

Tarantella di Pescatori

Music: the only commercial record of this tune that I have been able to find is listed as "Tarantella alla Paesana", Standard Phono Co. Record #F6026A. Sad to relate, this is arranged in such a manner that the entire sequence can be danced through only once; the orchestra then wanders off into regions of their own. There is no sheet music of the melody that I have been able to locate, and I don't quite trust my own judgment in transcribing from some of the arrangements that I have picked up on tape from festa groups; they too make up impromptu variations as they play, often undanceable since they serve as rest periods for the dancers, while the musicians sing a verse or two (often naughty!). I am very grateful to the Spallato family who danced this tarantella over and over while I checked step notations. As it has no name, I am designating it as the "Tarantella di Pescatori" (Fishermen's Tarantella) since the Spallatos say it was done by their family and neighbors in Cantazaro (Calabria) where they were engaged in this occupation. As to its age and origin, I know nothing; the grandmother of the family assured me that "it has always been done that way"; and danced through the figures; however I have never ran across this type of "wandering" figure among other Italian gatherings at festas.

Formation: Two couples facing, lady on the right of her partner. Both lady and partner usually carry tambourines — large ones.

(A) Facing partner, but keeping to the left, (not quite right shoulder to right shoulder, but tending that way) walk around each other (clockwise) with 8 walking steps, tambourines held shoulder-high near head and shaken. Bars 1-4

(B) Turning abruptly to the right, repeat the above, counterclockwise, keeping towards the right. Bars 5-8

(C) With 8 walking steps, ladies circle around each other in the center of the set (clockwise) assuming a slightly crouching position and beating on the tambourine held low in front. Bars 9-12

(D) Ladies walk counterclockwise around opposite man with 8 walking steps, tambourines held chest-high and beaten (the man does not turn with lady, but beats his tambourine and follows her with his head). Bars 13-16

(E) Facing each other across the set, the ladies do a peculiar Pas de Basque in this manner: holding tambourine behind with both hands, leap to the left on the left foot; touch the right toe to the floor in front of the left, and with a brushing motion, kick the right foot forward. Leap to the right on the right foot; touch the left toe to the floor in front of the right, and with a brushing motion, kick the left foot forward.

Repeat all. Bars 17-24

(F) Repeat (C). Bars 25-32

(G) Ladies repeat (D), but with own partner. Bars 33-40

(H) Ladies repeat (C). Bars 41-48

(I) All polka with own partners (smooth, turning polka) revolving around other couple (counterclockwise). Bars 49-64

Entire dance is now repeated, with the men performing the figures above described for the ladies and all clockwise and counterclockwise motions reversed from (A) through (H). The polka is then danced as in the first time, but the couples dance all around the floor pairing up at the end with a new couple, with whom they repeat the entire dance.