sound that smooth in this context. The triton substitution works the best for me since it can be used as a pivot chord for the next key.

### 6. 5 Orchestration

One of the most important facts of leading my own ensembles in such a diversity of contexts has been the arranging process, since I have been on the need of writing parts for all different types of musicians and find out solutions to make the song happen with the peculiarities of the band I worked with.

I also believe that a composition must be something alive, which can be adapted to different types of situations. The challenge of arranging the piece for all those different contexts must be taken into consideration as the composer's responsibility to keep his music alive. I have kept this statement and artistic view during my artistic work in this project.

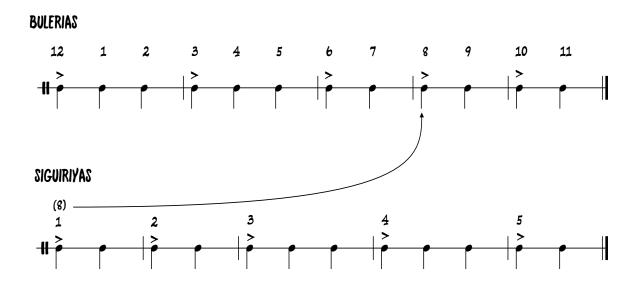
I believe this arranging challenge must be properly taken care of by the composer since the way music is presented to musicians will directly affect to the quality of its performance. If the music is not properly written, the motivation of the musicians will go down, and in most of the cases they will create a negative opinion about your music. Therefore, the chances of screwing up the music in the performance will be very high as well.

### 7 Analisis of compositions

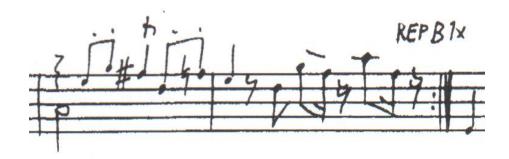
I have chosen to analyze in this chapter two compositions I made during the studies. My study focus and thesis topic has been present during the music creation proces of this music. The pieces has been performed with different ensemble settings during the last year.

### 7. 1 Cielo de Tierra

This composition is inspired on the connection between two flamenco rhythms and styles that can be seen as two brunches of the same tree: Bulerias and Siguiriyas. Both rhythms came from the same twelve beat count but starting the pattern form a different part of the cycle. Bulerias starts from the twelve and Siguiriyas starts from the eights. Therefore, the feeling of one is different from one style to another. The following graphic shows this rhythmical idea:



My experiences performing with Arabic musicians during my participation in local projects with Arabic musicians in Helsinki has been a motivator for my learning process of music styles from the Middle East. Those experiences have also served as a source of inspiration for composing new music integrating elements from those music traditions where I have been immersed. An example of this is reflected in the melodic material of the C section. The main motif of this section is taken from the traditional Arabic song Inta Oumri composed by Mohammed Abdel Wahab. The first time I performed this song I felt fascinated by the modal character of this melodic fragment which alternates between major an minor sixth notes inside a minor context. The following graphic shows the melodic excerpt from Inta Oumri:



I got very inspired by this melodic character and started to play around with this sound in the rhythmical context of Siguiriyas. This idea developed in the melodic content of the D section, which consist on a repetition of a two bar phrase melodic pattern adapted to the rhythmical context of Siguiriyas style. I believe that using melodic fragments from traditional music is a great tool to be used for composers. Since traditional and popular music is in the cultural heritage of people and it will evoke certain feelings in the audience when they are able to recognize those fragments. The following graphic shows the result of this melodic inspiration in my piece:



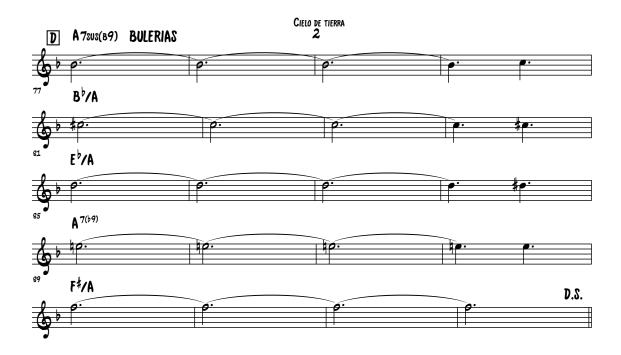
The song starts with Siguiriyas rhythm; I decided to write the style using a five bars phrase, which alternates between two bars of 2/4, two bars of 3/4 and one bar of 2/4. The bass line supports the Siguiriyas five bars phrase by playing the downbeat of every bar. The bass line plays the first five notes of the Spanish Phrygian scale, creating a feeling of trance and walking motion. The harmonic idea of this piece comes from the artistic need for finding different ways to approach Spanish Phrygian harmonies in my



compositions. During this process I realized that I could extrapolate the effect of changing harmonies by chord changes into changing whole sections with certain harmonic characters, emulating the effect of chord changes. This composition explores this idea by alternating between the characteristic harmonic changes of the Andalusian cadence between its sections. By using this effect, I aimed to look at the composition as a big resolution of the Andalusian cadence. Meaning that the color of the cadence will be a bit hidden but will still be naturally received by the listener as part of the style.

For this composition, I used this method in the following way; The A section of the piece features the harmonic character of A7(b9), first degree of the Andalusian cadence. The B section features the harmonic character of C, minor third degree of the cadence. The C section features the harmonic character of Bb, minor second degree of the cadence. Finally the D section resolves back again into the first degree of the cadence by going to the A7(b9) harmonic character. This harmonic progression between I, bIII, bII and I degree of the Phrygian scale is the basis of flamenco music chord changes since it can be found in almost all flamenco tunes.

The D section of this piece modulates to Bulerias groove, the way I wrote this style is in a two bar phrase and the way I feel it is a 6 beat count. This a particular feature of Bulerias from Jeréz style. The tempo is fast and coming from the Siguiriyas groove creates a feeling of doubling the tempo of the composition. We modulate to this new groove by using the second ¾ bar of the Siguiriyas pattern as a pivot for the transition to Bulerias groove. This way we end the C section with a ¾ and start the new section with a 3/4. The idea of the D section is to create a big crescendo using min7(b5) chords, creating tension that will be released in the solo section. When going back to the A section we use a break that is very typical in flamenco music. Leaving empty the first two 2/4 bars of the Siguiriyas pattern and coming in the downbeat of ¾ bar. The following graphic shows an excerpt of the D section:



The name of the song is a phrase taken from the poem "El paso de la Siguiriya" by Federico García Lorca. The text of this poem has been the source of inspiration for this composition by representing the descriptive elements of the poem into the music. The text describes the flamenco style of Siguiriya as a magical spirit with both human and animal qualities. I have used Copla singing style with excerpts of the poem as an introduction to the instrumental piece in live performances by interacting with the band and the singer. The lyrics I used are:

Entre mariposas negras va una muchacha **morena** junto a una blanca serpiente de **niebla**.

Tierra de luz,

Va encadenada al temblor de un ritmo que nunca **llega**; tiene el corazón de plata y un puñal en la **diestra**.

Tierra de luz,

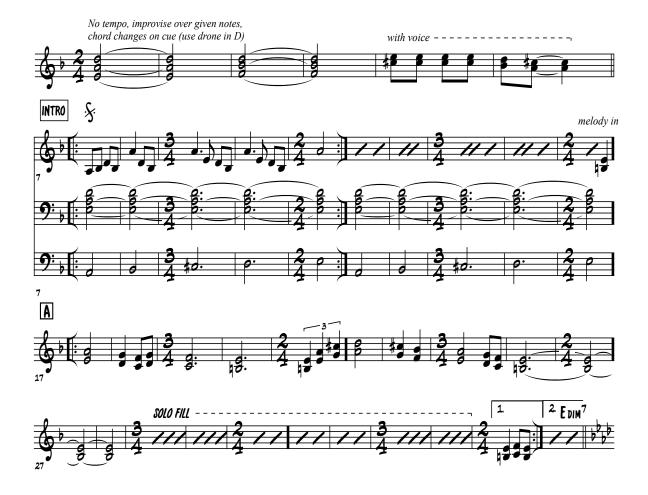
¿Adónde vas, siguiriya, con un ritmo sin cabeza?



# ¿Qué luna recogerá tu dolor de cal y **adelfa**?

Tierra de luz, cielo de tierra.

The intro of the song will be rubato, changing the chords on the underlined words and interacting between singer and musical soundscapes made with the band. The rubato feel of the introduction will be broken when the rhythm section came with the groove and moving to the A section.



The melody of the C section is take from the traditional Arabic song: I performed this song before and felt fascinated by the modal character of this melodic fragment. I included this melodic fragement in my piece and adapted it to the rhythmical context of



Siguiriyas style. I believe that using melodic fragments from traditional music is a great tool to be used for composers. Since traditional and polar music is in the cultural heritage of people and it will evoke certain feelings in the audience when they are able to recognize those fragments.

### 7. 2 Inmerso

The title of this song means "Immersed" in English. I got the inspiration from the process of integrating new musical influences into my own writing. In that process I notice that the mixture between the input source material coming form my own culture and coming from other cultures became natural and fluid without even noticing it. This phenomenon inspired the title and the characteristics features of this composition, since it incorporates elements from both Castillian folk and Brazilian music styles.

The rhythm and melody from the introduction and A section is inspired on the traditional Castilian music style of *Panaderas*. The style is traditionally performed by singing while strumming the rhythm on the table in a characteristic way (using the firsts and the open palm of the hands). I have transferred the rhythm into the instruments and used the original tune to begin the piece by singing and performing the body percussion rhythm. After its performance, musicians transfer the rhythm into their own instruments and began to play the melodic material I wrote. Here is an excerpt of the melodic material I wrote in panaderas style:



The name of this style came from the word bread maker, since this stomping in the table rhythm was originally perform during the long bread makers working labor as a way of enjoying and making their work lighter. The lyrics of this text are:

A la entrada del pueblo y a la salida, hay una panadera cuando me mira.

Ay que panadera, hay que panaderillaa, el alma me lleva.

Esa panaderilla me ofreció un bollo, por no verle la cara se lo perdono.

Ay que panadera, hay que panaderilla, el alma me lleva.

Esa panaderilla tiene tres nombres, jugadora borracha y amiga de hombres.

Ay que panadera, hay que panaderillaa, el alma me lleva.

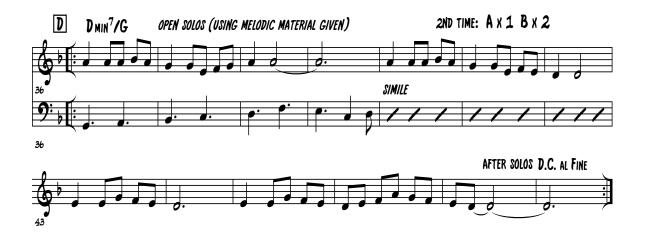
Dime panaderilla como va el trato, la harina va subiendo y el pan barato.

The topic of the text is a bit controversial. It talks about a female bread maker, which provoke love feelings to a man when he sees her at the entrance of the village. The man has big feelings about her but tries to contain them since she is a bad influence and a not suitable company for him. The text compares the services she provide by the company services she might provide to other man. Even though they can be considered as sexist and politically incorrect the lyrics are meant to be funny and provoking. Specially if we take into consideration that is an old text and by the time it was made the equality of gender was not the same as it is nowadays.

The B section consists on a metric modulation moving into a rhythmic idea inspired on the variation of *Samba partido alto*. I like the contrast between the ¾ three bar phrase in minor dorian scale from the A section and the 4/4 groove in major key that happens in the B section. The C section is a transition between both rhythms and the percussion break are meant to impulse this transition. The following graphic shows an excerpt of the melodic material I wrote in panaderas style in the B and C section:



In the D section I transcribed the melodic excerpt from these traditional lyrics to be used as an inspiration for the soloist. Although this section is meant to be open, using free improvisational ideas and creating a collective dialogue between the musicians, I believe that the idea of restricting the improvisation by providing a given melody will help to cohesionate the piece. The following graphic shows an excerpt of the melodic material given to the soloist in the D section:



In many cases when approaching a solo section, musicians tend to forget the material of your piece and go to some musical areas in which they are good at it. This can be dangerous since it might ruin the piece more than enhancing it with the improvisation. Although a solo improvisation should be free and follow the momentum of the performance, I believe the soloist should take into consideration the character of the piece and enhance the whole musical composition. In that sense, the use of this technique will help to give hints to the soloist and set a frame for the improvisation. In other compositions I have been using this idea to write background lines for a solo section using the melodic material of the piece. By using this methods, the soloist will get hints of the composer's artistic view and will be reminded to stay in the mood of the composition.

## 8 Leadership

I present in this chapter some of the challenges I faced during the leadership process of my project, I also reflect the methods I applied to solve them. As student, I faced this experience with the mentality that I should learn from a diversity of music situations in order to be prepared and qualified to further lead music ensembles in future.

# 8. 1 Combining methods

During the development of this project I have featured a combination of leadership methods. At a personal level, I wanted to get involved in the learning process by my immersion into it rather than keeping an outside analytical view. I have focused on internalizing the knowledge through my whole body, believing than the conceptual synthesis of the material learned will came naturally during my own music making practice.

During the process of leading diverse musical projects I have faced lots of challenges. Ensembles I have formed during the last two years in Denmark, Finland and Spain have performed my songs. Due to the diversity of the ensembles, I have had to arrange my songs for trio format, quartet, large ensemble and big band.

Another challenge I faced when leading music ensembles has been the fact of finding available musicians that are willing to join a new musical project. My approach in this sense has been quite open minded what comes to choose musicians. I wanted to perform with as much people as possible and discover which ways of leading and writing the music will work the best for new musicians

### 8. 2 The benefit of the risk

I believe that the academic environment is the right place for exploring and developing new artistic forms that are experimental and "outside the box". In my opinion, that should be the ultimate goal of a student. In that sense, university is a space for music creation and exploration. Not only preserving art but also making a tradition alive and being a motivator for the evolvement of artistic forms.

During the development of this musical project I have taken many risks and tried out multiple ideas that were not working at the beginning. A challenge I wanted to face as a



way of pushing me to uncomfortable situations were I needed to find solutions and forms to deal with those challenges.

In that sense, many of the decisions I have made with my own compositions have been made based on the idea of exploring something new. Meaning, some musical territory were I was not good at it. The fact of being in that "muddy lands" territory and getting a negative feedback from the musicians helped me a lot to grow as a musician and leader. After those experiences, I went back to the composition and fixed those mistakes and parts that must been improved. The advice from musicians has been crucial in this process. I have always communicated with them and explained the reasons why those ideas were needed to be included in the piece. I have found this approach crucial in the process of finding a personal connection with musicians as a way of breaking through the barrier of being a "session" musician and becoming a band mate.

Working with different types of musician's means that they will all have different opinions about your music, leadership approaches and diverse personal feelings about you. At times, it has felt very bad to write something undoable for an instrument or trying out a crazy idea that no one is able to perform. But in those moments I have learned something crucial and essential that has allowed me to grow up as a composer and bandleader.

I have also learned that, even though the musical output has been bad and my performance could have been way better. Musicians have respected the fact that I took a risk and do something brave. Something that, in many cases, they will not have the courage to even trying out with their own musical projects.

#### 9 Conclusion

The musical path of new flamenco music has already been established by a wide number of composers and artists in their legacy. Therefore, I believe that the reflection of methods I used for integrating bass in new flamenco ensemble will greatly benefit the music community by making traditional music styles accessible to contemporary musicians. During this experience I have learned how to keep an open-minded attitude what comes to approaching different musical cultures by being able to broad my knowledge by getting a better understanding of a musical culture. Being also aware the connections with my own culture.

I believe that my artistic work will contribute to hasten the development of traditional music styles by connecting them to contemporary musicians and audiences that are unfamiliar with the styles. Ultimately, I believe that the maturation of my artistic work as an artist in the future will allow me to reach new audiences, connect with like-minded musicians and provide the required tools to develop a life longing career.

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# Appendix 1. Video material:

The video excerpts represent a series of performances I have done during my studies. The concerts are part of the artistic work of my final project and connected with my research topic. The videos feature my own compositions and arrangements in a diversity of ensemble settings (duo, trio, quartet or quintet) The musicians of the ensembles are coming from different cultures and artistic backgrounds. I feature myself as band leader, composer, arranger and bassist.

- **July 2018** Performance at Kaustinen Folk Music Festival (Kaustinen) duo of flamenco guitarist Toni Jokiniitty and myself on bass.

## https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIYtX1\_eies

- October 2018 Performance at Vuotalo (Helsinki) with Cuejero featuring flamenco pianist Pablo Suárez and Romani singer Anette Åkerlund:

# https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7jQYZwA4Nss

- November 2018 Master project performance at Arabia Sali (Helsinki) featuring:

Pedro Sanchez (Cuba) Piano

Raciel Lopez (Cuba) Percussion

Milver Colmenares (Venezuela) Drums

Javier Sanchez (Spain) Double bass

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=----nvV3qYk

- **April 2019** Performance at Rytmihäiriöklubi (Helsinki) with Cuejero ensemble. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QiEFU-hN4Ew

I also have more videos that feature flamenco bass in youtube, you can find them in my youtube playlist:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2iVRKCWnoyUanUU87tRzdyKeCVuzYIRj



# CIELO DE TIERRA





