

El Gato

(Argentina)

This lively creole dance is found throughout Argentina. It is possible that it arrived by the 1820s from Peru via Bolivia or Chile or perhaps both. It was also danced in Uruguay, Paraguay, Chile and Peru, though it is in Argentina that it had the strongest development and diffusion. Originally it was known by different names in various provinces and there are still some places where it is called “Bailecito,” which is now the name of a completely different dance. Suffice it to say that El Gato is what this dance is called in the majority of Argentina. There are several variations, including El Gato Cuyano, Gato Con Relaciones (couplets), Gato Polqueado (polka), Gato Encadenado (enlaced), and Gato Patriótico (danced with two couples and with handkerchiefs).

El Gato uses a rhythm that is “ternario” – a measure of three parts (triplets) in 6/8 time, with the bass or drum percussion in 3/4 time.

Pronunciation: ehl GAH-toh

Translation: The Cat

Music: 6/8 meter

Música de Mi Pueblo, Track 1 (El Alegre)

Formation: Beg pos M and W stand approximately 8 feet apart. Wt on R with L extended and pointing R at an oblique angle twd ptr. Arms raised, hands at eye level, looking over L shldr at ptr.

Steps & Styling: Triplet Step: Each step in this dance is actually three steps that consist of one long step (ct 1) and two shorter steps done almost in place (cts 2, 3), beg with either ft.

Zarandeo. W does Triplet Steps tracing a pattern on the floor while swishing her skirt. W chooses Zarandeo she wants to do. Only one is described below.

Zarandeo de Cuatro. W does Waltzing Steps tracing a diamond or rhombus while moving her skirt counter-body. Each Cuatro takes four Waltzing Steps, so the tracing of the diamond is done twice.

Zapateo. This is a stamping pattern. M chooses which Zapateo to perform. There is no set choreographic choice dictated. See the end of this section for instructions on Zapateos.

Meas 6/8 meter

Pattern

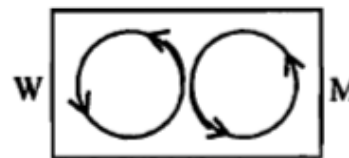
5 INTRODUCTION. Clapping while looking at ptr.

I. VUELTA ENTERA (FULL TURN).

1-4 Using eight Triplet Steps, each dances out to his/her R to dance in a large CCW circle. At the half-way point, each will be in the other’s starting pos, and at the end each will be back at the orig pos.

II. GIRO (SMALL TURN).

1-2 Using four Triplet Steps, each dances out to the R, to dance in a small individual CCW circle and back to orig pos. At the end of the second Triplet Steps, when R shldr are adjacent, each looks over R shoulder to smile at the other, before turning away and finishing the circle.



Giro

- III. ZAPATEO Y ZARANDEO (TAPPING AND SKIRT WORK).
 1-4 M performs a Zapateo while the woman performs a Zarandeo de Cuatro twice. See the end of this section for instructions on Zapateos.
- IV. MEDIA VUELTA (BIG HALF-TURN).
 1-2 M and W exchange places in a CCW arc, using four Triple Steps.
- V. ZAPATEO Y ZARANDEO (TAPPING AND SKIRT WORK).
 1-4 Repeat Fig III.
- V. GIRO FINAL (FINAL TURN).
 1-2 Using Three Triplet Steps, each dances in a small individual CCW circle. On the last three cts of the second meas, end close enough to face each other with L hand at the waist and R hand on the ptr's L shldr.
 M takes W's R hand in his and turns her L. Each then backs up into the other's orig pos, and the dance repeats.

Presented by Pampa Cortés

