

DO YOU WANT TO DANCE?
DANCING MUSIC IN THE BIBLIOTECA DE CATALUNYA COLLECTIONS

Generally, “dancing music” is understood as to the music composed or arranged to accompany a dance.

The dance, in addition to being an element of socialisation, is a cultural form at several historic stages and at several zones in the planet, not necessarily coincident in space nor time.

Without the aim of being exhaustive at all, we propose you to accompany us in a panoramic view of the dances and his music, with some examples extracted from collections in the Biblioteca de Catalunya.

The nickname “ballroom dance” derive somehow from the country dance, a popular dance which appeared in England on the 16th century and was adopted in the French Court the following century. At this French Court, at instances of the king Louis the 14th century, a school of dance was created, giving birth to the Baroque dance from the contradanse. The Baroque dance consists at a suite that includes dances like the alemanda, the courante, the minuet, the gavotte, the saraband, the jig and the rigaudon.

Saraband

Listen to the sound recording

Música de manuscrits catalans TOP: 2006-CD 1411

[Recull de danses] (manuscript score) TOP: M 691/2

The Baroque dance, contrived and strongly regulated as it was, was progressively abandoned in front of other forms which were considered more modern, as the scottish or the waltz, the dances preferred during the 19th century, together with the polkas, the gallops, the mazurka and the quadrilles. These new forms featured a much faster rythm, and a less ceremonial.

Vals

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Ramona / Gilbert y Wayne (piano roll) TOP :PIG 95

Ramona : exquisito vals-canción / Mabel Wayne TOP.: 2007-Fol-C 18/4

In Cuba the havanera, the bolero and, more advanced into the century, the danzón, appeared.

Danzón

Listen to the sound recording

Siboney/Ernesto Lecuona (78 rpm record) TOP: RB-PM 5894

Siboney / Ernesto Lecuona (score) TOP: 2019-4-C 8/4

Some dances from Latin America (some of which considered folk dances) have the country dance as a predecessor through the Spanish colonial influence, as it is the case of the pericón (in Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Paraguay).

In change of others, they have the origin in the indigenous culture, as for the bambuco (Colombia), of Inca tradition. Most of them have African influence (derived from the importation of slaves) and will be rhythms that are still valid in the 21st century: the merengue (Dominican Republic), the cumbia (Colombia and Panama), the rumba (Cuba), the samba (Brazil), ...

The folkloric dances have an ethnic component and are considered traditional. In Europe, the most famous are the tarantella (south of Italy), the bourrée (Provence), the sirtaki (Greece), the jota (a major part of Spanish territory), the flamenco (from Andalusia), the zortziko (Basque Country), the sardana (Catalonia), ...

Sardana

Listen to the [sound recording](#)

[*Sospirs del cor*](#) / Josep Serra (78 rpm disc) TOP: PM 1049

[*Sospirs del cor*](#) / Josep Serra (score) TOP: 2005-Fol-C 3/22

The modern popular balls are intimately linked to the development of the music industry. The phonograph and the radio were very useful devices for the diffusion of the foxtrot, the tango or the swing at the beginning of the 20th century, for example. Later on, from the fifties, pop and rock would be added.

Foxtrot

Listen to the [sound recording](#)

[*Poker de besos*](#) / Josep Casas Augé (78 rpm disc) TOP: RB-PM 5624

[*Poker de besos*](#) / Josep Casas Augé (score) TOP: 2005-4-C 32/36

Shimmy

Listen to the [sound recording](#)

[*Shimmy de los besos*](#) / J. Demon (78 rpm disc) TOP: PM 6411

[*Shimmy de los besos*](#) / J. Demon (score) TOP: 2006-4-C 1/19

The music industry knew how to make a profit from the popularization of the balls: the record companies started to publish international hits. At the same time, they were developing musical highlights specialized in scores of this type of music. In Catalonia, for example, we had: Música del Sur, Canciones del Mundo, Ediciones Gramófono-Odeón, Editorial Musical Ibero-Americana, Ediciones musicales RCA española, Ediciones Clipper's, Juan Reynes Publications, José Font Grau Publications, Bernard Hilda Music Editions, Canciones Francis Day, Radio Record Ibérica, Ediciones Algueró.

The emergence of the dance clubs as ballrooms and, a few years later, of the electronic instruments assisted by computers, will give the place to new musical genres: for example, disco music, house, dance... In particular, the balls have a strong influence of the Latin rhythms, such as reggaeton, salsa, etc.

Salsa

Listen to the sound recording

Huelga en la cocina / Senén Palacios (score) TOP: DL 78-4-C 22/10

Cumbias y merengues / Orquesta la Pesada (CD) TOP : 92-CD 269a

Within the documents held at the Biblioteca de Catalunya we find - as just shown in the most cited examples - a wide representation of the ballable music, so much so that it makes to the dancing music of the first half of the 20th century, as the current one. The formats are very varied and range from scores (handwritten and printed) to sound recordings (piano labels, 78 rpm, 33 and 45 rpm records and CDs).

For the Biblioteca de Catalunya, an important source of acquisition of this type of music documents is the legal deposit, which collects printed or recorded music pressed or published in Catalonia, and which complements other forms of incoming, mainly donations.

They also have a personal archives of composers and performers who have dedicated a good part of their professional career to this type of music (Xavier Cugat, Jordi Domingo i Mombiola, Joan Fontàs Casas, Ramon Ollé i Giralt, Lluís Risueño Quilis). In these archives you can find scores and you will also find photographs, programs and posters of the performances.

Dancing music is also represented in many other collections, for example Josep M. Ruera's, where documents about his orchestras and their ensembles can be found. Those were very famous orchestras at the time, and many composers wrote a dancing pieces or devoted the beginning of their musical career to playing ballroom music in cafés in, at the time, most alive street in Barcelona, the Paral·lel. Enric Granados, Eduard Toldrà and Emili Salut performed in their cafés very often, although some of them would use pseudonyms to sign these ball pieces. But that's another story and, as a catalan saying reads, "if we are in the dancing room, we have to dance!"

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