

# Rockets learn Flamenco dancing in Spanish class

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Flamenco: Rhythm and movement and lots of fun! Culture in the form of dance came to Southern Huntingdon County High School Oct. 29 when SHC students had the privilege of learning about the popular Spanish dance, Flamenco dancing. The new Spanish teacher, Christine Maxwell, arranged for the Language in Motion program from Juniata College to come and present Flamenco dancing to two of her Spanish classes. After listening to conversations between students, preceding the presentation, one could assume that many had no idea what to expect. Senior Erin Hall was not alone when she said with a laugh, "Honestly, I had no idea that it was called Flamenco dancing; I thought it was flamenco dancing!"

When students gathered in the auditorium during eighth and ninth periods, they were introduced to Danny, an exchange student at Juniata, and Rebecca, who teaches Spanish at the college. "We are here today to share with you a type of dance that originates from southern Spain," Danny shared. "This dance is called Flamenco dancing."

Flamenco is considered an art, not just a dance. There are three forms of Flamenco dancing: el cante (the song), el

baile (the dance) and la guitarra (the guitar playing). Flamenco is said to have originated from gypsies, and it came from India to Europe and Africa bringing cultural influences and rich music.

"I want you to know," Danny shared, "that in Spain, we do not dance the Flamenco in night clubs. In clubs and at parties, we dance to music much like you do here in America. We dance the Flamenco during a special week in April called the April Festival. The April Festival is filled with dancing, food and parties. People travel from all over the world to gather together for the festival. Bull fighting is also a major part of this week, and Flamenco dancers can be found in many places."

Flamenco is a very difficult dance to learn. There are four parts to Flamenco, and it usually takes about one year to learn the complete dance. The dance involves heavy stepping, clapping to specific rhythms and flowing arm movements. Usually, a man and a woman dance the Flamenco together, but it is also common for two women to dance together. Women will often wear a long dress with flowing material and a flower on either the side or on top of the head. High heels are usually worn by both partners.

Castanets are typical instruments used for Flamenco dancing.

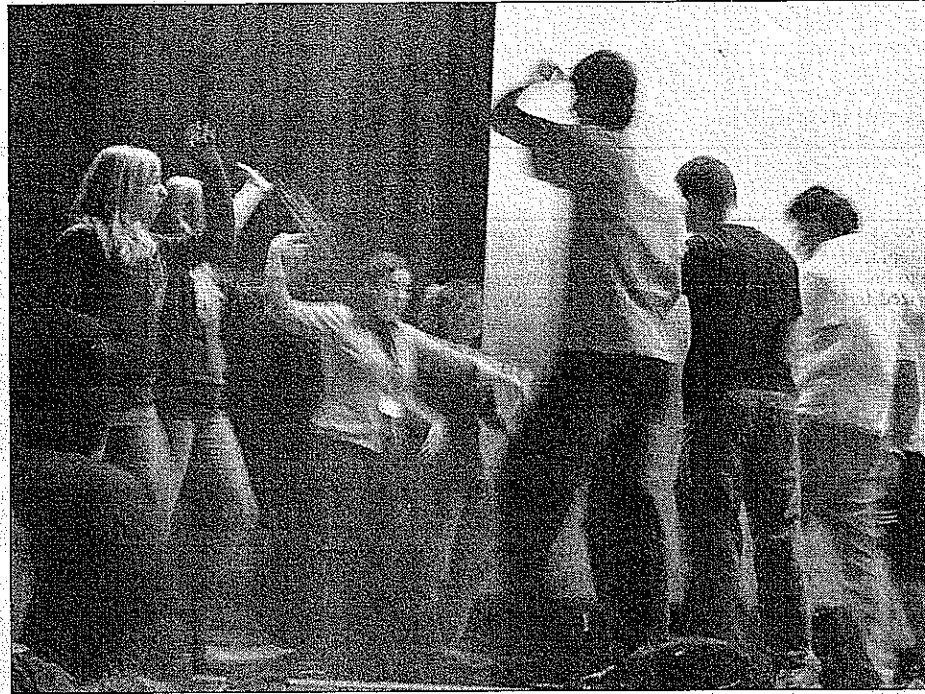


Photo by COURTNEY OSWALD

## SHC students learn some Flamenco dance steps.

ing. A castanet is a percussion instrument that usually comes in a pair of slightly cupped shells made of either ivory or hardwood. They are played by holding them in the palm of the hand by a connecting cord over the thumb and are clapped together with the fingers. "Castanets are played to

the rhythm of Flamenco music and playing them requires a lot of coordination," Rebecca shared.

After explaining the means of dancing the Flamenco, Danny and Rebecca demonstrated a slow dance. They then showed a movie which showed professional Flamenco

dancers. Then, they asked for volunteers, and some students were able to learn some basic steps of Flamenco.

"I enjoyed the instructors' demonstration of the Flamenco dance. The dance was full of movement that caught my eye. I also enjoyed the fact that they involved the students in the

presentation. I got to attempt to play the castanets. It wasn't as easy as it looked!" exclaimed ninth grader Tiffany Hall.

Junior Jennie Everhart shared, "I enjoyed learning about the culture and background of Flamenco dancing and watching the instructors dance. I also liked getting to watch my friends dance. It was very entertaining!"

"I thought that Monday's event was very interesting. I never knew what Flamenco dancing was before the presentation. I hope that we are able to do something like it again!" shared Sophomore Matt Fish.

Junior Jessica Parson volunteered to learn some dance moves, and she had a lot to say about her experience. "I enjoyed the presentation so much! I learned some new things about the Spanish culture, and it was very fun to learn some basic steps of Flamenco dancing. It was also very hard! When you watch other people dance, it looks like it would be easy, but actually trying to make your feet and hands move together is very difficult! I hope we are able to have more fun presentations like this one throughout the year!"

Maxwell summed up, "We are fortunate to have Juniata College in our community. The international students brought their world and experiences into our school Monday, and everyone loved it!"