

The Metamorphosis of a Falseta

PART ONE by Alain Faucher

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Flamenco guitarist know that a falseta is not always fixed forever. This is the very character of Flamenco; art of the instant, changing by it's nature; living art; movement by it's nature.

Art of the instant: just as in life, as one seldom pronounces the same sentence with the same intonation, a flamenco guitarist seldom interprets a Falseta in exactly the same way. He brings to it, depending on the moment, his shape, his mood, and the influence of his particular state of musical evolution as well; relatively important variables: chromatic, rhythmical, or better achieved developments. One recognizes the greatest by their excellence in interpretation. Flamenco as a living art is in constant evolution. Here lies one of the most exciting aspects.

As we will see, a Falseta authored by one guitarist can be revived and reprocessed by another. The matter becomes composition, not interpretation; the changes brought to the original are less concerned with the values, intervals or accentuations than the melody itself, the structure remains unchanged. For the listener the action is in ascertaining the original theme behind an apparently new, related Falseta. Sometimes the allusion is evident, sometimes the relationship is harder to establish. Observing the evolution of a Falseta from it's birth to it's "updated" form makes it somewhat possible to determine the personality and style of each guitarist concerned: a sort of character study. **Example 1** below is, for example, an excerpt of a well known soleá of Sabicas:

We see a pattern - CM, G7, FM, EM, as we often see the Sabicas, played whether in rasgueado or as above, which is sort of an arpeggiated development of the chords, the thumb using up and down strokes on the same string, like a plectrum. The idea here is transforming into a musical variation (say a melody) what was originally merely a rhythmical development of four chords of four bars in a soleá compas. One can clearly hear the chords sounding one after one while the falseta is being played. This creativity is both musical and technical, because Sabicas is the composer of the musical idea and the inventor of this specific fingering.

Example 2 is the same variation reprocessed by Rafael Riqueni. (No doubt as to the affiliation).

The pattern is barely altered. The CM at the beginning now becomes F7. We are struck by the modern harmony of the first chord, played in reversed position, as well as by the stretching of some intervals (6th and 8th beats of the compas) and by the unexpected appearance of the final EM. Riqueni himself is not summed up within these four bars, by any means. Similar to using a computer-processed picture, we can, however, observe his predilection for dissonance and his ability to create it. The general effect remains, and without difficulty one recognises "the wink at Sabicas." Remark on execution: it is easier to replace the upstroke of the thumb (p) by the index finger. The effect will remain intact.