

Tientos

The Tientos are slow, melancholy, profound songs and dances connected to tangos. The rhythm is 4/4, similar in most ways to tangos, where the first beat is held silent by the dancer or accented with a *gólpe* (a foot stamp) and the other 3 counts are clapped (the guitar heavily accents count 1). A variation in the *palmas* claps the “and” count between counts 3 and 4, and this is slightly syncopated:

Tientos rhythm

Beat/Counts	1	2	&	3	4
Palmas		x		x	x
Variation Palmas		x	x	x	x

Tientos Lyrics – the letras:

Singing the tientos is challenging, as is all *cante jondo* (flamenco deep song). As the term implies, these songs are serious and deeply felt. The second sung verse of tientos is “mas valiente”, or harder than the first. Musically, tientos and all flamenco songs employ a variety of challenging techniques, including *Melismas* (a decorative series of notes) at the ends of phrases and *quejios* (cries, such as the ¡Ay! heard throughout the song).

The first letra here suggests liturgical roots, in the personal conversation between the singer and his God about being ill-treated by a lover. The 2nd letra gets a more democratic twist when the singer speaks with the President about the same problem.

Salida (salia) Le re le le le le leee le re... Le le le le le le leee ra

Hablo con mi Dios y le digo
Ay que me párace mentira
Lo que tu hace conmigo

*I spoke with God and I told him
How it seemed a lie
How you had treated me*

Y entre las paredes escribe
Yo hablé con el Presidente
Ay si el querer es un delito
Que Dios me mande la muerte

*It's written on the walls
I spoke with the President
If love is a crime
then God should condemn me to death*

Dance phrasing and sequences:

For the dancer, the piece incorporates lovely hip gestures, *braceo* (arm work), *muñecas/rosas* (hand gestures), and *marcando* (marking steps). These are combined to create choreography for both of the *letras* (verse) sections and to a *falseta* section (section

performed with dancer and guitarist only) that occurs after the 1st verse. Choreography often matches or rhythmically compliments the syncopated rhythm of the guitar.

Although there are many variations, the basic form of the tientos is as follows:

1. **Guitar introduction:** The guitarist sets the basic tempo and key
2. **Temple:** the singer sings fragments – *estribillos* – (le le, la, etc.) to get into the key, pulse and mood of the piece.
3. The dancer's *llamada* – call – the guitarist goes into double time here. The dancer generally performs footwork.
4. **Letra** - 1st verse – the singer sings the first verse, and the dancer interprets this impressionistically and rhythmically. After the 1st line of the song, the singer takes a break – the *respira* – and the dancer usually inserts footwork here.
5. Guitar *falseta* – a short melodic phrase that the dancer interprets lyrically
6. **Escobilla** – the dancer's 1st prolonged footwork section. This ends with a *llamada* to call in the 2nd verse.
7. **Letra** - 2nd verse – Like the 1st verse.
8. 2nd *escobilla* – the dancer's final long footwork section, before going into:
9. The *macho* – it is common for a flamenco song to end in a faster song/rhythm, usually *tangos*.