

SARDANA (Catalan)

Record: Angel LP Sardana record

The Sardana of Catalonia (the northeast corner of Spain) is the traditional, yes fiercely nationalistic dance of the Catalans, performed as a symbol of their distinctness from the rest of Franco Spain. The dance in the form it is known today goes back over 100 years; its antecedents are traced back to religious processions performed by choir boys in medieval times and even farther back to the primitive, ancient rituals of the pagans. Its resemblance to Greek dances may stem from the time when Spain was a colony of Greece, or it may be that all the primitive circle dances have a common origin in the needs of ancient man for spiritual expression. The Sardana as now danced has very strict "rules and regulations." The two different steps involved are very precise; the pattern of the dance itself is set by the music, written especially for dancing. Sardana music is still being written in Catalonia, and the Sardana is still a very popular, going concern, despite competition from the fox-trot and jitterbug.

The two steps of the Sardana are the curts (short step) and the llargs (long step); the saltos (hopping step) is an accentuation of the llargs. Sardana music is written with a sequence of curts, which is always repeated, then a sequence of llargs. The longer compositions then have a contre pas (interlude), followed by two more sections of curts, then llargs. Each section of the dance must be completed with an ending; the final ending must move to the left. Endings take different numbers of measures, in order for the dance to end with the end of the musical phrase; Sardana compositions have different numbers of measures both in the curts melody and in the llargs melody. Dancers must become familiar with the music in order to know how many times to do each step, and just what the ending will be.

FORMATION: Standing in circle, holding hands. Generally done in circles of ten to fifteen dancers.

CURTS

(Arms down, but away from sides -- not straight down as in kolos -- holding neighbors' hands.)

Curt step to the left

- One curt step
takes two
measures
1. With weight on right foot, touch left toe forward (count one).
 2. Bring left foot back beside right foot, stepping on left foot (count two).
 3. Step on right foot, slightly to right and back (count one).
 4. Cross left foot in front of right foot and step on it (count two)

Repeat, to the right, beginning with weight on left foot, touching right foot forward, etc. Continue, starting curt step with left, then right.

Sardana (cont.)

Steps throughout are small and precise. Feet are kept as in ballet position, with heels together and toes turned slightly out. Do not turn body in direction of foot movement, but hold body directly facing center. This applies to both curts and llargs.

LLARGS (pronounced yahks)

(Arms held up, elbows bent. Man's palms up, ladies' down.)

1. With weight on right foot, touch left foot forward (count one).
2. Bring left foot back beside right and put weight on it (count two).
- One 3. Touch right foot forward, slightly to the left (count one)
- llarg 4. Lift right foot and step on it across in front of left
- step 5. Touch left foot forward diagonally to the left (count one).
- takes 6. Step back on left foot (slightly to the left side and in
- four 7. Step on right foot to right side and slightly back (count
- meas- 8. Step on left foot across in front of right foot (count two).
- ures

Repeat, to the right beginning with weight on left foot, touching right foot forward, etc. Continue, starting llarg step with left, then right. The step is done with an ever-so-slight bounce, or flexing of the knee (two such slight throbs per count) (they should be felt particularly on steps 1, 3, and 5 above; the flex is done with leg that weight is on, not the pointing foot.)

SALTOS

(Arms are held even higher up.)

Same as llargs, except that the steps are all done with more bounce; stay more on the toes all the way through. Feeling is lighter and airier and higher than plain llargs. Where there was a throb in the llargs there should be an actual bounce in the saltos; the bounce is high enough so that the heel is well off the floor although the toe seldom actually leaves the ground.

ENDINGS

Endings may take two, three, four, or five measures, depending on how many are needed in order to end the dance with the music. For example, if the melody of the curts has 25 measures you do 22 measures of curts, then a three-measure ending; if the melody has 26 measures, you do 24 measures of curts and then a two measure ending. You must have an ending; you cannot just do even numbered measures of curts, even though this will come out at the end of the music.

Sardana (cont.)

TRES (three-measure ending)

This can be done either to the right, or the left, as needed, depending on which foot is free. Here it is given to the right.

1. With weight on left foot, touch right foot forward (count one).
2. Bring right foot back next to left foot and step on right foot (count two).
3. Touch left foot forward (count one).
4. Then lift left foot and step on it across in front of right foot (count two).
5. Bring right foot to left foot and step on it (count one).
6. Hold (count two).

DOS Y TRES UNIDOS (five-measure ending)

1. With weight on left foot, point right foot forward (count one).
2. Then step on right foot to side (count two).
3. Then bring left foot to right (count one),
4. Shift weight to left foot, cross right foot in front of left and step on it (count two).
5. Touch left foot forward (count one).
6. Bring left foot straight back and step on it (count two).
7. Touch right foot forward (count one).
8. Then lift right foot and step on it across in front of left foot (count two).
9. Bring left foot to right foot (count one).
10. Thrust arms forward chest level (count two).

Endings for the curts can be to right or left; you must finish up a complete curts step and then take the proper ending to end with the music. At the very end of the dance, following the llargs, you must end to the left, after a complete llarg step (this becomes a rather difficult mathematical problem sometimes

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Sardana (cont.)

SEQUENCE FOR "SALTIRO DE LA CARDINA" -- a sardana composed by Vincente Bou, one of the most popular sardana composers in Catalonia.

This was the current favorite (the No. 1 on the sardana hit parade) when Dave Rosenberg was in Spain during the summer of 1955. It was always played a couple of times during the Sunday afternoon Sardana sessions in the public squares in Barcelona where old and young come to dance the Sardana. Sardana music is always played by a cobla orchestra, made up of eleven wind instruments.

First comes the introduction, on the flaviol and tambor (small one-hand flute and one-hand drum fastened to the wrist). This is part of every Sardana. After the last drum beat, you begin the first count of the curts.

There are 41 measures of the curts melody. Thus you do 38 measures of curts, and then do the tres ending to the right (this is 19 complete curts steps and a tres ending). (These 41 measures happen to include music A and B, two different melody variations.)

These 41 measures are then repeated.

Begin llargs immediately. Brings hands up. There are 73 measures of the llargs music. You do regular llargs for 58 measures (that is, $16\frac{1}{2}$ llarg steps), then saltos for 10 measures (that is $2\frac{1}{2}$ llarg steps), then do the dos y tres unidos ending.

NOTE: The music always "tells" you when to begin the saltos. There is a definite accentuation of beat, the volume increases--the music does not speed up. In this record the saltos begin on the 59th measure; that is, in the middle of a llarg step.

Other Sardana tunes will have other sequences, that is, different numbers of curts, with perhaps other endings, and then different numbers of llargs. The order is always the same, however: introduction, curts, ending, repeat curts and ending, llargs, saltos, ending (with perhaps a contre pas and all repeated again). It is fun to try to figure out, for yourself, the number of curts and llargs and the endings for the other Sardana tunes on the Angel recording. It may take a lot of figuring, but it will work out -- for it's all done mathematically; music is mathematics.

Although the Sardana is the national expression of the Catalans, it is not a joyous dance. The dancers are always serious--not only because of the significance of the dance to their national feeling--but because they are counting the measures for the endings!

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