

fiesta flamenco

PASSIONATE ~ PROUD ~ EXCITING ~ LOUD



The Spanish Dance Society

The Spanish Dance Society is a non-profit organisation formed to promote interest in the art of Spanish Dance, pursuing excellence in presentation, execution and instruction. To achieve its goals, the Spanish Dance Society offers a structured method, taught through a certificate program using a structured syllabus.

Students master the basic techniques for castanets, arm movements, turns and footwork. Knowledge of the music, costumes and history of the dance is also taught. Examinations are held annually, to certify successful mastery of each level. The Spanish Dance Society has centres in several countries across the world.

In 1965, in South Africa, Spanish dance was, for the first time ever codified into a teaching method, graded according to age and ability. The Spanish Dance Society was formed by senior teachers from Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. At the suggestion of Ivy Conmee, an examiner for the Royal Academy of Dance, a syllabus was created by founding members Mercedes Molina, Rhoda Rivkind and Madame Gitanilla, from Johannesburg, Mavis Becker, Deanna Blacher and Marina Keet from Cape Town, and Theo Dantes and Bernie Lyle from Durban. Later Enrique Segovia set the boys syllabus and other professionals contributed to the development of the organisation. The basic components of Spanish dance, including the existing Escuela Bolera exercises and dances, were arranged into a method to teach the technique of Spanish dancing.

The founders had all studied with reputable Spanish teachers and/or performed with well-known Spanish dance companies. They based the exercises on the work of these teachers and set the standard as that needed in a Spanish dance company. Thus the pupil is prepared with basic components that comprise the dances. The technique is broken down into castanet playing, steps, footwork, arm movements and various different types of turns, which are taught progressively in a series of seven graded junior levels and three senior levels, each examination culminating in the presentation of two or three dances of regional, classical or flamenco styles. There is also a pure flamenco syllabus, if the dancer wishes to study that exclusively. Most students follow both syllabi. The ensuing three examinations for training a teacher are comprised of knowledge of all the prior work, the theory and historical background plus an understanding of the music, dance psychology and anatomy. The final examination for teachers also includes the Pericet Escuela Bolera syllabus and dances, as codified by Marina Keet based on her classes with Eloy Pericet in Madrid. Syllabus books, theory and recorded music are available to accompany the syllabus.

This Spanish Dance Society has spread worldwide, and at present is taught in Australia, Belgium, Cyprus, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, South Africa, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, the USA, the and although it started outside Spain; it is now enthusiastically taught there as well.

Examinations are conducted annually in each centre by external examiners. The Society provides free revision classes in the main centres for the teachers after each examination session, of which there are often two per year in some countries. The Society's syllabus is used in degree courses in South Africa and the USA. Recently the society has been accepted onto the distance learning degree programme delivered by the Royal Academy of Dance, validated by the University of Durham. Each year an international summer school is held in London, with guest teachers from Spain and other countries. All types of Spanish dance are offered and lecture/demonstrations with guest artists are included. The teachers of the Spanish Dance Society remain to participate in a stimulating course, to revise the syllabus and learn new material.