

# « Four dances from Iberia » by Gorka Hermosa

Analysis of the traditional rhythms and problematic in their interpretation

Travail réalisé pour l'obtention du Master of Arts HES-SO en Interprétation musicale  
avec orientation en Concert

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Année académique 2018-2019

HEMU - Haute Ecole de Musique de Lausanne



# Abstract

This work is about folk music from the Iberian Peninsula, describing the characteristic rhythms of this region. What are the specifics and what should be considered when playing traditional music from this region? What should we pay attention to while this music is consumed? These folk dances are not so typical for an instrument such as an accordion, but thanks to the great composer, Gorka Hermosa, who masterfully managed to transfer this music to the accordion, we have the opportunity to enjoy it in a different light.

# Keywords

Basque music. Fado. Jota. Flamenco. Iberia. Dances.

# Thanks

I would like to endlessly thank the composer, Gorka Hermosa, for his cooperation and generosity, and for this composition arrangement, which he made for me. I would also like to thank my mentor Yaël Hêche who helped me to realize my idea, and to my professor Stéphane Chapuis with who I worked on the musical accomplishment of this great composition.

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## 1. Introduction

“Four dances from Iberia” by Gorka Hermosa is undoubtedly a great refreshment in the world of music, especially in the accordion world. Hermosa has masterfully managed to compose the Iberian four folk dances and merge them into one logical unit. It is very interesting to mention that each of these dances were primarily composed as a solo piece, composed in different time periods, so the composer would later merge them into one big composition for accordion and string orchestra. He recently made an arrangement for accordion and string quartet, dedicated to me and this occasion, so I will speak more about this special arrangement.

Each of these four folk dances originates from different parts of the Iberian Peninsula.

The first dance called “Brehme” is from Basque country. It is fast paced, rhythmical, energetic, typical for the first movement of a symphony.

The second movement is “Saudade Ártica” which is a complete opposite of the first one: slow tempo, nostalgic, songful, a melody resembling a singer, which is characteristic for Portuguese fado.

Then follows the third dance “Zelaia” which is inspired by Enrike Zelaia, a famous accordionist from that area, which is why the movement is named after him. In the measure of 3/4, cheerful and songful, it makes you dance the popular jota from the north of Navarre.

The final movement is hot-blooded flamenco from Andalusia. It uses unique rhythms of *bulería* and *rumba*, includes yelling and rhythmical hitting, which are one of the great characteristics of this dance. The name of this movement “Paco” is giving thanks to the world's famous flamenco guitarist - Paco de Lucia.

I will talk exactly about the characteristics of these folk dances, about transferring them to the instrument, about the performing difficulties and how to overcome them. I will try to approach and clarify this somewhat unknown music for us, non-Iberian people.

I consider this topic to be very interesting, because the folk music of this region has become quite popular, played by the musicians all over the world, by people from different cultures. So, I have dealt with this topic thoroughly and explored the fineness and specificity of this kind of music, which I will, hopefully, facilitate and clarify this rich, traditional music's performing, as well as listening and consuming, in every sense.

## **2. The Iberian traditional music**

Iberian Peninsula is a place especially rich in folk music. Obviously, there are historical reasons. Iberia has been a place where various people of different cultures have lived and left their very different marks. It remembers the Arabs, the Jews, in addition to the series of minor invasions that we all know. It is possible to think that each of these cultures had left its traces, sometimes perfectly visible in the national folklore, with songs that have been admitted and that have undergone sometimes logical transformations throughout the centuries. (3, 13, 18)

Trying to summarize the Iberian folkloric music legacy, we will divide Iberian regions into subgroups, which are shown in different colors in this map: (3, 18)



## 2.1 Andalucía and Murcia

In these regions, the main music is flamenco, where Muslim, Byzantine and gypsy influences have been especially important. This makes us find ourselves in an especially rich area of music. These cultures have not left only the folk elements, but also the ways of singing and even instruments. In this sense, the guitar has become a basic instrument in Andalusian music. Depending on the way that the guitar starts a song, the experts know what type of *palo*<sup>1</sup> it is. Among the most important *palos* we must distinguish *Soleá*, *Bulería*, *Tanguillos*, *Seguidilla*, *Seguirilla gitana*... Another group is the *Fandango* and a series of more or less related pieces, such as *Granada*, *Ronda*, *Malaga* and *Murcia*. The *Fandanguillo*, would be a mixture of the Andalusian and northern elements. A third group are the *saetas* and *carceleras*<sup>2</sup>, which do not carry accompaniment, unlike the previous ones. The most characteristic elements of this folklore are the rhythmic force, its oriental characters, and the participation of the singer who makes or transforms the works in a kind of improvisation. The fourth movement of “Four dances from Iberia” is written exactly in this flamenco genre, using the *buleria* and *rumba* style. (3, 13, 18)



*Flamenco players (photo: Juan Verguillos)*

## 2.2 Aragón and South Navarre

The great form from these regions is the *jota*. A tradition attributes its invention to an Arab, Aben Jot, hence its name. The *jota* has become one of the national songs *par excellence* and has been accepted elsewhere. Because of this, we have *jotas* from different places: *jota navarra*, *jota valenciana*, *jota castellana* or *jota montañesa*. It has a ternary rhythm and a heroic character. “Zelaia”, the third movement of the Hermosa’s composition, is in fact the *jota* from Navarre. (3, 13, 18)

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<sup>1</sup> *Palos* are the different genres of the flamenco, depending of the rhythm, the tempo, harmony...

<sup>2</sup> *Carceleras*- jailers

### **2.3 Catalunya, Valencia and Balears**

Catalonia is a rich area, formed in the Middle Ages, as witnessed by books such as the *Llibre Vermell*<sup>3</sup>. Since that time there were abundant ballads. But, the dance *par excellence* of this region is the *sardana*. It has a character between religious and elegant, it is danced in a circle, with a great solemnity and rhythmical beauty. It is accompanied by a musical combination called *cobla*, with several instruments among which is the *flabiol*<sup>4</sup>. In Valencia, some of the most important genres are the *alboradas*, *folies* and the typical *Valencian jota*. (3, 13, 18)

### **2.4 Castilla**

This block includes the two Castiles, Rioja, Madrid and Extremadura. Its folklore is very rich and has been revalued from Falla. It is rich with a series of genres that are rooted in their history as the *villancico*<sup>5</sup> or the *tonadas*. Among its great legacy and variety we can mention: the songs of pilgrims, among them those of mowing, of cradle, of round (practically every agricultural work has its typical songs), the *seguidillas of La Mancha*, etc. The instruments that accompany many of them are: whistle, *dulzaina*<sup>6</sup>, *tambor* and *tamboril*.<sup>7</sup> (3, 13, 18)

### **2.5 Atlantic Coast**

In the Atlantic area (Galicia, Asturias and Cantabria) the Celtic influence is extremely strong. The folklore of typically Galician root is so strong and distant that already in the *Cantigas de Amor* by Martín de Codax<sup>8</sup>, this appears clearly (second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century). Galician folklore is marked by the use of an instrument that exists in all the countries through which the Celtic culture passed: the bagpipe. It is an instrument of diatonic character that marks the music of this region and that gives rise to two important forms such as the *alborada* and the *muñeira*, in 6/8 rhythm. We should also mention the songs of *Alalá*, *Canteros*, etc. The main characteristic of this music is its sentimentality. In Asturias we have genres as the *Corri-corri* and *Prima prima*, both of Celtic origin, and the *pericote*. In addition, Asturias has an abundance of songs, among them those of *vaqueiros*<sup>9</sup> and miners. In Cantabria, there are also Celtic dances, which are, therefore, very old. The *montañesas* are especially famous. (3, 9, 13, 18)

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<sup>3</sup> *Llibre Vermell* is a collection of late medieval songs. (19)

<sup>4</sup> *Flabiol* is a Catalan woodwind musical instrument, a kind of small flute. (19)

<sup>5</sup> *Villancico*: songs singing for Christmas. Carols. (19)

<sup>6</sup> *Dulzaina* is a Spanish double reed instrument from the oboe family. (19)

<sup>7</sup> *Tambor* and *tamboril* are percussion instruments. (19)

<sup>8</sup> Martín de Codax was a Galician medieval joglar (non-noble composer and performer—as opposed to a *trobador*) - possibly from Vigo, Galicia in present-day Spain (19)

<sup>9</sup> *Vaqueiros*- cowboys (19)



## 2.6 Basque Country

The Basque area (Euskadi and the north of Navarre) is one of the richest nucleuses of Spanish folklore. The *Aurresku* and the *Zortziko* stand out among dances, with a very original 5/8 rhythm. The typical instruments of the Basques are *txistu*<sup>10</sup>, *txalaparta*<sup>11</sup>, *alboka*<sup>12</sup> and the group called *trikitixa* (diatonic accordion and tambourine combination). The *trikitixa* genre has different rhythms (*arin-arin* 2/4, *fandango* 3/4, *biribilketa* 6/8). The word *jota* is usually used (especially in the 20th century) for *arin-arin* and *fandango*, especially in the north of Navarre. “Brehme”, the first movement of “Four dances from Iberia”, is a music inspired by folk music of this region. (1, 15, 16, 18)



*Trikitixa from Zumarraga (photo: [www.zumarraga.eus](http://www.zumarraga.eus))*

## 2.7 Canarias

We know that the *Guanches* (the natives of Canary Islands) practiced a great number of dances and dances with a strong rhythmical base, which leads us to see the relationships between this music and primitive races. After the Spanish conquest, some of these dances became fashionable, like the *guaracha*. Other popular songs are already of peninsular origin, such as *seguidillas*, *folías* and *zorongo*. Particularly noteworthy is the *isa*, which is a Canary *jota* and a lullaby called *arrorró*. Among the typical Canary instruments, we should mention the *timble*, a type of a guitar. (3, 13, 18)

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<sup>10</sup> *Txistu* is a kind of fipple flute with three holes. (19)

<sup>11</sup> *Txalaparta* is a traditional percussion instrument made of wood or stone. It is close to the xylophone or the balafon, but the sticks are held vertically. (19)

<sup>12</sup> *Alboka* is a single-reed woodwind instrument consisting of a single reed, two small diameter melody pipes with finger holes and a bell traditionally made from animal horn (19)

## 2.8 Portugal

The most popular music of Portugal is *fado*. *Fado* (Eng. fate) is a music genre that can be traced from the 1820s in Portugal, but it probably has earlier beginnings. It is characterized by sad melodies and lyrics, often about the sea and the life of the poor. It is claimed that *fado* origins are older, going back to the 15th century, when women cried with longing for their husbands that sailed to the never-ending seas. The name that Portuguese people use to express this music is *saudade* - an expression that can't be translated in a large number of languages. The Portuguese themselves are proud to say that only they have the expression for that feeling. *Saudade* is usually translated into nostalgia, a longing, a feeling of regret for something. There are claims that *fado* is a mixture of rhythms of African slaves with traditional Portuguese music, with Arabic influence. There are two main types of *fado*, Lisbon *fado* and Coimbra *fado*. The Lisbon style is more popular, while Coimbra is more sophisticated. The music is performed by a vocalist, typically accompanied of one or two *guitarras*<sup>13</sup>, one or two *violas*<sup>14</sup>, and perhaps also a *viola baixo*<sup>15</sup>. Most of the repertoire follows a duple meter (usually with four beats to a measure). A particular stylistic trait of *fado* is the use of *rubato*, where the music pauses at the end of a phrase and the singer holds the note for dramatic effect. Gorka Hermosa used *fado* style for the second movement of "Four dances from Iberia", which we can assume given the name of this movement: "Saudade Ártica". (5,7)



*Fado singer and players (photo: ABC)*

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<sup>13</sup> *Guitarra* is a special 10 or 12-string guitar. (19)

<sup>14</sup> *Viola* is a special 6-string guitar. (19)

<sup>15</sup> *Viola baixo* is a small 8-string *bass viola*. (19)

*Here is a summary of Iberian Peninsula regions and their traditional dances, rhythms and instruments:*

REGION	DANCES & RHYTHMS	INSTRUMENTS
Andalucía, Murcia	Flamenco (soleá, seguidilla, fandango, fandanguillo, saetas...)	Guitar, palmas
Aragón, South Navarra	Jota	Castanetas, guitar
Catalunya, Valencia, Baleares	Sardana, alboradas, folias, jota valenciana	Cobla, flabiol, xirimía, gralla
Castilla	Carols, tonadas, cantos de romeros, cantos de cuna, cantos de ronda, seguidillas...	Castanetas, whistle, dulzaina, tambor, tamboril.
Galicia, Asturias, Cantabria	Celtic style (Muñeira, Alalá, Alborada, tonada, pericote, jota montañesa)	Bagpipe, clarinet, tambor, tambourine
Basque Country, north Navarra	Aurresku, Zortziko, trikitixa (fandango, arin-arin, biribilketa)	Txistu, tamboril, accordion, tambourine, txalaparta, alboka
Canarias	Guaracha, seguidillas, folías, zorongo, Arrorró	Timple
Portugal	Fado	Portuguese guitar

### **3. The composer**

Pablo Zinger (Piazzolla's ex-pianist) said: "Gorka Hermosa's music impressed me for his originality, his atmosphere and his virtuosity: makes of the word crossover an intense reality. He's a very talented musician to look very close". Born in 1976 in Urretxu (Basque Country), he is a very multifaceted musician: accordion player, composer, teacher, writer, publisher... (8)

Gorka Hermosa was the first Spanish accordionist who played as a soloist with a symphonic orchestra (the Spanish National Radio and TV orchestra and after more than 12 times with other different orchestras), he often appears in Spanish TV and radio shows and gives concerts in China, Iran, South America and all around Europe. He has played first time more than 20 works for accordion of Spanish composers. He has also played varied musical styles including flamenco, fado, folk, pop-rock, jazz, techno, fusion... playing with musicians as Paquito D'Rivera (Grammy Awarded), Jorge Pardo (Best European Jazz Player 2013), Javier Peixoto (Madredeus), Pablo Zinger, Ara Malikian, La Mari (Chambao), Luis Auserón (Radio Futura), Carmen París, José Luis Montón, Iñaki Salvador, Germán Díaz, Baldo Martínez, Carlos Soto (Celtas Cortos), Nacho Mastretta, India Martínez... (8)

As classical composer, his works are very often played by players of the five continents. He has been awarded with the "Composition 2016" and "Composition 2018" prize by the "Confédération Mondiale de L'Accordéon" and he has received the prize "CIA IMC-UNESCO Accordion Composition" in 2013 and 2014. His works have also been played in the graduation exams of the most important conservatories of the world (Moscow, London, Paris, Rome, Beijing...). He has composed the music for short movies and for some documentaries for the Spanish National TV (TVE). His works for accordion and orchestra has been premiered in U.S.A., Finland, Romania, Belgium, Brazil, Turkey, Poland, Lithuania, France, Spain... (8)

He has published seven of his own CDs, mostly with his compositions, and has made more than 30 discography collaborations. He has written four books about the accordion and has given conferences about the history of the accordion in Europe, South America and China. At present he is the accordion teacher of the "Jesús de Monasterio" Musical Conservatory of Santander. (8)



*Gorka Hermosa (photo: Maxi del Campo)*

His compositions can be divided in 4 different groups: (11)

- **CONCERT WORKS:** (1992- ):
  - Concert works: Tocata, Gernika, Ekaitza eta barealdia, Fragilissimo, Ka Mate, Goya: Capricho 43, Paco, Zheng Zai, Saudade Ártica, Oda, Pater Noster, Great Wall...
  - Children pieces: Children Suites No. 1, Sonatina, 12 idazketatxo, Notebook of Traditional Melodies, Technic Notebook...
- **POPULAR MUSIC** (1994- ):
  - Songs for the pop-rock band “ilunaBar”: Galderen erantzunak, Itxaroten, Mara-Mara, Hemendik at...
  - Folk pieces for the band “Vallobera”: Gari ta Mohammed, Anantango, Zumarragako Biribilketa, Danzas de San Román...
  - Pieces for “Hezurbeltzak” and “ELE”: Langile eraildu bati, Amaren erditze baldintzak, Maleta...
- **FUSION** (2003- ): pieces of fusion about tango, Spanish music, jazz and classical music
  - “Tangosophy”: Anantango, Ekía, Milonga del vent, Galliano en Santiago...
  - “Flamenco Etxea”: Zelaia, Zumardi...
  - “Malandro Club”: Brehme, Tango pour Ludwig, Un incendio en la nieve...
  - “Four dances form Iberia”: Brehme, Saudade Artica, Zelaia, Paco
- **ARRANGEMENTS** of the previous pieces
  - Chamber Music
  - Orchestral Music

## **4. “Four dances from Iberia”**

### **4.1 The Aesthetics of the dances**

The aesthetics of the work moves between classical music, improvisation close to jazz and Iberian roots music, with influences as varied as Astor Piazzolla, Richard Galliano, Paco de Lucia, Enrike Zelaia, Egberto Gismonti, Jobim, Falla... or Sofia Gubaidulina. (11)

### **4.2 The Arrangement**

A constant in Hermosa's compositions is that his music is not meant for a specific instrumentation. His works are usually first composed for accordion solo and then arranged for different instrumentations. These four pieces were composed for accordion solo, then arranged for duo (melodic instrument & accordion), then trio with double bass, after that for accordion and strings, followed by accordion and symphonic orchestra or wind band... And then, he made some redactions: for accordion and piano, accordion duo... or like in this arrangement made for Anja Jagodić, for accordion and string quartet. (11)

### **4.3 The grouping of “Four dances of Iberia”**

It consists of four movements, four of the Hermosa's best-known pieces written between 2008 and 2013, which are the journey through the different Iberian rhythms: “Brehme”, the first dance, is a trip from Bilbao to all the Celtic roots of the Spain's north parts, “Saudade Ártica” (second dance) evokes *fado* music, “Zelaia” (third dance) is a fast instrumental *jota* of Navarre and the last (fourth dance), “Paco”, (awarded with the CIA-IMC UNESCO Composition 2013 prize) is a tribute to Paco de Lucía with *Bulería* and *Rumba* rhythms. (10)

Truly, those “Four dances from Iberia” are four independent pieces written in different years. Hermosa grouped them like this because those are compositions that have a lot in common: all of them are dances which evoke Spanish traditional rhythms; with aesthetic between folk, classical and jazz music which work well together, because, more than a form of a suite, this grouping tries to evoke the form of a Symphony with four movements: one fast movement, lento, gallant and fast final movement. (10)

He used those pieces in different groupings, for example in “Atlantia”: a suite for accordion and symphonic orchestra with 6 movements (“Ekia”, “Anantango”, “Milonga del vent”, “Brehme”, “Saudade Ártica” and “Paco”) based on music of different Atlantic regions of America, Africa and Europe. (10)



## 4.4 How they were composed

### 4.4.1 How “Brehme” was composed

Composed in 2011, it departs from a melody that Hermosa previously used in the piece "Musicians of Bremen visit Alcañiz" (2005) for an ensemble of teachers (flute, four recorders, oboe, two clarinets Bb, alto sax, bassoon, horn, two trumpets in C, trombone, tuba, guitar, piano, two violins and accordion) which was played in a pedagogical concert organized by the conservatory of Alcañiz, where he worked. From the name of a town in the title of the story (Bremen), with minor adjustments, comes the title of the piece: Brehme. It was inspired by the music of the Basque diatonic accordionist Kepa Junkera, to which Gorka added in 2011 a central part in amalgam measures<sup>16</sup> with a certain Celtic atmosphere to be interpreted by the group "Toralia" (accordion and Celtic whistle). They finally didn't play with this group, but he used to play it in the National Spanish TV in duo with the most famous violinist in Spain (Ara Malikian). Some months later, he started playing it in the repertoire of "Malandro Club" (trumpet, accordion and double bass). The double bass player suggested making a re-exposition of the theme and thanks to him, instead of lasting 3 minutes like it lasted in the beginning, the piece now lasts 5 minutes. This double bass player (Javier Mayor) is also the one who arranged the bass line of the piece. With this structure they recorded it with *Malandro Club* in 2015 on their first album (with the addition of the famous drummer Borja Barrueta) and they recorded a video clip that can be viewed and listened on Youtube: (10, 16)

“Brehme” by “Malandro Club”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFiKiB0u3vQ>



“Malandro Club” (photo: Elena Revuelta)

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<sup>16</sup> Measures with irregular rhythms (19)

#### 4.4.2 How “Saudade Ártica” was composed

“Saudade Ártica” (2014) is dedicated to Paulo Jorge Ferreira<sup>17</sup>. It is a development of the second movement of Hermosa’s “Suite for children nº2” (2008): “Ártico”, which supposes the exposition of the “Saudade Ártica”. They arranged it for accordion, bass clarinet, guitar, oboe, trumpet and xylophone for the CD of Hermosa’s group “Garúa” in 2009, but at the end they didn’t publish the CD. After 5 years, Gorka decided to develop the piece: the central part was written in 2014 as one solo for one Celtic piece for the “Toralia” group CD. After this recording he re-harmonized it and arranged it to make it suits with “Ártico”, and “Saudade Ártica” was born. It tries to evoke the hypothetical nostalgia for the immense loneliness that might be found in the place like Arctic. It was recorded by Christine Rossi for her CD dedicated to Gorka Hermosa’s works. After this solo version, he made an arrangement for “Malandro Club” and they recorded it for their CD. It’s arranged for trumpet, double bass, accordion and drums, making some solos in the re-exposition. Javier Mayor helped Gorka by making the bass line in the exposition of the piece. It can be listened here: (10)

“Saudade Ártica” by “Malandro Club”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Px3SMUjc8ss>

#### 4.4.3 How “Zelaia” was composed

"Zelaia" (2008) integrates various melodies popularized in the 1960s and 1970s by the Basque famous accordionist Enrike Zelaia, whom the piece tries to pay tribute to. He was the first Basque accordion virtuoso who used the Basque traditional music with difficult arrangements. He was extremely popular in Basque Country in those decades. Hermosa composed it for accordion solo and later he recorded it with flamenco guitar and flamenco percussion for their CD "Flamenco Etxea", mixing the Basque folklore and the flamenco music. The dancer Selene Muñoz did the choreography for this piece when they recorded it for the Spanish National TV that can be listened to here: (1, 10, 17)

“Zelaia” by “Flamenco Etxea” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VIyoJw\\_lWcM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VIyoJw_lWcM)



*Gorka Hermosa with Enrike Zelaia (photo: Javi Galeano)*

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<sup>17</sup> Famous Portuguese accordionist (11)





*"Flamenco Etxea": Gorka Hermosa, José Luis Montón with the bailaora Selene Muñoz (photo: Araceli Gedack)*

#### **4.4.4 How "Paco" was composed**

"Paco" (2013), is a tribute to Paco de Lucía, the greatest instrumentalist in the history of flamenco: a revolutionary. This piece was born when Alexander Selivanov, a professor at the Gnessin Institute in Moscow, suggested to Hermosa to write a piece based on Spanish folklore. Hermosa has had experience in flamenco music in years of playing with one of the most important flamenco guitarists of today, José Luis Montón, who introduced him to this music and who taught him to appreciate the art of Paco de Lucía even more. The work was written in the first 15 days of February 2013. All the original themes of "Paco" were developed with the intention not to make a copy of Paco's music, but to serve as a tribute to his music through music that it has never been done before with an accordion. Probably, it's the first flamenco piece ever composed for accordion: a new universe to explore for the instrument, using a wide variety of technical elements (*ricochet*, *bellow shake*<sup>18</sup>, *percussion*...) to evoke the technique of the Spanish flamenco guitar. It was recorded by Christine Rossi on her CD "Gorka Hermosa: Works for Accordion". Gorka arranged it to play with "Malandro Club" CD (trumpet, accordion, double bass and drums) and they had the great luck to collaborate with one of the best friends of Paco, the flautist who played with him all his life: Jorge Pardo. (11)

"Paco" by Christine Rossi: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kG4esCkuIKk>

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<sup>18</sup> *Ricochet* and *bellows shake* are the special accordion technic using the bellow



*Gorka Hermosa with Jorge Pardo (photo: Maxi del Campo)*

## **4.5 Traditional rhythms in “Four dances from Iberia”**

### **4.5.1 Traditional rhythms in “Brehme”**

“Brehme” has 3 different parts with a structure **A-A-B-A-C-A-A-B-A**. (11)

The **A** part is Basque *Ezpatadantza* (“sword dance”). This dance is a typical dance from *Duranguesado* (the valley of Durango), in the province of Biscay. All the measures have 6 8ths but with different accentuations: one measure is 3-3, and the second one is 2-2-2. In other words: one measure 6/8 and next 3/4. It’s usually played with *txistu* and *tamboril* (small tambour). It can be listened to here: (2, 11, 16)

Ezpatadantza: [https://youtu.be/PgHnTse\\_xpo](https://youtu.be/PgHnTse_xpo)



*Ezpatadantza dancers (photo: naiz)*

## EZPATADANTZA



*Traditional "Ezpatadantza"*



*Beginning of the accordion part of "Brehme"*

It's interesting that this rhythm is the same as the *bulería* in flamenco music, but there is no connection between them. (11)

The **B** part is a constant amalgam. It's a deformation of this *Ezpatadantza* rhythm where rhythms of 3 and 2 are chaotically combined, creating a sensation of instability. (11)



*Beginning of the B part of "Brehme"*

This sensation of instability finishes when part C finally arrives with a 3-3-2 rhythm. This rhythm is the typical rhythm of Piazzolla's tangos, a very constant influence on Hermosa's music. (11, 14)



*Beginning of the C part of "Brehme"*



#### 4.5.2 Traditional rhythms in “Saudade Ártica”

The structure of this piece is **A-B-A**. (11)

The ostinato rhythm of the **A** part of this piece is a typical accompaniment of *fado* rhythm: (11)



*Accompaniment rhythm of A part of “Saudade Ártica”*

What we can see here is this typical rhythm of a famous *fado* for piano. It is interesting to mention that this rhythm is also a typical rhythm of *habanera*, which is a Cuban dance (the most popular example of *habanera* is the one from opera “Carmen” by Georges Bizet). In this example the rhythm is written in 2/4 and in “Saudade Ártica” in 4/4. As we can see the lower note (the note without the chord) of this accompaniment of Hermosa’s piece is the same as the left hand of this traditional *fado*: (4, 11)

#### FADO N.º 6

A. Rey Colaço



*Fado N.º 6 by Rey Colaço, [ca. 1895].*

To be more precise, we can take a look to the accompaniment of the left hand of accordion part of “Saudade Ártica” which is in 4/4 measure, and compare it with the “Fado N.º 6” which is written in 2/4 measure: (4, 11)



The **B** part is a waltz, an international rhythm which is also very popular in Portugal. But, it's true that it's an implied waltz, because the typical accompaniment of the waltz never appears in an explicit way, except in one measure (measure 73): (11)



The accompaniment is more a floating waltz accompanied with these two rhythms: (11)



And only sometimes used with this rhythm by the composer to break the monotony: (11)



### 4.5.3 Traditional rhythms in “Zelaia”

“Zelaia” is a *jota* from the north of Navarre. The word *jota* is used for many different dances, in many different regions of Iberian Peninsula. The nearly unique common characteristic is that almost all of them are written in 3/4 rhythm. The most famous one is the *jota* from Aragon (and the south of Navarre), which is sang and accompanied with castanets. In Basque Country (and in the north of Navarre which has the same culture and language as Basque Country) the *jota* is much faster and it's instrumental. Even in the decades of 1960 and 1970 (during the dictatorship) the word *jota* was more used for this dance. Nowadays it's the most known as *Basque fandango*. The usual instrumentation is diatonic accordion and tambourine. The first accordionist who made virtuoso music with this rhythm was Enrike Zelaia (born in 1939). Hermosa wrote this piece by using some of Zelaia's best known melodies and rhythms. (11, 17, 19)

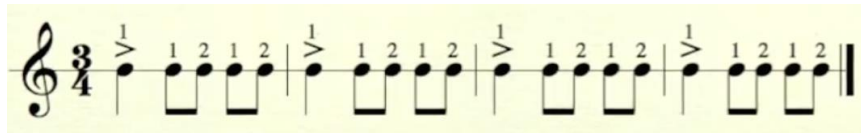
The most common and simple pattern of the *jota* from the north of Navarre (or the Basque fandango) is: (12)



This pattern is present in the first measure of the main theme of “Zelaia” that is constantly repeated in the piece: (10)



The other most common pattern of accompaniment of the *jota* of the north of Navarre (or Basque fandango) is: (12)



And it's equally used in the main theme of "Zelaia": (10)



#### 4.5.4 Traditional rhythms in "Paco"

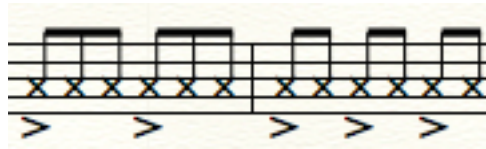
"Paco" is a flamenco piece. It has three sections: the first is a *bulería* (3-3-2-2-2 rhythm) with certain reminiscences of the piece "Almoraima" by Paco de Lucía. The second one is also a *bulería*, but now without harmony (only the one improvised melody with the percussion pattern of the *bulería*) and where the performers must *jalear* (shouts of mood typical for flamenco). The third and last one is a fast *rumba* based on the last theme of "Entre dos aguas", Paco's best-known piece. (10)



Paco de Lucía (photo: ABC)



There is no flamenco part(y) that does not end with *bulerías*. It is the most flexible singing and dancing of the flamenco *palos* (styles or rhythms of the flamenco), and it seems that it comes from the gypsies of Jerez, the most authentic area of the flamenco. The *compás* (rhythm) is the same as that of the *soleá* (probably the oldest flamenco *palo* rhythm and from which many of the flamenco rhythms are derived) but much faster. The *bulerías* transmit noise, uproar... Its most common pattern is: (6)



But it's usually developed and changed. In this piece, the first measure of the *bulería* is changed to this rhythm which is further used as main pattern of this first section of the piece: (11)



The *cierres* (closing patterns) are commonly used to close each phrase in flamenco music. In this piece the used *cierres* are: (11)



It's used at the ends of different parts of this *bulería* section: (11)

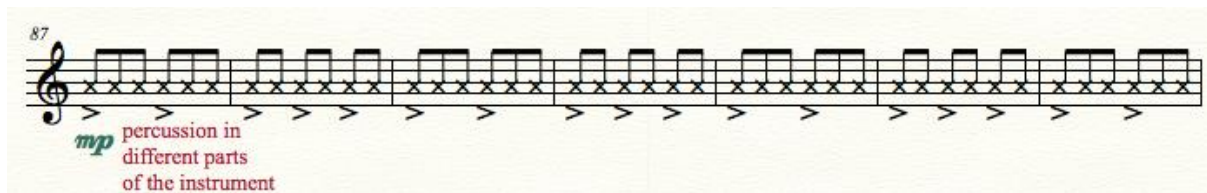


Example No.1 of "cierre"



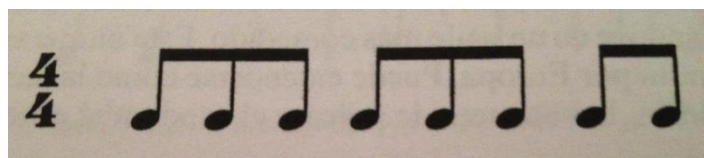
Example No.2 of “cierre”

The second part (measure 87), as previously mentioned, is also a *bulería*, but now without harmony. It's an improvisation on the *bulería* pattern (from measure 87): (10)



The last part is a *rumba*. *Rumba* is a genre of traditional music that originated in Cuba during the nineteenth century. With African roots, the Cuban *rumba* is considered as the mother of numerous Latin rhythms and dances, such as *salsa*, and has derivations in various Latin American countries. The flamenco *rumba* has its origin in the union of flamenco and Cuban *rumba*. It is a very fast and rhythmic *palo*, which is often used to give a flamenco character to musical themes that are not properly flamenco. Its most common instruments are the *palmas*<sup>19</sup>, the castanets and the guitar. (11)

The traditional rhythm of the *rumba* is: (19)



<sup>19</sup> *Palmas*: is to clap with the interior part of the hands making the characteristic rhythms of flamenco music.

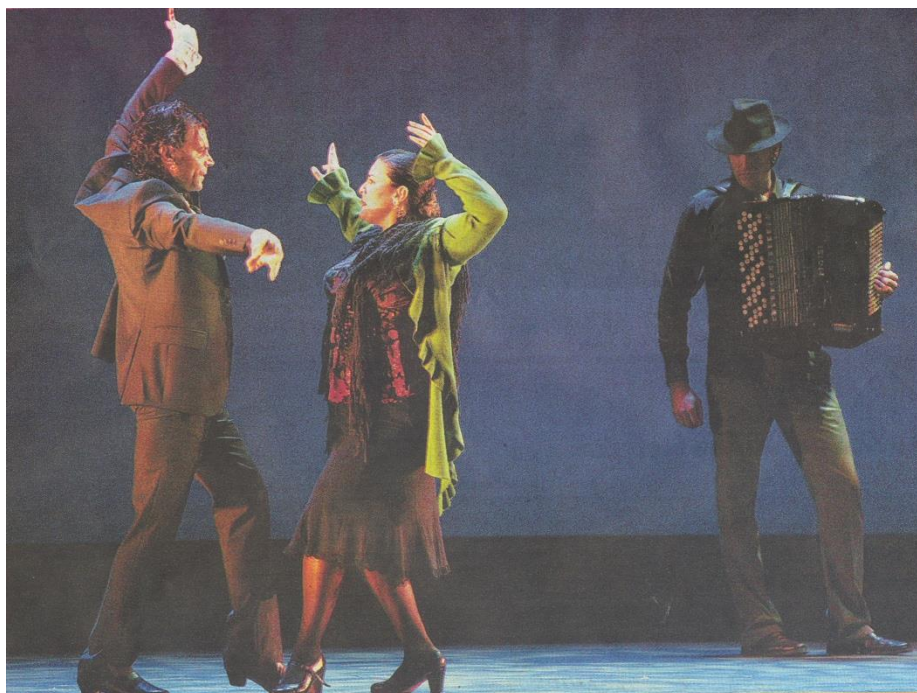
Paco de Lucía changed this pattern in his best known composition, “Entre dos aguas”, to this: (6)



And in this piece Hermosa arranged it for accordion to get: (11)

A musical score for accordion, consisting of two systems of two staves each. The tempo is marked 'Con vita' with a quarter note equal to approximately 120 beats per minute. The first system starts at measure 150 and the second at measure 152. The notation shows a rhythmic accompaniment pattern in the left hand, with the right hand playing chords and some melodic lines. A 'normal bellow' instruction is present in the first system. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

In the piece this pattern is used like an accompaniment while the right hand of the accordion makes different melodies in an improvised character till the end of the piece. (11)



*Gorka Hermosa on “Festival Flamenco de Jerez”, the most important flamenco Festival of the world in 2007 (photo: Diario de Jerez)*

So, as a resume of these four dances:

PIECE	REGION	DANCES & RHYTHMS
Brehme	Basque Country	Ezpatadantza, amalgama & tango
Saudade Ártica	Portugal	Fado & Waltz
Zelaia	Navarre	Jota Navarra & Basque fandango
Paco	Andalusia	Bulería & Rumba

## **4.6 Problematic and difficulties of playing “Four dances from Iberia”**

I’m going to analyze the problematic about playing the Spanish folk music. I will concentrate on the rhythms used concretely in this piece. Finally, I will analyze some of the main difficulties in playing “Four dances from Iberia”. (11)

### **4.6.1 Problematic and difficulties in “Brehme”**

#### **Articulation**

In Basque music, when it’s played with an accordion, especially when it’s played with a diatonic accordion, the articulation is always very *staccato*. Usually, when this music is played by non-Basque musicians (accordionists), they don’t play it as *staccato* as it’s needed. Probably the best way to go through this problem is to listen the traditional Basque music carefully, played on traditional instruments of this region and try “to catch the spirit” and the way of playing. (11)

#### **Reading of the rhythm**

The rhythm of “Brehme” itself is difficult to read. It’s difficult to be precise. It must be very metronomic. (11)

#### **Accents on the rhythm**

Even bigger difficulty than the studying with the metronome, is to give the correct accentuations in a natural way. The first note of the 6/8 must be more accentuated than the one of the 3/4, and the first note of every 4 patterns of 6/8+3/4 must also be more accentuated than the others. (11)

#### **Character**

It’s important to be aware that the character of the *Ezpatadantza* is elegant and martial. In spite of this, we also must be aware that Hermosa used it in this piece in a more informal way- “funnier” than the traditional rhythm. (11)

#### **Playing with the quartet**

Before the beginning of working with the quartet, it would be useful to play together with the violinist: the first eight measures of the accordion part with the eight firsts of the violin I, and the same with the next eight measures to have the homogeneity in the articulation between both of instruments during the question-answer part at the beginning. (11)

The quartet must be aware that between the measures 159-166 they play one melody together, but playing one little part of the melody between each of them. (11)

#### **Ornamentation**

In this kind of dance it's not very usual for the player to add his/her own ornamentation, but Hermosa likes to push the player into this problem. As a suggestion, all the ornamentation used in Celtic music is extremely useful for this piece. (11)



## Dynamics

In this kind of traditional music, the dynamics are nearly not used. But Hermosa likes to introduce them in this piece starting with *pp*, then a big *crescendo* in the final of the first **A** part, to arrive to *mf* to the second **A** part and then, in its second middle, to *f*. The **B** part starts with *p* and in the final going to *crescendo* to arrive to the **A** part again. The **C** part must be played *p* and mysterious again and then re-exposition, exaggerating the dynamics to finish even more *f* than in the exposition. (11)

### 4.6.2 Problematic and difficulties in “Saudade Ártica”

Understanding of the word *Saudade* perfectly shows the character of the Portuguese people: very nostalgic, with melancholy longing, yearning, missing... (11)



*Amalia Rodrigues, one of the biggest fado singers (photo: Gladys Palmera)*

## Character

The main difficulty is that the melody has to sound like a singing, sadness, nostalgia... in the characteristic nostalgic Portuguese character. We have to try to avoid making noise caused by buttons and registers and to be extremely careful with the bellows, to try not to make the accents, but always keep it in tension. That's how we can express the melody as one singer. (11)

The accordion player's left hand (or in this case the string quartet) must sound like a Portuguese guitar (that's why it's written often in *pizzicato*). In the parts where the accordion player plays with the both hands, it's difficult to make the difference between the precision of the *staccato* in left hand and the expression of the right hand, so the special attention should be paid to the **articulation**: extremely precise and clear accompaniment and a big *legato* for the “singing” part. (11)

## Playing with the quartet

The quartet must be aware that in the first 6 measures they play a melody together: each one of them plays one note of the melody. (11)

The transition between the last measure of the **A** part and the first one of the **B** part (measures 36 to 37) is also complex. Half note must be equal to complete measure of 3/4: in the whole note the accordionist must mark 2 measures of 3/4 to give the security to the quartet with the velocity to start the **C** part. (11)

In the **B** part the implicit waltz must be listened to... or felt. (11)

## Dynamics

Whole piece has to be very subtle, so maximum dynamic can be *mf* or perhaps a little *f*, but very delicate, trying to play most of the piece between *ppp* and *mp*. (11)

### 4.6.3 Problematic and difficulties in “Zelaia”

## Articulation

In the same way as in “Brehme”, the articulation is usually a problem when this music is played by non-Basque musicians (accordionists): they don't play it as *staccato* as it's needed. In Basque music, the articulation is always very *staccato*. (11)

## Ornamentation

In the same way as we spoke about “Brehme”, in this kind of instrumental music is not very usual that the player adds his/her own ornamentation, but Hermosa likes to push the player into this problem. Again, all the ornamentation used in Celtic music is extremely useful for this piece. (11)

## Character

The character of this kind of music is like a party, but Hermosa thinks in this music more as a fast and elegant minuet. (11)

## Dynamics

In the same way as in “Brehme”, in this kind of traditional music the dynamics are nearly not used, but Hermosa likes to introduce those in this piece. In order of playing *f* all the time, which is typical in this kind of dances, Hermosa pushes the player to play between *mp* and *mf* and reserve the *f* only to underline the parts with more character. (11)

#### 4.6.4 Problematics and difficulties in “Paco”

##### How to play the flamenco music on accordion

Flamenco is typically played on a guitar, never on an accordion. Hermosa has arranged most of flamenco characteristics to the accordion. For example, he uses the *ricochet* to make the *rasgueados*<sup>20</sup> of the guitar. We must think about those *rasgueados* each time we play the *ricochet*. Hermosa perfectly used the possibilities of accordion and made the *rasgueados* sound really powerful and consisted, really in flamenco style. (11)

##### Articulation

The flamenco guitar is played with nails, so the articulation must be always very *staccato* and it's important to try to imitate it with the accordion or the string instruments (depending who is playing it in the different parts of the piece). (6, 11)

##### Characteristics

*Jaleo* is the name for all the shouts that the *palmeros*<sup>21</sup> (and sometimes even the people from the audience) make to the flamenco singers, dancers or players. Flamenco people said that to do it well is one of the most difficult things of flamenco. To do it in tempo, with the correct tone, character, pronunciation... and mood. The player has to listen to a lot of flamenco music to try to do it correctly. It's not possible to learn it theoretically, you only can learn it if you listen to a lot of flamenco music, especially if you listened to it since you were a child. (6, 11)

*Soniquete* is the flow of playing the flamenco in rhythm in the correct style. Flamenco people (especially gypsy people) always say that you can feel if one player is a flamenco player or not, even whether he's a gypsy or not. (6, 11)



*Traditional flamenco players (photo: Peineta Revuelta)*

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<sup>20</sup> *Rasgueado* is a guitar finger strumming technique commonly associated with flamenco guitar music. (6, 19)

<sup>21</sup> *Palmeros*: percussionists whose *instrument* is to clap with their hands. (6, 19)



## ***Non rubato***

The usual belief of non-Spanish people is that one of characteristics of flamenco and Spanish music is to play *rubato*... But: No! Flamenco music is extremely precise in rhythm, extremely metronomic. The entire tempo is subdivided by the *palmeros*, who need to be very precise in clapping. There are usually two *palmeros*: one in tempo, and the other one in contra-tempo. The rest of the players must play exactly with this metronomic precision of the *palmeros*, so ***rubato*** playing is absolutely forbidden. (11)

## **Playing with the quartet**

It is a real challenge to start together with the quartet at the beginning of the piece. Even if it's not a very "classical" way, in flamenco it is normal (and recommended) to count before start, one 6/8 measure with voice: one-two-three-one-two-three. Or to make it more flamenco, to do it in Spanish with Andalusian dialect accent: un-doh-treh-un-doh-treh. (11)

In the central part it's extremely important to feel the rhythm made by the string instruments and to know and to feel where the accents are while we are playing the accordion part. (11)

The quartet must be aware that between the measures 154-170 they play one melody together, playing one little part of the melody each one of them. (11)

## **Improvisation**

The central part of "Paco": This part is an improvisation made by the great flautist Jorge Pardo for the CD "Maladroit Club" where this piece was recorded (it can be listened on *Spotify*). As this is a one improvisation, it can be changed... or can be replaced by another improvisation made by composer or by the player. Gorka Hermosa said: "That would be marvelous. In case to play the written improvisation, the player can change whatever he/she wants in this improvisation. Even to try to play different each time and do the improvisation like it is real- not only to read the scores." (11)

## **Ornamentation**

In flamenco, the ornamentation is free for the player, a way of showing the character of the player. So, in this piece the player can (and must) do his/her own ornamentations. Microtonal ornamentation is commonly used in flamenco, especially by the singers, but also on flute, violin... and even guitar players (bending). On accordion it's more difficult, but also possible to do this kind of ornaments. Bending is more common for the string instruments, than for an accordion. We can do the bending, but slower, so we have to find a right place for it, the place where we have enough time to do it. We can do it by pressing the button and slowly let it up and keep it half-pressed while making bigger pressure on the bellows. (6, 11)

## **Dynamics**

In flamenco, different textures are used to accomplish different dynamics, but Hermosa again wants to push the player to take advantage of classical education and make use of the dynamics to exaggerate the different characters of the different parts, underlining them with the use of dynamics. (11)

### **4.6.5 General problematic and difficulties in “Four dances from Iberia”**

## **Instrumentation**

The main problem with the accordion & string quartet version is that there is no double bass. The bass is extremely important in Hermosa's compositions, so the cello player must understand the importance of his voice and that the cello has all the weight of this music. Apart of this, string quartet is the most beautiful musical ensemble, extremely appropriate for Hermosa's music. And on the other hand, Hermosa's music is a kind of music hardly ever composed for this instrumentation. (11)

## **Placement on the stage**

The accordion projects its sound much less than the string instruments. When you are close to the accordion you can hear its powerful sound, but when you move away, the volume of the sound is decreasing. So, the sensation “inside” the quartet could be that the accordion is much louder than the quartet, but from some distance, it is exactly the opposite. And we must never forget that in this piece the accordion is the soloist, so it must sound louder than usual. The placement on the stage could help if the quartet plays in semicircle and the accordion stands in the middle of all the four instruments. About the placement of the quartet, Hermosa prefers the cello on the right side (looked from the audience) of the quartet (just in the part of the left hand of the accordion) and not in the middle as some of the new quartets nowadays do. (11)

## **Amplification**

Two microphones for the accordion and a little amplification is not a bad idea if the auditory is really big. It's not necessary, but it helps the accordionist to have more projection of the sound. In this way, accordionist can play without being preoccupied with loudness. (11)

## **Fidelity with the score**

The player must understand that this is not Beethoven or Stravinsky... This music is not strictly Classical Music. It must have a part reserved for improvisation, which Classical Music does not have, so Hermosa gives the liberty to the players to change the things in the score and to play personal things. (11)

## **5. Conclusion**

I consider it very important to understand that the music from Iberia is passionate, hot-blooded, full of strong emotions- love, sadness, happiness... Therefore, the player doesn't have to be afraid to exaggerate with the emotional outbursts, because even when the player thinks it is excessive, it just means that it is the right way (kind of a guideline for a non Iberian player). I like the fact that the composer gives a lot of space to the performers, to feel free to improvise and express themselves. "Four dances from Iberia" is a great combination of really complex music, very difficult in technical, musical and structural way (like Classical music is) and folk music with all of its characteristics, as well as jazz music with all its liberty (improvisation).

The big advantage is that the accordion is an instrument with great possibilities, capable to conjure up and imitate different instruments, or even ensembles, especially in the combination with the string quartet. Hermosa wisely used the sound, different techniques and effects that an accordion can give to catch the spirit of Iberian folk music and its traditional instruments. He did it in an impeccable way, so even if we have been thinking that the accordion is not suitable for all of the Iberian genres that Hermosa used in this piece, he definitely managed to persuade us otherwise.

This research truly helped me in understanding and realization of this composition, but also helped me to understand and get closer to Iberian folk music, rich with various of specific, unusual rhythms. It also helped me discover new techniques of playing and unique sound with the string quartet.

I hope this work will encourage and interest some future players and help them improve their performances and understanding of this musical treasure.

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Lausanne, 25.02.2019

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