

WORLD MUSIC

SPAIN

Introduction

A notable entry for Spain is the Middle Ages troubadour piece composed by Miguel de Cervantes, the author of the classic *Don Quixote (El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha)*. Written in 1615, this song probably ranks as the earliest known cave-inspired song that has been recorded.

The majority of the Spanish cave-inspired music can be grouped neatly into two genre of music: Spanish Celtic and Flamenco. The Celtic music in many cases was inspired by real caves in the northwestern portion of Spain whereas the Flamenco music is related in some way with the artificial nightclub caves of Sacromonte outside Granada (with the exception of "Cueva del Gato" by Paco de Lucia) in southeastern Spain.

There are also two cave-inspired pieces for Catalan music and two for Canary Island music.

WD-ES1 United States Early1960s

LA CUEVA DE SALAMANCA *

WD – Medieval – Troubadour – Spoken Word – Fiction – Theater

Mus. & Lyr: Miguel DE CERVANTES ([LY-WD13](#))

Perf: **GRUPO DE TEATRO "EL CORRAL"**

(with guitar)

Prod. Co: Spoken Arts; New Rochelle, NY

Liner Notes: (16-page Booklet -Text translation)

Time: 1:46

LP: TREASURY OF SPANISH DRAMA – VOL. 1 –

Miguel de Cervantes

Spoken Arts 862 (mono)

12" 33rpm (Sd 1)



Notes: This is a short stage play published by Cervantes in 1615. (For a summary of the story of this one-act play see below and also under Spoken Word Adult – Prose – Spanish – La Cueva de Salamanca – [SWA-PR-SP2](#)).

The liner notes tell us that – “According to an old tradition, the Cave of Salamanca had been for many years a haven for witches where magic and witchcraft were taught.” At the end of this one act play the sacristan sings (with guitar accompaniment) a 5-stanza song, “Cueva de Salamanca,” composed in the style of a Spanish medieval troubadour song. (See full lyrics – [LY-WD13](#)) The singer deliberately plods through each verse of each stanza and the others sing the one verse chorus – La cueva de Salamanca.

This probably ranks as the earliest known cave-inspired song that has been recorded.

The photo above shows a performance of this play at the Teatro Margen in León, Spain in 2008.

Some would classify this as classical music; nothing of the sort, it's not in the classical mode at all. Troubadour music in the Middle Ages, whether performed in France or Spain, had solid roots in the ethnic music of a region during a given period. “Troubadour songs were usually monophonic... Most were composed by the troubadours themselves. Some were set to pre-existing pieces of music.” (Anon. 2012)



The Cueva de Salamanca is an entirely artificial, architectural space built of sandy limestone blocks, located in downtown Salamanca not far from the Catedral Nueva. Basically it is an arched chamber facing east, measuring some 5.5m wide, 4m deep, and 5m high. In the middle of the back wall a narrow stairway leads up to a terrace. (Brison 2008) The bedrock here has an upper stratum of chert and a lower stratum of beige & violet volcanic ash.

One source tells us that the famous Salamanca Cave is located “close to Los Dominicos and alongside the Villena Tower. A whole series of legends have grown up about it over the years and it is mentioned in the works of writers as

prestigious as Cervantes, Quevedo, and Rojas. Supposedly, the Marques de Villena, who was the sacristan of San Ciprian Church during the 14th century brought students here to teach them about the occult sciences and fortune-telling. The Catholic Monarchs, Fernando and Isabel [during the Spanish Inquisition] ordered it to be bricked up and it remained so for nearly 500 years until the local council restored it and opened the remains to the public a few years ago.” (Anon. 1999)

Concerning Salamanca’s presence in the works of Cervantes, Mendez Peñate writes – “*Cervantes igualmente demostro el gran conocimiento que tenia de Samamanca y de todas sus historias y leyendas en el entremés titulado La Cueva de Salamanca, llamada asi por la creencia popular de que en Salamanca habla una cueva donde el diablo enseñaba magia a sus discipulos. Este lugar existe también en Salamanca en la pequeña plaza Carajal, aunque, desde luego, con los años Satanas ha perdido su clientela. En este entremés un picaro estudiante salamantino despliega la magia aprendida en la cueva para salvar el honor de una señora alegre quien en ausencia de su esposo, ella y su criada se divierten con el sacristán y el barbero del lugar. La fiesta está en su apogeo cuando llega el marido burlado. El estudiante convence al marido de que todo lo ocurrido ha sido producto de la magia de la Cueva de Salamanca y la cosa termina en que el cándido marido burlado quiere también que le enseñen las ciencias de la Cueva de Salamanca.*” (Mendez 1982)

[Cervantes also demonstrated the great knowledge he had of Salamanca and all its stories and legends in the short play called *La Cueva de Salamanca*, named after the popular belief that tells of a cave in Salamanca where the devil taught magic to his disciples. This place exists in the small Plaza Carajal in Salamanca, although, of course, over the years Satan has lost his clientele. In this short play a rogue student of Salamanca displayed the magic learned in the cave to save the honor of a cheerful lady, who, in her husband's absence, does with her maid have fun with the sexton and the barber of the place. The party is at its peak when the deceived husband arrives. The student persuades her husband that everything that happened has been the product of the magic of the Cave of Salamanca and the affair ends in the candidly deceived husband also wanting to display the knowledge of the Salamanca Cave.]

The performers here are the Grupo de Teatro “El Corral,” which is made up of Spanish scholars and actors, several of whom are connected with Yale University and have acted in the United States and abroad.

Today in Salamanca there is an active theater troop called Grupo de Teatro La Cueva de Salamanca.

Ref: Anon. 1999, Cueva de Salamanca, [mytravelguide](#)

Anon. 2012, Troubador, [Wikipedia](#)

Brison, David 2008, Unpublished sketch map of Cueva de Salamanca, 19 May 2008

Botello de Moraes y Vasconcelos, Francisco 1737, *Historia de las cuevas de Salamanca*, 432p (Not seen),

[googlebooks](#)

De Cervantes, Miquel (1999), *Obras Completas*, Editorial Castalia, Madrid, p. 1152-1156

Grupo de Teatro El Corral, Golden Treasury of Spanish Drama – Vol. 1 LP, [worldcat](#)

Mavridis, Spyridon 2006, *Historia de las cuevas de Salamanca*, [csic.es](#)

Mendez Peñate, Sergio 1982, *Presencia de Salamanca en la obra de Cervantes*, Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, p. 30-31

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