

Mallorquin Bolero

(Mallorca, Balearic Islands, Spain)

Background: On the Island of Mallorca the Bolero is danced as a freestyle dance in circles, long double lines (Contra formation), and as couples. Formations are danced simultaneously depending on the participating dancers. Each of the formations is lead by a leader. Over a vast array of ages leaders are women or men. People who are easy to follow are preferred and usually gain large circles or lines.

The major dances interacting with the Bolero are Jotas, Fandangos, and a dance originating on the Island, Mateixa. Live music is always found at dances. The younger generation is active in creating music for dancing and a resurgence of the use of xeremiers (bagpipes), pipe and tabor, drums, and other traditional instruments.

Dances are always accompanied with live music. There is a preponderance of bands on the Island; since, most villages support at least one folk music organization. The groups are sponsored by trading or paid for dances and fiesta holiday celebrations. Though a big number of independent and popular musicians can be found.

The musicians are very good at announcing the next dance to be played. The band will start their set with a tune to adjust amplified levels, and a dance, music set is always one hour.

Castanets are used by some dancers to accompany their dancing. (See description under castanets for rhythmic pattern.)

Music: Almost any Mallorquin Bolero tune can be used. For beginners I suggest shorter compositions. Some of the music titles include “Bolero Mallorqui,” “Bolero de Palma,” “Bolero de Ciutat,” to mention only a few.

Castanets: Left hand beat (ct 1), Right hand beat (ct 2, &, a), Both hand close. The castanets are of the smaller variety made from wood and can be played hanging from the thumb or the middle finger.

Formations: Circles, two double lines as in a Contra dance (male or female on both sides), individual couple.

Arms: For the most part the arms are held at shoulder level. There are some occasions where the arms are moving, but this is usually from dances originating extraneous to the Island.

Basic Step: Step L (cts 1-2); Step R (cts 3-4); Step L (cts 5); Step R (cts 6) [Slow, Slow, quick, quick]. In a circle and double line formation all are dancing as written above. As a couple opposite (mirror image) feet are used.

Pattern: The leader is free to lead different directions using the basic step. Examples are moving side to side, around the circle, in and out, and turning. Leader is able to do other steps as needed. Set patterns are not necessary for the dance to proceed. A leader will be able to recognize the music and change steps with the changes of the singing and instrumental sections of the music.