

Lounge

Flamenco to an Indian beat

Guess what we learnt after watching the touring dancers tap to and match steps with Rajasthani music and dance? That gypsy Roma music originated in India

Nina Mukherji ★★★★★

Posted On Sunday, October 31, 2010 at 07:36:55 PM

What can possibly better a Flamenco performance? A fusion of the energetic Spanish dance with music from Rajasthan. The flamenco troupe was led by Agustin Carbonell, a leading guitar player and composer from Spain. They are in India for a tour organised by the Spanish embassy and performed alongside the Langas, a group of musicians from Rajasthan, in the city, transcending barriers of language and culture.

The Flamenco musicians and dancers set the stage on fire with their unusual and very striking movements and music. The dancers with the sweeping movements of their arms and rhythmic stomping of their feet created a brilliant and dramatic effect. They were joined in the latter part of the show by the Rajasthani Langa musicians and their Kalbeliya dancer. The exotic Flamenco dancers moved energetically to the Rajasthani beats while Rajasthani artiste swirled gracefully to the Flamenco music.

The Rajasthani group kept pace brilliantly and also added a very interesting dimension to the Spanish music. The Langa musicians with their colourful bandini turbans and brightly worked shawls, the Kalbeliya dancer in a heavily embroidered flowing skirt with a multi-coloured dupatta and beautiful necklace and bangles left the audience breathless. In stark contrast the Flamenco dancers wore tight fitting silhouettes muted but solid tones, and handmade wooden shoes.

The first question to Augustin is an obvious one; on the fusion. "Traditionally, the Flamenco performers and the Langas come from a gypsy background. They have a lot more in common than people realise." Roma music of the gypsies originated from Northern India and then shifted slowly westwards. Both Flamenco and Langa music had their origins in Roma music.

"Many centuries have passed but a lot of similarities remain in the waist and the hand movements of the two forms. After playing with them and experiencing their music we do realise that the origins must have been the same," said Taryn Lugo, a Spanish dancer. "The language of music brings down cultural and other barriers. We had translators to help us. But, they have the same kind of passion and love for their music as we do for ours. Therefore, we could come together and perform with ease." Augustin added.

The two groups had just 10 days to practice together and yet the result was outstanding.

When asked about how they maintained their stamina and high energy levels, Taryn Lugo, one of the dancers, said, "We practise for up to eight hours every day depending on what we are preparing for. Most of us start at a very young age. I started when I was four. We are used to the gruelling routine and performances."

The group performed in Jodhpur and Delhi before Bangalore and will end their tour in Mumbai.