

BONGO

Region: Trinidad

Influence: African

Record: Traditional Rhythms for Caribbean Dances; LP IB 0001
Side 2, Band 3

Character: This is a men's dance, although women dance it too.
Lively and strong. This is developed from the Bongo
dance which is done at wakes.

Formation: 2 circles - 1 inner, 1 outer - both start from centre.

Basic Bongo - on chorus:

Low jump with lower leg extending forward; Jump onto two feet
left placed behind right, (ct 1), extend Right in front and
by using Left shin to push out lower Right leg (somewhat like
cabriole beat) land in place - on Left leg, repeat beginning
Right.

Step 1: A run, in which the body falls sharply forward and the legs
are placed across and behind as they are lifted.

Step 2: Slow Jig: The same principle as the fast jig, done to 4 counts.
The knee is lifted higher and the arms, which are loose, swing
from the shoulders in a characteristic figure of 8 patterns

Step 3: Run on spot followed by high knee lift: Run on spot twice,
(cts 1 - 2). Knee lift twice, (cts 3 and 4). Arms held high,
with bent elbows on knee lift.

Step 4: Jump with circular leg swing: Stand on both feet, jump onto
two feet with knees bent, (ct 1); with R elbow bent pointing
forwards and L arm extended to side. Swing R leg up and around
(ct 2), as hop is made with L leg. Repeat, swinging L leg
with L elbow bent and R arm extended. Body leans away from the
swinging leg.

Step 5: Knee bending: Arms extended sideways, both knees bend sharply
to R and up, L and up.

Step 6: Jump and squat with leg extension, like Russian Gopak step.

Step 7: Heel shuffle: Arms sideways, step on R heel, close L foot up
to R. Do 4 times; repeat on L.

Step 8: Fast Jig: This is a skip done by lifting the R knee and
placing the R foot behind L on the step and not proceeding
forward as the hop is taken. Repeat on L (cts 1 & 2 &). As
the hop is made on the L foot, the landing is not made on the
same spot but slightly to the left of the take-off, and vice-
versa with the R. At the same time, there is a lift and twist
of the R shoulder. This movement is characteristic of the slow
as well as the fast jig.

... continued on other side ...

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Sequence of Dance:

There are two songs - "Girl in the Coffee" and "Tonight is the Bongo Night". The first is danced to eights and fours. The second is danced to fours and twos. In the first, there are 4 basic Bongo steps in the chorus; and in the second there are 2 basic Bongo steps. The whole music is divided in the following way:

Steps 1 - 8 - Group A

Steps 9 - 16 - Group B

Steps 17 - 20 - Group A & B

After this, Group A & B stand on the outer circle.

Second song is danced by groups emerging from outer circle.

There are 7 such groups which must be formed. A group can dance twice, and persons can dance twice as the dance gets more exciting.

The whole dance finishes with two verses and chorus of "Tonight is the Bongo Night", doing the basic Bongo step in free position. Finish with arms up in the air on last drum roll.

Presented at Ontario Folk Dance Camp 1976 by Ivy Baxter.