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“The Notes that bathe the Mediterranean”: Spanish Flamencos and Moroccan Musicians in Creative *Convivencia*

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Abstract

Recent scholarship in ethnomusicology foregrounds issues of globalization; transnational identity, deterritorialization and migration as they are articulated in musical practice. For centuries the music of the peoples of Spain has moved back and forth between Andalusia and North Africa. The recent collaborations between Spanish and North African musicians present a discourse of a pan-Mediterranean sensibility which articulates shared historical roots and shared contemporary realities, as it simultaneously references notions of *convivencia* (the shared co-existence of the three cultures in medieval Spain) and expresses contemporary inter-dependence. This article explores musical collaborations in Spain, ranging from interactive musical dialogues to hybrid fusions between musicians of both cultures. In what ways do these musical collaborations articulate identities; acknowledge shared histories and musical affinities; reflect contemporary socio/political realities and function as expressions of solidarity? In presenting the collaborative work of Spanish and North African musicians, I address issues these collaborations represent. I examine these collaborations from the perspectives of the musicians involved, and the discourse surrounding these musical creations. In so doing, I explore concepts of transnational and pan-Mediterranean identities, as well as the role of cultural imagination in constructing narratives of community and collective memory.

Keywords: flamenco; Música Andalusí; Moroccan music; hybridity; identity construction; *convivencia*.

The title for this article was inspired by a piece that appeared in the Sevillian press in 2004, publicizing the upcoming tour of musicians from the Magreb throughout the province of Seville and sponsored by the Andalusian government. This summer tour which was advertised in the *Diario de Sevilla*, entitled *Mediterráneos* announced regional concert performances of Moroccan *Música Andalusí* orchestras, *gitano* flamenco performances and performances by ensembles from Egypt, sharing stages and venues throughout Andalusia. Prior to this, in the late 1990s, a number of North African groups specializing in *Al-Andalus* or Andalusian music, had been performing regularly in iconic Moorish sites. As part of the *Encuentros Andalusí en Granada* in April 1996 (and in commemoration of the laying of the first stone of the Mosque that was to be built in that city), both the *Orquesta Música Andalusí-Garnati Awtar Tilimsán* from Tlemcen Algeria, and the *Orquesta de la Escuela de Música Andalusí* of Tetuan, Morocco performed in the Manuel de Falla Cultural Center, which sits just above the most revered of all Andalusian sites, the Alhambra Palace of Granada. Another of these performances was part of the *III Ciclo de Música Andalusí*, in September 1996, in which an Orchestra from Fez, Morocco performed in a patio of the *Real Alcázar*, the Moorish Palace and gardens in the center of old Seville.

The growing audience and increasing regional government support for these musical and cultural exchanges reflects a celebration of the cultural heritage unique to southern Spain and is evident in the frequency and high profile of these festivals, concerts and tours.

Some decades prior to this, a number of musical collaborations between North African musicians, musical ensembles, and flamenco performers, had begun to emerge, both in theatrical productions and recordings. Since the late 1970s these collaborations and fusions have flourished to critical acclaim.

These recent collaborations between flamencos and North African musicians offer a compelling example of musical expressions which articulate both shared historical roots and shared contemporary realities, as they simultaneously reference notions of *convivencia* (the co-existence of the three cultures in medieval Spain) and expresses solidarity and contemporary interdependence. Over the past three decades, *Música Andalusí*, Moroccan Andalusian music, has become better appreciated in Spain, at the same time that there have been numerous intercultural collaborations. The frequent inclusion of North African groups in festivals and the increasing hybrid collaborations between musicians of both cultures represent this sense of interdependence, mutual regard and social and cultural solidarity. This article examines some of these musical representations as they articulate processes of identity construction, evocations of the past, notions of shared historical roots and visions of the future, and in so doing underscores the key role of individual agency in these musical creations. Fieldwork for this project began in 1996 in Seville and has continued throughout Andalusia up to the present day.

Shared musical characteristics

Not surprisingly, Spanish traditional folk music and flamenco, and Moroccan music, both popular genres and the more classical *Música Andalusia* repertoire, share many similar musical traits. These musical similarities make possible a fluidity and ease of movement back and forth between the genres and styles. These shared traits have a long history that dates back many centuries. Flamenco scholar Cristina Cruces explores aspects of these shared musical cultures in her interesting work *El Flamenco y la Música Andalusí: Argumentos para un Encuentro*. Cruces outlines a number of traits which are shared by the two musical cultures. She describes both *Andalusí* and Flamenco as being characterized by “sung poetry.”¹ In terms of musical structures and harmony, she notes the predominance of modal scales in both and in particular the Andalusian cadence,² as well as the propensity for open phrases. Both musical genres are characterized by a tendency toward melodic flexibility and microtonal intervals. There are many shared vocal traits of both Moroccan music and flamenco, including a high degree of melismatic vocal ornamentation, vocal monody and a strophic

¹Cristina Cruces, *El flamenco y la música andalusí: argumentos para un encuentro* (Barcelona: Ediciones Carena, 2003), 121-124

² The diatonic Phrygian tetrachord which creates the step-wise descending chord progression vi-V-IV-III in major mode or i-VII-VI-V in minor mode.

song structure. Rhythmically both musics are similar in their use of intricate polyrhythms, and certain binary structures.

Due to the many centuries of shared culture in *al-Andalus*, as one would expect, there are many shared linguistic traits. According to Cruces, there is an important influence of Andalusí poetic and musical culture in the Spanish repertoire of *Romances*, medieval ballads, which in turn have influenced the creation of flamenco song. The lyric forms of the “sung poetry” in both musics are similar, characterized by short strophic forms and similar themes and emotional affect. The two musics have developed as oral traditions over the centuries, with musical notation being the exception. And one cannot overlook the central role that individual artists play in each of these musical cultures, in which certain individuals are considered the creators and primary exponents of particular musical genres. The shared culture over so many centuries has produced many common musical traits, which enhance the combining of these two musics, whether in juxtaposition, in dialogue or actual fusion.

Theoretical bases for the construction of cultural identity

Current scholarship in ethnomusicology foregrounds issues of globalization and transnational identity as they are articulated in musical practice. In his framework which analyzes global cultural flows, Arjun Appadurai has noted, “the landscapes of group identity—the *ethnoscapes*—around the world are no longer familiar anthropological objects insofar as groups are no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically self conscious or culturally homogeneous.” Appadurai’s work examines nature of locality as a lived experience in a global, deterritorialized world. Appadurai examines the flow of people, ideas, media, money, finances and technologies, while emphasizing the importance of taking into consideration the flow of people, the *ethnoscapes*.³ These flows are complex, multi-dimensional and multi-directional. Moreover, historical reconstructions of contemporary local situations play an important role in the understanding of complex identities. As Beebe Bahrami points out in *Al-Andalus and Memory: The Past and Being Present among Hispano-Moroccan Andalusians from Rabat*, Moroccan Andalusian identity is complex, “with a multi-faceted and selectively remembered past; it is one identity label with multiple, contextual relevances.”⁴

Locality can broaden into and expand to include many disparate experiences, which can be viewed through a shared lens of Mediterranean-ness. A pan-Mediterranean sensibility, be it imagined or real, has come to hold sway in the collective imagination, a concept which Goffredo Plastino references in his text “Open Textures: On Mediterranean Music.” Plastino examines the concept of “an imaginary Mediterranean” and of a globalization which does not necessarily “pervert individual cultures; rather it enriches them.” Referencing the work of anthropologist Michael Herzfeld, Plastino

³Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 48

⁴ Beebe Bahrami, “Al Andalus and Memory: The Past and Being Present Among Hispano-Moroccan Andalusians from Rabat,” in *Charting Memory: Recalling Medieval Spain*, ed. Stacy Beckwith (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 2000), 111.

suggests the possibility of reconceptualizing the Mediterranean as both a physical and virtual space. Quoting Herzfeld, he suggests a more “process-oriented understanding of the politics of cultural identity, in a region where some people, some of the time, do find it useful to emphasize their identity as Mediterranean.”

In his book *Playing Across a Divide: Israeli-Palestinian Musical Encounters*, Ben Brinner’s examination of the Israeli/Palestinian shared cultural landscape reflects in many ways the Moroccan/Spanish musical experience. His chapter entitled *Roots in the Past/Routes to the Future* is especially relevant to the Spanish/North African cultural experience.⁵ North Africans cherish their Andalusian past on the Iberian peninsula as a glorious moment in their history albeit a painful one. Until the middle of the twentieth century, Spaniards tended to downplay their Moorish heritage, due to the ideological legacy of the *reconquista* (the reconquest of Muslim Spain by Spanish Christians) and later nationalist movements. The second half of the twentieth century has seen a change in this attitude both in the scholarly community and in the general public. In recent decades, issues of immigration, shifting demographics, and the critical economic situation have been of extreme concern to both Spaniards and Moroccans. The fact that musicians consciously choose to create musical expressions that build bridges and attempt to remove cultural barriers speaks to the desire of many to create, in the words of Brinner “routes to the future.” This article speaks to the work of some of these musicians: their creative choices and the role of individual agency in these articulations of musical and cultural identity; evocations of shared historical roots and expressions of the desire for a more socially and politically inclusive future.

Evocations of the past

Representations of Mediterranean culture past and future evoke history and the idea of *convivencia*, of Arabs, Christians and Jews living together in relative tolerance. While the issue of the degree of tolerance that existed between these groups has shown, in recent scholarship, to be a complex one that resists oversimplification, there is no doubt that the interchange over many centuries of cultural forms greatly enriched the poetry and musics of medieval Spain. The notion of *convivencia* continues to maintain a powerful hold on the Spanish and the Moroccan collective imagination. The notion of nostalgia became a potent force in the Magreb due to the expulsion of Spanish Muslims and the continuance of the musical tradition in North Africa. As Dwight Reynolds as noted “*al-Andalus* survived in the popular imagination primarily as a site of nostalgia.”⁶ Transnationalism is not a recent phenomenon for Moroccans, whose history and culture carry the influence of the Arab, African and European. According to Bahrami, Andalusians represent the multiple historical and cultural influences of the past in contemporary Moroccan society. There has been a continuity of historical identity between the *moriscos*, the Hispanic Muslims who submitted to Christian baptism with those Muslims who were expelled from Spain between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, and with contemporary Moroccan Andalusians.

⁵Ben Brinner, *Playing Across a Divide: Israeli-Palestinian Musical Encounters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁶Dwight Reynolds, “Musical Remembrances of Medieval Muslim Spain,” in *Charting Memory*, 229-230.

As Bahrami suggests, the “overall complexity of Moroccan Andalusian identity draws significantly on ancestral experience in medieval Spain as diverse, multi vocal and on the ways in which Andalusians have remembered this to the present day.”⁷

Musical evocations of *convivencia*

Spanish early music played an important role in the current flowering of fusions and cooperative endeavors between Spanish and North African musicians. The work of the Paniagua brothers presents an engaging example of this musical expression of *convivencia*. Brothers Gregorio and Eduardo Paniagua created early music ensembles such as *Atrium Musicae de Madrid* beginning in the mid 1960s. Groups like *Atrium Musicae* and the internationally known *Hesperion XX*, led by Catalan musician Jordi Savall specialize in musical recreations of *convivencia*, shifting the emphasis between the Christian, the Jewish or the Moorish legacy. In mid 1980s Eduardo Paniagua founded two groups that specialize in Arabo-Andalusian music and in 1994 Paniagua created the *Ensemble Ibn Baya* together with ‘oud player Omar Metioui, for the performance and recording of Andalusian music. During the same period Paniagua began the very successful *Pneuma* record label which produces both early music and Arabo-Andalusian recordings, which include Medieval *cantigas*, Sephardic musics and numerous recordings of Andalusian musics. The elaborately designed CD covers with their romantic and orientalist themes portray a nostalgic evocation of the Spanish and Moroccan Andalusian past.



Figure 1: *La Belleza Contemplada: Música Andalusí de Laúd*. 2000. CD cover of Pneuma Recording produced by the Paniagua brothers.

⁷ Bahrami, 114.

Institutional support for artistic collaborations.

Prior to the economic crisis that began in 2008, Spanish state institutional support in promoting cultural exchange was generous and collaborative projects were flourishing in Spain. Government and private foundation support began to appear at the same time that the Paniaguas were becoming well known. Local and regional governmental agencies regularly sponsored musical exchanges, such as the 2004 summer tour in Andalusia, *Los Mediterráneos*, or the Annual festivals of *Música Andalusí* that took place in Seville and Granada. Foundations were created for the dissemination of the historical culture of *al Andalus*, and to further research the cultural exchange between Spanish and Magreb culture. These governmental and private foundations promote concerts, fund publications, conferences and cultural encounters of many kinds. The *Legado Andalusí* (The Legacy of al-Andalus) is a public foundation of the Andalusian regional government whose aim is to promote and disseminate the cultural patrimony of Andalusia, with particular attention to the artistic expression and monuments of the Hispano-Muslim period.⁸

Based in Granada, their objectives include the promotion of cultural and rural tourism, traditional arts, and the protection and restoration of this vast heritage. They maintain a permanent exhibit at the *Pabellón Andalus* (the Andalusian Pavillion, at the Park of the Sciences in Granada), and publish the periodical *El Legado Andalusí: Una Nueva Sociedad Mediterránea*, as well as a number of other publications related to the culture of al-Andalus.

Another important institution is located in Seville, the capital of Andalusia. The *Fundación de las Tres Culturas del Mediterráneo* was established in 1998 as an initiative of the Andalusian regional government and the Kingdom of Morocco.⁹ The foundation is committed fostering the coexistence of cultures and religions through exchange of ideas and experiences. The foundation, whose goal is to enhance cooperation throughout the region, promotes dialogue with civil, political and artistic sectors throughout the Mediterranean. The Three Cultures Foundation engages in a number of cultural initiatives, including concerts, exhibitions, seminars and other activities. They sponsor a cultural diversity month with programming that includes musical collaborative groups from Spain and Morocco, as well as both Spanish and Moroccan traditional music concerts. Both of these institutions, along with a number of regional government agencies, have played an important role in promotion of music and related arts throughout Andalusia and Spain.

Flamenco Arabe

Fusions of flamenco *cante* (song) with Arabic and North African musics began back in the 1970s with the work of the Montoya family, in particular with flamenco singer and dancer Antonia Rodríguez Moreno, known as *La Negra*. Born in Oran, Algeria in 1936, and raised in Morocco, she moved to the formerly *gitano* neighborhood of Triana, in Seville, where she married dancer Juan Montoya. Together they formed the flamenco ensemble *La Familia Montoya* in 1972. *La Negra* is

⁸ Web page: <<http://www.legadoandalusi.es>>

⁹ Web page: <tresculturas.org>

especially known for singing of flamenco tangos in North African dialect. This inheritance was passed onto her daughter, flamenco singer Lole Montoya who performed with the family troupe and later formed the famed duo *Lole y Manuel*, with singer/guitarist Manuel Molina. Lole and Manuel were innovators of the genre known as *Nuevo Flamenco*, or new flamenco, in which they created fusions of flamenco with other musical genres in their own unique compositions. These compositions frequently featured lyrics sung in Arabic by Lole. Certain compositions referenced their shared Spanish/North African heritage directly, such as the song *Sangre Gitana y Mora* (Gypsy and Moorish Blood). Lole is known for her settings of songs in arabic to styles of flamenco *cante*, following the tradition set by her mother, Antonia Montoya, La Negra. She and Manuel performed their original compositions throughout the 1970s and 80s. The Montoyas were featured artists in the ground breaking theatrical production *Macama Jonda*, a much acclaimed collaboration of the two cultures, which premiered in 1983.

One of the early celebrated fusion efforts between Moroccan musicians and flamencos was the recording *Encuentros I* (First Encounters) produced in 1985 with famed flamenco singer the late Juan Peña, El Lebrijano and the Orchetra Andalusí from Tangiers. This acclaimed recording had a tremendous influence on younger performers who followed in the creation of these musical collaborations. Musical director of the project, well-known flamenco guitarist Paco Cepero, joined forces with poet and lyricist Caballero Bonald and Juan Peña to create songs which mixed the two heritages of Andalusia. These songs juxtaposed and synthesized the two musics. Flamenco *cante* was sung over Moroccan musical accompaniments. Songs in North African dialect were sung to a background of flamenco guitar with Moroccan-style violin and percussion. Many of the songs on this recording feature singers alternating in Arabic and Spanish, instrumentation which includes arabic 'oud, violin, *derbukka*, often the *riq* (tamborine) as well as flamenco guitar, palmas and at times the flamenco *cajón*. Lyrics deal with themes of love and freedom, such as *Dame la Libertad* (Give me Freedom), which expresses a common *gitano* theme.

The recordings of *La Negra*, of the duo Lole y Manuel and the ground-breaking *Encuentros I* of EL Lebrijano expressed a reaffirmation of Andalusian cultural heritage and a celebration of Moorish historical connections. These earlier collaborations of the two musics functioned as symbols of a multi-faceted Andalusian identity that is simultaneously regional, ethnic and Mediterranean.

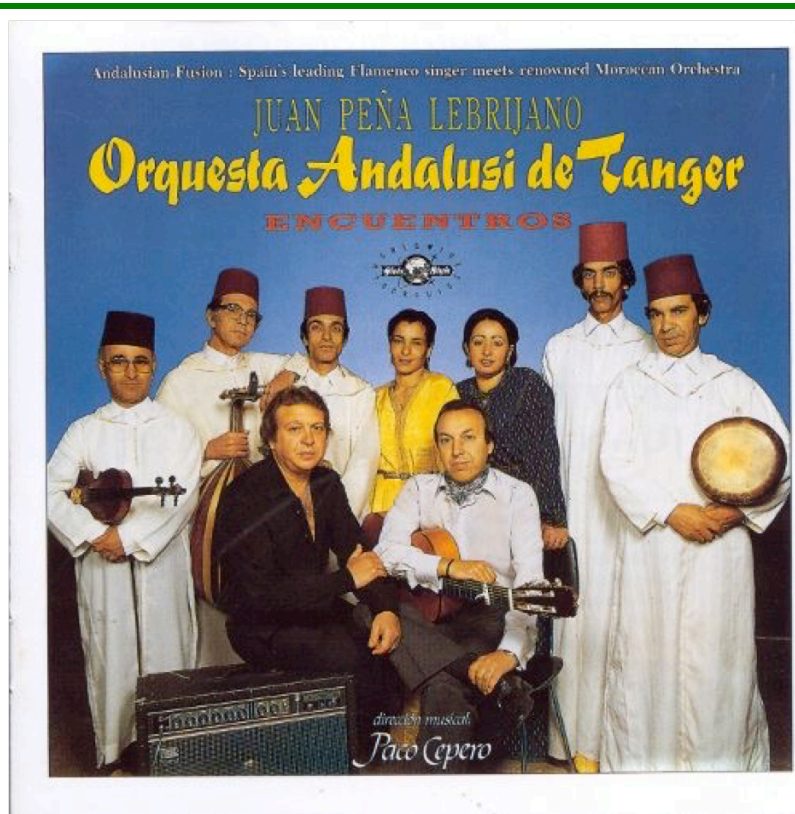


Figure 2: *Encuentros I*: CD cover of the 1985 recording produced by Juan Peña El Lebrijano and Paco Cepero, with the *Orquesta Andalusi de Tanger*

The legacy of Abdessadek Chekara

A pioneering figure in the collaborations between flamencos and Moroccan musicians was Abdessadeq Chekara (1931-1998). Born in Tetuan, Morocco, Chekara was a singer of traditional Andalusian classical music and Moroccan folk musics. Known as the grand master of al-Ala (Andalusian music) he was a renowned violinist and 'oud virtuoso and singer of Andalusian and traditional Moroccan music in *mawawl* (improvised solo) style. Chekara was a professor of Andalusian music at the *Conservatory of Andalusian Music and Dance in Tetuan* and founded the *Orchestra of the Conservatory of Tetuan* in 1958. One of the goals of his orchestra was to preserve and disseminate Moroccan Andalusian culture. He did much to popularize Andalusian music, which had been largely an elite music for Andalusians alone. Abdessadeq Chekara was a central and essential figure in the genre of cultural fusions.

One of the interests of Chekara was to reunite culture and musics from the past, thus *Orchestra Chekara* began a long term relationship with flamenco musicians, among them with innovative singer Enrique Morente. Chekara is also known for popularizing the traditional Moroccan songs, such as *Bent Bladi*. In 1982 Chekara met Professor José Heredia in Granada and collaborated to produce a version of *Bent Bladi*, that is a combination of Tetouani music and flamenco. In this version of the popular song, lyrics in Arabic alternate with Spanish lyrics, as do rhythms from both musical genres.

Macama Jonda

Macama Jondo was the highly acclaimed collaboration of Chekara with José Heredia, a gypsy, poet and intellectual who taught at the university of Granada.(the first gypsy professor in Spain) and a number of respected flamenco performers which included singer Morente, flamenco singers Luis Heredia El Polaco and Jaime Heredia El Parrón from Granada, and members of the Montoya family troupe. The performance, which premiered in the *III Festival Internacional de Teatro in Madrid* in March 1983, featured the *Orquesta del Conservatorio de Tetuan*, directed by Abdessadek Chekara. The plot centered on the wedding of a young gypsy woman from Sacromonte (the *gitano* neighborhood in Granada) and a young Moroccan. The Arabic word *Macama* signifies encounter or meeting, while *Jonda* refers to the flamenco tradition of *cante jondo*. *Macama Jonda* brought together the two musical cultures, in this work of Heredia, and Chekara, which was a precursor to the many flamenco/Moroccan fusions which followed. This production began a long and close relationship between singer Morente and Chekara, who continued to work on a number of projects afterward. *Macama Jonda* featured dancers and musicians from both musical traditions. One of the members of *Orquesta Chekara* in commenting on the production observed that “for the first time in 500 years, we came together to unite that which had once been united.”¹⁰

Jalal Chekara, nephew of Abdessadek, was born in Tetuan to this illustrious musical family and has resided in Granada since 2005. Violinist and singer, Jalal has carried on the work of his uncle and took over directorship of the *Orquesta Chekara*, which he has transformed into the *Orquesta Chekara Flamenca*. He represents the continuum of the long term relationship that *Orchestra Chekara* has had with flamenco music. Jalal has collaborated with key flamenco figures such as Enrique Morente and young Marina Heredia from the famed Heredia lineage of singers from Granada. His recording *Orquesta Chekara Flamenca* was released in 2008, featuring flamenco singers Vicente Gelo and Alicia Acuña and guitarist Raul Cantizano, with whom he continues to work in various ensembles including his recent group *Multaka*. In his fusion groups Jalal employs popular musical genres from Morocco, in particular *shabbi*, which both he and flamenco performers I interviewed feel combines especially well with flamenco rhythms and modalities. In 2010 the *Orquesta Chekara Flamenca* appeared at Town Hall in New York with Marina Heredia.

¹⁰Rosa Torres, “El Encuentro de Músicas y Pueblos Escenificado en *Macama Jonda*,” in *El País Cultura*. April 18, 1983. Available on the internet: <https://elpais.com/diario/1983/04/18/cultura/419464816_850215.html>



Figure 3: Jalal Chekara with musicians and dancer from his ensemble *Multaka*.

Tan Cerca, Tan Lejos

Tan Cerca, Tan Lejos (So Near, So Far) is the title of the second recording produced by Jalal Chekara. Dedicated to the late Enrique Morente in acknowledgment of his key role as supporter and long time friend of the *Orquesta Chekara*, the recording is a compilation of fusions of *Música Andalusí*, of popular Moroccan musics and flamenco. This second CD, which appeared in 2014, includes his ensemble of performers, including singers Vicente Gelo and Rosa Alegciras, Moroccan percussionists Youssef Chair and Outman Alami, Redouan El Houmdani on violin, Yihad Bouchata on ‘oud and violin and Tino van der Sman on flamenco guitar. The recording also includes a special collaboration, *Seguiriya del Alma* in memory of the late Enrique Morente sung by his daughter, singer Estrella Morente. The recording was begun in Tetuan in 2012, working with the *Ensemble Chekra Andalusí of Tetuan*, and then continued in studios in Seville in 2013.

The recording of *Tan Cerca Tan Lejos* was produced a few years after the film of the same name. The film, produced by Pepe Zapata and his Company *Música Es Amor* in 2010 celebrates the legacy of the Chekara lineage, the pioneering role of Abdessadaq and Jalal’s father (also a musician) in the creation of the orchestra in Tetuan in 1958; and their later collaboration with Morente and other flamencos in *Macama Jonda*. Jalal Chekara presents himself in the film as the inheritor of this important tradition and underscores his role in the continuation of this ensemble and of cultural collaborations more generally. The film presents the work and commentary of a number of musicians, both Moroccan and Spanish, who have been involved in creating musical collaborations between the two cultures. Reynaldo Fernández Manzano, the former director of the *Centro de Documentación Musical* in Granada, and a respected scholar of Moroccan Andalusian music, also appears in the film, providing historical context in his informative commentary. *Tan Cerca Tan Lejos* highlights the cities of Granada and Seville and their important role as sites for the preservation of the *Andalusí* tradition and the creation of new fusion works. Granada is given pride of place as the setting for much of the film, due to the presence of the Alhambra Palace and the old Moorish

neighborhood the *Albaicín*, as well as to the fact that Morente was a singer from Granada and *Macama Jonda* was created by Granadan poet José Heredia. Produced in 2010, the film is dedicated to the memory of Enrique Morente.¹¹

Tierra de Nadie

Another interesting musical collaboration created and promoted by flamenco singer from Seville Segundo Falcón. was the production *Tierra de Nadie* (No Man's Land). This work premiered in the acclaimed Biennial of Flamenco in September 2004. *Tierra de Nadie*, was a fusion of flamenco, Moroccan and Indian musics. The idea for the creation of this work was described by Segundo Falcón as a “dialogue between cultures.” Falcón emphasized that there are no fusions but rather “dialogues” in which all musics are of equal importance. He stressed that song belongs to no one, hence the title of the production.¹² One of the interests in this work, according to director Falcón, was to investigate the roots of flamenco song. The original performance included flamenco singers Segundo Falcón and Vicente Gelo, among the nine flamenco musicians, Moroccan musicians Suhail Serghini, the *Orquesta Chekara*, led by Jalal Chekara, and the Maharahá Orchestra from Rajasthan. Falcón performed very traditional flamenco song, which he referred to as the “pure and long-lasting tradition of the *pueblos*,” alternating with songs from traditional Moroccan and Indian musics. According to Falcón, the intention of the production was to demonstrate similarities and connections between all three cultures, thus a dialogue rather than a fusion. The performance was inspired by an investigation of the roots of flamenco song, for singer Falcón had noted that there appear to be many similarities between flamenco cante and the vocal traditions of both Morocco and India. Falcón also underscored the similarity of many of the rhythmic bases shared by the three cultures. For Segundo Falcón, this project was the culmination of several different experiences with the musicians of Rajasthan in 1998, and with shared collaboration done with *Orquesta Chekara* sing 1999. *Tierra de Nadie* was one of the primary events of the flamenco biennial in Seville in 2004.¹³

Amin Chaachoo, musician, scholar, traditionalist and innovator

One very important and pioneering figure in the growth of interest in both Música Andalusí and the collaborations between Moroccan and flamenco musicians is Amin Chaachoo. Chaachoo is a multifaceted musician and musicologist who was living in Sevilla in the 1990s, studying architecture at the university. During his years in Seville he performed regularly at venues such as the *Casa de la Memoria* (house of memory) that was located in the heart of old Seville, a venue which promoted concerts of the music of *convivencia*: traditional Moroccan Andalusian music, Sephardic musical

¹¹ Web page: <<http://www.musicaesamor.com>>

¹² Personal communication. July 2011. Seville, Spain.

¹³ “La Bienal y la UIMP organizan en el Alcázar las Jornadas ‘Flamenco como Arte Mudéjar’.” Available on the internet: <<http://www.uimp.es/sedes/sevilla/noticias-sede-de-sevilla.html?view=article&id=1838:la-uimp-sevilla-participa-en-la-xviii-bienal-de-flamenco-con-una-jornada-sobre-redes-sociales>>

groups and newer fusion ensembles. I met and interviewed Amin on several occasions in the late 90s, in which he emphasized the importance of the traditional Andalusí repertoire, yet expressed his interest in opening up to musical collaborations. He created a number of fusion ensembles while living in Seville, among them *Caravazar*, and *Samarcanda*, both of which perform arrangements of *Música Andalusí*, Turkish and Balkan musics, Sephardic and medieval Christian music, in an effort to, in his words “to combine musics from the shore of the Mediterranean.”¹⁴ Chaachoo’s ensembles such as *Samarcanda* and *Media Luna Flamenca* were regular performers in the acclaimed summer concert series: *Noches en Los Jardines del Real Alcázar*, a series of concerts which take place in the gardens of the beautiful Moorish Alcazar Palace from late June to the end of September. Since the inception of this concert series at the Alcazar gardens in 1999, Arabic and North African musical groups and arabic/flamenco fusion groups of various types have been a regular presence. In a recent concert performed in the Alcázar gardens, the program presented by Amin Chaachoo and his group was entitled *Memory of the Juderías*, a reference to the old Jewish neighborhood in Seville. Amin was also instrumental in the creation of *Medialuna Flamenco* in 2001, which featured a mix of Moroccan and Spanish instruments and vocal repertoire.

Amin Chaachoo has since returned to his native Tetuan, where he received his Diploma in *Música Andalusí* and Violin from the Conservatory there. In 2006 he founded the Music Conservatory *Founoun*. In 2013 he went on to create a Center for the Conservation of his musical Patrimony in Tetuan. In the same year, he created the first Orchestra of *Música Andalusí* in Málaga, formed by young Spanish musicians from all over Spain. In Tetuan he has become a spokesperson for a purist approach to Andalusia music, both in his teaching, his many publications and his performances. He is the author of *La Música Hispano Arabe Al- Ala*, which is both a history and a theoretical treatise.¹⁵ In 2011 he won the *Primer Premio Internacional de Estudios Andalusíes y Moriscos* for this work. While he has become increasingly more traditional in his musical endeavors, he continues to return to Spain to perform with some of the fusion groups, in particular a newer ensemble *Zejel* which recorded a CD *La Memoria del Oriente* in 2013. One cannot underestimate the importance of Amin Chaachoo’s role in the flourishing of Flamenco/North African fusion ensembles in Andalusia, a point that reinforced by comments of flamenco singer Vicente Gelo, who has worked in a number of fusion groups with Amin and more recently works regularly with Jalal Chekara. Singer Gelo expressed the viewpoint that many of the fusion groups and collaborations which reemerged in Seville in the 1990s would not have happened had it not been for the work of Amin Chaachoo and his influence on fellow musicians, both fellow Moroccans and Flamencos.¹⁶

¹⁴ Personal communication. June 1998. Seville, Spain.

¹⁵ Amin Chachoo, *La música andalusí Al-Ala: historia, conceptos y teoría musical* (Cordoba: Almuzara, 2011).

¹⁶ Personal communication. July 2012. Seville, Spain.



Figure 4: *Mujeres Mediterráneas* in concert. Mixtlán Salomón, flute; Ana Solas, flamenco singer, Habibi Quakhchachi; percussion and vocals; Pilar Alonso, flamenco guitar.

Mujeres Mediterráneas

A recently formed all female ensemble of musicians is bringing a new and unique contribution to the genre of Flamenco/Arabic music fusion. The ensemble, headed by guitarist Pilar Alonso, began in 2015, when a group of women who had participated in a concert of Arabic music and dance met and became interested in collaborating to explore shared musical expressions. They endeavor to “create bridges of dialogue between Arabic and Western music, to explore both shared musical territory and expressions unique to each culture.”¹⁷ Pilar Alonso, a consummate guitarist who performs flamenco and classical guitar, plays a number of stringed instruments from Spanish folklore tradition such as the *laúd* and the *bandurría*, conducts a traditional folklore ensemble and is the first woman to be professor of flamenco guitar at the *Conservatorio Profesional* in Granada, is arranger and musical director of the ensemble. While she is not new to experimental fusions, having created interesting arrangements of flamenco and Greek *rebetiko*, *Mujeres Mediterráneas* is her first foray into Flamenco/Arabic music collaborations. The other members of the ensemble include Moroccan singer and percussionist Habibi Quakhchachi, Spanish flamenco singer Ana Solas, flamenco flutist Mixtlan Salomón, and flutist Fauzia Benedetti (both from Argentina, but who reside in Granada) and Argentinian percussionist Juana Larreta. In the publicity for a recent performance of the ensemble at the *Palacio de los Olvidados* in Granada, the group described their music as: “Quejío y Mawwal emocionan igual”: El Flamenco y la Música Árabe en clave de complicidad femenina” (Flamenco lament and *mawwal* express the same emotion: Flamenco and Arabic music in the key of feminine complicity.)¹⁸

¹⁷ Web page *Conciertos en Granada*: <<https://www.conciertosengranada.es/conciertos/1032-mujeres-mediterraneas>>

¹⁸ Ibid.

The music of *Mujeres Mediterráneas* evokes notions of *convivencia*, of a shared past that informs the present. Their music suggests that these two cultures spring from a similar source, that their expression together is a natural outgrowth of the long history these two cultures and peoples have shared. The group is based in Granada, the most iconic of all the cities of *al-Andalus*, with the Alhambra Palace rising from one side of the river Darro, and the old Moorish neighborhood the *Albaicín*, rising up from the opposite side of the river. A number of their YouTube videos are filmed in these iconic sites of Moorish Spain. In one, *Ola Por Fandangos*, they are seated performing in the famed *Palacio de Dar Al Horra*, in the Alhambra Palace. In another video, *Morerías Flamencas*, whose title evokes Moorish culture, they perform in a central patio in the *Albaicín*, the former *morería*, or Moorish neighborhood, in Granada. Their music also evokes a sense of pan-mediterranean identity and includes the performance of Greek *rebetiko* by singer Anastasia Karantzia in some of their compositions.

The musical encounter of *Mujeres Mediterráneas* features the personal stylings of each of the musicians, who mix Arabic rhythms on *darbukka*, *rig* and Moroccan *bendir* with flamenco rhythmic structures such as *soleá* and tangos; and singers who perform Moroccan, flamenco and Greek vocal genres and styles.

Their music is a constant dialogue between cultures and is, in many numbers, a real fusion of these two musics. In *Olas Por Fandango*, flamenco fandango rhythms and harmonies on the guitar are coupled with flute melodies also based on the fandango; while vocals alternate between lyrics sung in Arabic and fandango lyrics sung in Spanish.¹⁹ In *Misirlou-Quaduka el Mayas*, Greek vocals for the *Misirlou* alternate with Arabic lyrics of the popular song Iraqi folk song *Qaduka el Mayas*. Guitar accompaniment to the lyrics alternates Greek and Arabic and melodies, each song moving seamlessly from one to the other, with flamenco *palmas*, or clapping, adding further rhythmic complexity.²⁰

In the aforementioned *Morerías Flamencas*, Pilar Alonso plays a flamenco *soleá* on guitar, accompanying the Habiba Quakhchachi who sings a *soleá* in Arabic, This video was filmed in the old *morería*.²¹ In another theme, *Arabescos Por Alegría*, the very title suggests the two cultures, arabic arabesques in the style of *alegría*, a flamenco song genre in major tonality. This composition begins with the flamenco *alegría* rhythm and *falsetas* (melodic passages on the guitar between verses of the song), while the lyrics are sung in Arabic. About mid-way through the piece, while staying in the same key, the rhythm changes to that of the *rumba flamenca*, the flamenco rumba.

Mujeres Mediterráneas was chosen to perform in the *Festival Flamenco y Cultura* in November 2016, which was sponsored by the local arts administration. This seventh edition of the program, organized by the cultural branch of the municipal government, offered a series of activities that included recitals, conferences, and interactive experiences with flamenco. *Mujeres Mediterráneas* was chosen as one of the key groups to perform and to represent Granada in this two-week long festival of the music and culture.

¹⁹ For a YouTube video, see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lOcm_-V9qdQ>

²⁰ For a YouTube video, see: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NqkyhVgE1yU>>

²¹ For a YouTube video, see: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G20RrtbspTg>>

Music on the shores of the Mediterranean

A recent musical event in the Mediterranean coastal city of Almuñecar, a concert billed *A las dos Orillas del Mediterráneo*, was presented in the gardens of the *Palacete de la Najarra* in September 2014.²² In this collaboration between flamenco and Moroccan musics, local elderly flamenco singer Rafael Muñoz was accompanied by Moroccan singer and violinist Ahmed El Harrak and flamenco guitarist Ricardo de la Juana. The performance included a performer who presented dances accompanied by North African and flamenco rhythms. In a nearby coastal town of Salobreña, some of these same performers play regularly at a seaside restaurant *El Peñon* much frequented by English and German tourists, as well as locals. Both guitarist Ricardo and El Harrak play several nights a week at this restaurant, with an ensemble that performs a repertoire which features traditional flamenco, Moroccan popular songs, and cover versions of some of the well known songs from the *Encuentros I* recording made famous by El Lebrijano some thirty years ago, among them *Dame La Libertad* and *Habibi*.

EL Harrak, violinist and singer, hails from Tetuan and is a cousin of Jalal Chekara. He and his family migrated to Spain about a dozen years ago, and reside in Almuñecar. In an interview conducted in summer 2016, El Harrak told me that he works regularly in Granada and in the coastal towns nearby, in both traditional Moroccan ensembles and in fusion groups such as the one I heard at *El Peñon*. He commented on the openness and receptivity of the audiences he plays for, of their interest in both Moroccan music and the fusion repertoire. El Harrak is a local musician who makes a modest living playing mainly restaurant gigs and the occasionally concert. The fact that the songs and arrangements of collaborative flamenco/Moroccan fusions, songs from the recordings of EL Lebrijano and others are popular as entertainment, is in many ways evidence of how much they have been accepted in the social and cultural mix of Andalusia.

Conclusion

It is well acknowledged in ethnomusicology that music can serve to articulate identities; acknowledge shared histories and musical affinities; reflect contemporary socio-political realities and function as an expression of solidarity. Music can be understood to mark a zone of cultural difference to allow for the heterogeneous play of identities and ideologies of self and community. Fusions between *Musica Andalusí*, North African popular musics and flamenco; interpretations of medieval Spanish music and fusions of other Mediterranean musics (Greek, Turkish, Balkan and Sephardic), all serve as a medium for the enactment of collective memories and constructions of utopias of the past, perhaps, as Shannon suggests, to counteract the distopias of the present era. These performances in which musicians make conscious musical choices can, in part be understood as reenactments of historical remembrance which underscore the important role of cultural imagination in constructing narratives of community and collective memory. They can also be understood as vehicles which articulate a sense of identity and belonging. While economic and practical realities also influence these choices, musical expressions enable participants to envision an identity that acknowledges the

²² Web page InfoCosta Tropical: <http://www.infocostatropical.com/mb/noticia.asp?id_noticia=58850>

past and envisions an expanded sense of self, whether Spanish/Moroccan or pan-Mediterranean. As Shannon has suggested in his work on discourse, memory and the role of nostalgia in conceptions of *Al Andalus*, “the idea of Al Andalus and Andalusian music promotes a new configuration of regional identities focusing on a trans Mediterranean phenomenon.”²³ Just as the early music CDs produced by the Paniaguas serve to evoke notions of *convivencia*, of an imagined golden age, so do fusions of *Música Andalusí* and Flamenco serve as a medium to build bridges between cultures and between notions of the past, and the present, with a focus on shaping the future, of a re-envisioned and re-invigorated Mediterranean identity.

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²³Shannon, Jonathan.Holt. *Performing al-Andalus: Music and Nostalgia across the Mediterranean*. Series: Public Cultures of the Middle East and North Africa. 2015

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