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Mother's Art

In celebration of Mother's Day, kids speak out about flamenco. By Julie Baggenstoss

Ten babies will be welcomed into the flamenco community in Atlanta, from late 2008 to the end of 2009. Their births follow two years in which nearly a dozen other newborns joined our ranks of strumming, stomping and singing. These children will have an opportunity that their parents may wish they had: growing up surrounded by flamenco, listening, playing music, dancing and being part of the social side of the art - like it or not.

While these children may be too young to voice their opinion about flamenco, others can speak out about their thoughts on the art, as seen through experiences of parents. In celebration of Mother's Day, let's hear what these kids think about Mom's flamenco.



Angelica Silva is one of 10 women in the Atlanta flamenco community who are expecting - or have recently welcomed a new baby into their families.



Sabrina Murner and her family, including Samuel pictured above, are expecting another baby this year.

Xochitl Cruz-Gallo, age 3, says, "I like it... but sometimes it is so loud!" And, of the

performance by her mother, Selina Cruz-Gallo, in



Fronteras 2009, she says, "It is pretty, but why did they turn all the lights off? I couldn't see how to come up and dance with you!"



John Herman, Lisa Herman's 9-year-old son says, "I think it's

Selina & Xochitl Cruz-Gallo dance together.



Lisa Herman with her children, Henry, John, and Hannah.

mom, "This means 'super good!' I like to watch you dance."

kind of loud, constant movements and you have to be really fast to do it. I think it is funny that you do all those random moves."

Lisa's 5-year-old son, Henry, stretches both arms out wide and says to his

Dawne Dawson's daughter Tyler, who is about to turn 12, says "I was not a fan of flamenco at first, but I have started to like it as I've gotten older. Because I go to most of Mom's classes with her, I practically hear flamenco music and lots of stomping in my dreams now!



Dawne and Tyler Dawson

I remember when I first heard flamenco music: I was in the backseat of my mom's car, and all I heard was a man's voice wailing like he was in pain ---and I couldn't figure out why my mother was clapping along to that sound with a smile on her face! Soon after that first time, Mom taught me to clap with the rhythms and how to figure out something called "compas" by counting out the beats in the music. I got pretty good at that --- even with the 12-count songs! This helped me later on when I started taking piano lessons.

The first time I saw Mom actually perform flamenco on stage helped me to understand it all a little better, and I know how happy the music and the dance makes her feel."

Adriana Gaffga's 7-year-old daughter Nicole Andrea, is a flamenco dance student just like her mom. She says of her mom's dancing, "I think



that my mom's flamenco is very good. I think that it is a lot of fun."



Nicole Andrea Gaffga dances at Fronteras 2009. Photo by Guillermo Maduro.



Martha Wannamaker's 13-year-old daughter Pamela Wannamaker says, "It's weird because of the movements. I don't think I can make them! I will never try dancing flamenco. There are too many things to remember when dancing (chest high, shoulders down, and don't get me started on the hands and arm movements!) Forget it! I enjoy seeing someone else doing it instead... I'll stick with my piano lessons thank you very much!"



Seven-year-old Amanda Wannamaker is taking on the challenge of flamenco classes. She says, "I think it's fun...the turns are the best! but there are some steps really weird!"

Pamela Wannamaker (above) and Amanda Wannamaker (below).

After seeing her mother through nearly a decade of flamenco, Rina Menosky's daughter Akahne, now 14 years old says, "Flamenco dance has been a part of my mother's life (as well as



Rina Menosky's daughter Akahne plays violin in Fronteras 2008.

my own) for a very long time. In fact, I can't remember a single time when my mom has not been dancing. The experience first was not the best. To me, it was just some loud thing that my mother did constantly. She never stopped. Classes were bearable as long as I slept through the stomping, but overall I was sort of miserable and bored. Yes, I had my fun in ballet class and gymnastics, so I guess it was fair. If I got to do something that I enjoyed, why couldn't she? As a few years passed, I began to dislike flamenco very much. People would ask me, 'Do you like flamenco?' I would reply, 'No, it's too loud.' Loudness was my reason for my dislike of flamenco. What other excuse could an eight year old come up with? I grew older into my 'double digit' years and of course, flamenco was still there. It was everywhere; it was in the house, in the car, in restaurants, and in long lines. Ha ha ha. It was like my family couldn't get enough of it!

Motherly Advice

"Now, I am appreciative of this dance

"Experienced"
moms give
advice on
being a mother
while keeping
compás. Story:
[Mama Said](#)

because it not
only physically
keeps you in
shape, but it
mentally keeps
you in shape as
well. I have
learned and seen
for myself what
flamenco can do
for people, and
why my mom likes
it so much.

Although at times it can be somewhat of an annoyance (still), I will always be proud of what my mother can do. She is like no other!"

Almost 3 years old, Samantha Abramson argues with her mother, Darbi, about the pronunciation of "olé." Darbi says, "Somehow she thinks there should be an 'F' in front of the 'olé' and will argue with me until I give in. So she just will start randomly yelling out, 'fohle' during songs. Sometimes it sounds like 'fillet.' It makes me laugh."



Samantha Abramson.

Whether praise or embarrassment or the classification of "weird," a child's reaction is a welcome support for a mother. This week, in celebration of Mother's Day, give some to your mom - for being a great mother and everything else that she is.

Happy Mother's Day!

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Flamenco Ripples In Spanish Immersion

Flamenco travels to a high school Spanish immersion camp in Hampton, GA. By Julie Baggenstoss, Erica Poole contributing

A rain drop strikes a puddle. Its effect ripples to the edge of a muddy field. The water settles back into the puddle. This was the case over and over during the Spanish Total Immersion Camp, presented by the Georgia Chapter of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, held at the Camp

Fortson 4-H Center in Hampton, GA., during a stormy, soggy weekend in late March. It created an easy analogy for the flamenco dance workshops offered for the first time in the camp's 25-year history. From across the Atlantic, flamenco becomes an art to be appreciated as it aids in students' education. Like the ripples in a puddle, flamenco spreads from Spain via Atlanta-based flamenco dancers to high school Spanish language students passionate about learning more culture and applying what they knew grammatically.



So passionate is this group that 85 students from across Georgia attended the camp, speaking and



Photo by Josh McIntyre.

being spoken to only in Spanish, not for school credit, but simply for the love of the language. They participated in hands-on workshops throughout a weekend that exposed them to the roots of their chosen "foreign" language. They made

tortillas. They played futbol. They constructed Mexican paper flowers. And, yes, they learned to dance flamenco.

Spanish language teacher and flamenco student Erica Poole asked me to co-teach classes with her at the camp. We were among a score of volunteers who led workshops through the weekend. Together, we gave students a broad introduction to flamenco dance movement, singing, and music --- and how it all fits together within the culture of southern Spain. Students learned to dance sevillanas and performed at the camp "carnaval," the culminating social event of the weekend. Spanish vocabulary words "atrás," "braceo," apoyo," "vuelta," and more were reinforced all the time as they danced. And, they danced well, shouting, "¡Ole, qué viva tu madre!" and clapping their hands to support one another.



Julie Bagenstoss and Erica Poole teach flamenco workshops at the Spanish Total Immersion Camp in Hampton, Ga. Photo by Josh McIntyre.

It wasn't until I returned to Atlanta that the immersion camp experience came full circle --- or "puddle" --- for me. In class, Esther Witchett declared to me, "Your language is dance." She explained that for her, learning to dance is like learning a foreign language. And, she should know: the Dutch-born flamenco dance student speaks three languages, including Dutch, German, and English.

"It's like little steps," Esther said. "You become so familiar with the little steps that you know what to say. You start with 'yes' and 'no,' and little by little, you start to form sentences, through repetition... if you do it all the time, it's quicker."

Make the analogy of flamenco education to language education. Make the analogy of flamenco education to any activity, and you'll find one thing in common: passion. To choose to study is to pursue something "foreign" in hopes of making it familiar. Talk to a flamenco aficionado studying the art, or talk to a high school student who elected to spend a weekend at a rural 4H camp immersed in Spanish language, or talk to a woman who has established a life in a new country. Some might

Spanish Total
Immersion Camp

Georgia High School
Students

Three Days, Speaking
Spanish Only

Social Groups of Five
"Familias"

Day 1: Check in, get
passports, give up
English contraband

Day 2: Daytime
workshops given by
volunteer staff: soccer,
music, crafts, cooking
and dance; evening
"carnaval" including
typical costumes of
Spanish speaking
countries

say you'd have to be insane to take leaps like these. But, be reminded they're not crazy. They're passionate "sculptors" molding their own clay that without the ripples of water would never become shaped into art.

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Day 3: Family skits;
bargaining at the
"mercado"; awards

Presented by Georgia
Chapter of the
American Association
of Teachers of Spanish
and Portuguese

Held at Camp Fortson
4-H Center in
Hampton, Ga.