



**MALEVO: THE ARGENTINIAN
MALAMBO SENSATIONS**

A STUDY GUIDE



THE STORY OF MALAMBO: THE DANCE OF THE GAUCHO



WHO ARE THE GAUCHO?

Gauchos are a national symbol of Argentina. Gauchos are cowboys of exceptional skill from South America's Pampas region. They are heroes of legend, folklore and literature for their noble, brave and generous spirit, with others wily and unruly.

Historically, the gaucho were migratory horsemen and adept at cattle work. Today the word refers to people work with livestock and agriculture, but the original Portuguese meaning is "an inhabitant of the plains of Rio Grande do Sul, or the Pampas of Argentina".

"The Gauchos, or countrymen, are very superior to those who reside in the towns. The Gaucho is invariably most obliging, polite, and hospitable: I did not meet with even one instance of rudeness or inhospitality. He is modest, both respecting himself and country, but at the same time a spirited, bold fellow. On the other hand, many robberies are committed, and there is much bloodshed: the habit of constantly wearing the knife is the chief cause of the latter. It is lamentable to hear how many lives are lost in trifling quarrels. In fighting, each party tries to mark the face of his adversary by slashing his nose or eyes; as is often attested by deep and horrid-looking scars. Robberies are a natural consequence of universal gambling, much drinking, and extreme indolence. At Mercedes I asked two men why they did not work. One gravely said the days were too long; the other that he was too poor. The number of horses and the profusion of food are the destruction of all industry."

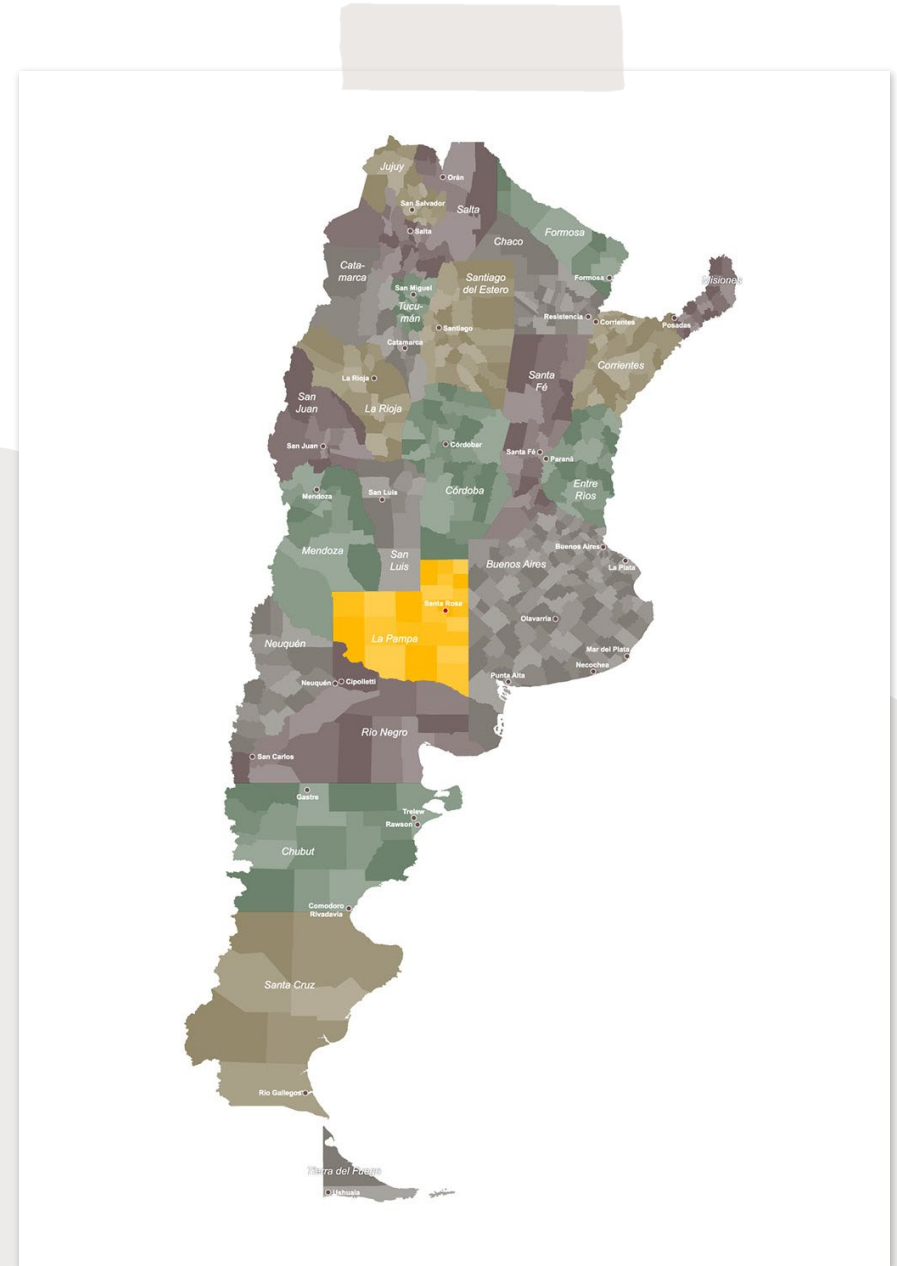
- Charles Darwin, diary entry from 1833



WHAT IS MALAMBO?

The Malambo is a traditional dance handed down from older South American Cowboys to their younger counterparts, and one might imagine these dances taking place around campfires, after long days on horseback. Customarily a solo form, Malambo has long been among the original competitive dances. Argentinian Gauchos perfected their moves to wow, entertain and yes, beat out their fellow dancers.

In watching Malambo, what's evident is the beauty, fluidity, strength, and sheer bravado of the dancers. Chests are puffed and poised like those of horses said to have inspired this dance, and feet paw at the ground. Like manes, long black hair trails behind as the men who comprise Malambo face off, preparing for a battle of complex rhythm and footwork. As the performance progresses, one may observe influences from seemingly disparate dance traditions and distant countries. A quick look at Argentina's history and trade practices reveals that indeed the dance vocabularies that appear in the Malambo are no coincidence.

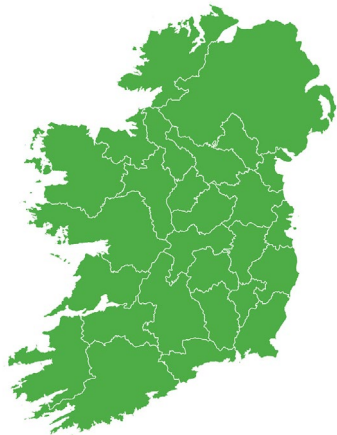


A DANCE FROM MANY NATIONS

Like many percussive dance forms, such as North American tap and jazz, Malambo has an important intersection with West African dance. Beginning in 1587, the Portuguese slave trade brought West Africans through Brazil to northern Argentina. Many of these enslaved Africans were sold to ranchers who then put them to work side-by-side with the Argentinian Gauchos. As part of the West African tradition, dance and rhythm were essential in their storytelling practice and would have been crucial in developing bonds with their new, albeit forced, community. In much the same way that tap and jazz incorporated elements such as syncopated rhythms, friendly competition, bravado or an “aesthetic of cool” bent knees, flat feet, clapping, rhythms performed on the body and asymmetrical use of arms and legs, those same movement vocabularies are present in Malambo.

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Also notable are the occasional straight leg kicks and stiff torsos that are hallmarks of Irish Step dance. Indeed there was an influx of Irish immigrants into northern Argentina in the early 1800's. These immigrants worked as laborers and shepherders and many became landowners. Although their interactions with Gauchos would not have been as direct as the enslaved West Africans, it is undeniable that there was some co-mingling or at least incorporation of Irish Dance into the Malambo. Interestingly, today, Argentina boasts the fifth largest Irish community in the world.





Flamenco legend Farruquito



Andalusia region of Spain

A third stylistic influence may be seen in dance forms that are thought of as more traditionally Spanish: Flamenco.

Flamenco was actually developed by a coming together of Indian, Jewish and Moorish traditions in remote regions of the territory now called, Spain, more specifically in the area of modern day Andalusia, where these groups took refuge during the Inquisition in the 1400's and 1500's. Tango grew from dance halls in the Argentinian Barrio where West African people, both enslaved and free, came together and danced with Argentinians. These forms made their way most through a dance called the Milonga, which was practiced by the country-dwellers in Argentina and was derived from Flamenco, into the Malambo because this would have been the dance of the communities Gauchos grew up in.

You can clearly see this lineage in the twisting of the hips and the use of *zapateo*, the fast-paced footwork associated with Flamenco. Other common traits are the placement of the arms as they move across the body and are raised overhead, the use of the head to punctuate movement, and some of the clapping sections.

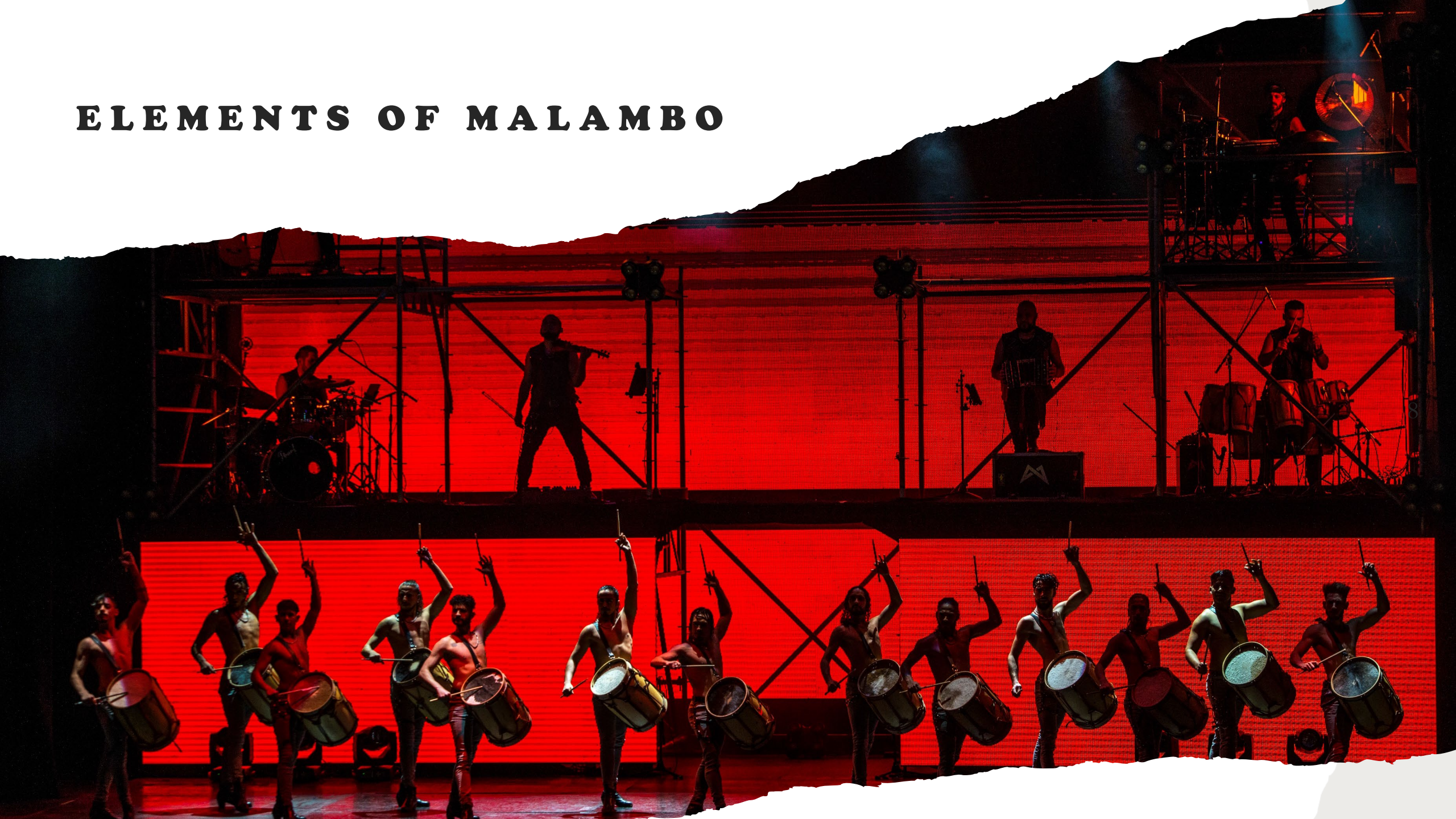
SUREÑO & NORTEÑO (SOUTH & NORTH)

There are two types of *Malambo*: *el norteño* “the northern” and *el sureño* “the southern”. These evolved due to differences between social and demographic differences between the northern and southern regions of Argentina. The Norteño tradition emerged from the Sureño, which is performed barefoot, following the introduction of boots brought to the nation by the Spaniards.

The two types are defined by the character of the music: the *malambo norteño* possesses a faster tempo and more forceful stomping which is opposite to the slow tempo and more gentle footwork of the *malambo sureño*.



ELEMENTS OF MALAMBO



EL ZAPATEO (THE FOOTWORK)

There are no rules to performing *zapateo*, a dance that is exclusively made up of the movements of the feet. Each combination of basic movements is unique and depends on the origin of the gaucho who executes it. It could vary in the order, position, coordination rhythm and posture.



LAS BOLEADORAS (THE LASSOS)

Boleadora is the Argentinian equivalent of the North American lasso. It is a rope with a weight at the end that is used by the *gaucho* as a weapon to capture animals, perhaps prey for food, or a calf who broke away from the herd of cattle, by entangling its legs.

The dancers spin boleadoras around at break-neck speeds while rhythmically striking the floor and accompanying their percussive footwork.





EL BOMBO (DRUMS)

Malambo also offers driving sections of drumming, performed on traditional Argentinian drums known as *bombos*.

These drums are also inspired from similar drum forms from Western Africa which were brought to South America by the slaves. The gauchos not only developed their own style of drum which was used as an instrument, they also used them as a tool to communicate with each other from one mountain top to another and ultimately, incorporated them into the Malambo.

EL BOMBO LEGÜRO (THE LEGÜRO DRUM)

The *bombo legüero* is emblematic of Argentinian folk music. It is traditionally made from a hollowed tree trunk and covered with cured animal skins, for example goats, cows, or sheep. The *bombo's* sound is deep and dark due to the fur being left on the hide. The *bombo* was influenced by European military drums, and is played while hanging to the side of the drummer. With one arm draped over the drum, the drummer strikes the drumhead and wooden rim in alternation with a soft-headed mallet and stick. Historically, it was also used as a way to determine the borders of a gauchos' territory.

The bombo is used for both bass and percussion. It not only keeps the rhythm, but evokes an elemental reaction. As the Latin American Folk Institute says, "Whether in Argentina or its Andean neighbors, the sound of the bombo is like the sound of a large, strong heart, communicating through its vibrations with the pulse of the listener."



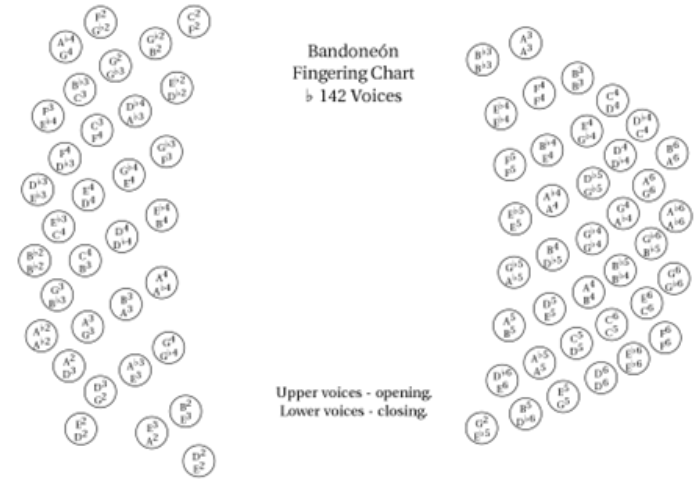
EL BANDONEON (SQUEEZE BOX)

The bandoneon, so named by the German instrument dealer Heinrich Band (1821–1860), was originally intended as an instrument for religious and popular music of the day. Around 1870, German and Italian emigrants and sailors brought the instrument to Argentina, where it was adopted into the nascent genre of tango music, a descendant of the earlier milonga. Malevo predominantly features this iconic Argentine instrument in much of the music of their performances today.

By 1910 bandoneons were being produced in Germany expressly for the Argentine and Uruguayan markets, with 25,000 shipping to Argentina in 1930 alone!

The bandoneon is held between the hands, and pulling and pushing actions force air through bellows and then through particular reeds as selected by pressing the instrument's buttons. Each button can sound up to two notes, one note with the air flowing out (blowing as the bellows are compressed) and a second note with the air flowing in (sucking as the bellows are expanded). This means with 72 buttons there are 144 possible notes. This is arranged with 37 buttons (74 possible notes) on the descant side for the right hand and 35 buttons (70 possible notes) on the bass side for the left hand. The descant side also has a thumb lever that disengages the reed organ, so the bellows can expand or contract without sounding any notes.

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EL CAJÓN (BOX PERCUSSION)

A *cajón* (Spanish for "box", "crate" or "drawer") is a box-shaped percussion instrument, played by slapping the front or rear faces (generally thin plywood) with the hands, fingers, or sometimes implements such as brushes, mallets, or sticks. Cajones are primarily played in Afro-Peruvian music (specifically *música criolla*), but has made its way into flamenco as well. Slaves of west and central African origin in the Americas are considered to be the source of the cajón drum. Currently, the instrument is common in musical performance throughout some of the Americas and Spain. The instrument reached a peak in popularity by 1850, and by the end of the 19th century cajón players were experimenting with the design of the instrument by bending some of the planks in the cajón's body to alter the instrument's patterns of sound vibration. After slavery the cajón was spread to a much larger audience including Criollos.

The player sits on top of the box, tilting it at an angle while striking the head between their knees. The percussionist can play the sides with the top of their palms and fingers for additional sounds.



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UNDERSTANDING DANCE

THE LANGUAGE OF DANCE

Dance is universal. Whether at the ballet or around your living room, everyone has experienced the joy of dance at some point. But what are the things that make dance, dance?

BODY – This refers to awareness of different parts of the body and how they move, either individually or together

ACTION – Action means both Locomotor action and Non-Loocomotor action. Locomotor action is movement that moves in space. This could be walking, running, jumping, or leaping. Non-loocomotor action is when parts of the body move, but stays in one place like swaying, shaking, stretching, or twisting.

SPACE – Space may mean the area a dancer moves through (like a stage), but also refers to the shapes the body makes, the direction of the movements and shapes, and the levels and moment patters of a group of dancers.

TIME – Time is applied to both music and movement and refers to the beat, tempo, accent and duration.

EFFORT – Effort means the force applied to dance to accentuate a dancer's movement including the weight, attack, strength and flow.



MEET MALEVO



ABOUT MALEVO

MALEVO, created by director, choreographer, and dancer Matías Jaime, this thrilling all-male group specializes in Malambo—a traditional Argentine folk dance of great virility and dexterity—and seeks to take it beyond its limits with a modern, avant-garde, and transgressive approach, merging it with other dance styles like flamenco and urban percussion.

After being named an official “Cultural Ambassador to the National Identity of Argentina,” and on the tail of numerous successes including events and performances in Las Vegas, New York, Dubai, Paris, Cairo, St Petersburg and Montreal as well as special performances with Latin pop-star Ricky Martin, Cirque du Soleil, a year-long residency at Universal Studios Japan and making it to semi-finalists on the hit TV show – America’s Got Talent, MALEVO is excited to present a new touring performance created for proscenium theaters of performing arts centers and festivals.



MATIAS JAIME, FOUNDER

Matias Jaime, Artistic Director and the Founder and Artistic Director Malevo has taken the traditional folklore dance of the malambo and has staged it in a way that is exciting and engaging for today's contemporary audiences.

Through his work with Malevo, Matias is constantly pushing the malambo art from forward, marking the future of this culture and ensuring that it remains relevant and current. The dancers that make up Malevo are the most talented Malambo dancers in the world. In many cases, you will find individuals who are talented with the Boleadoras, or others who excel in the drumming of the Bombos. But to find so many all-around-artists who can do it all; percussive footwork, barefoot percussive foot work, bombos, boleadoras and many who can sing and play the guitars – that is something truly exceptional.

