

## **BALLO SARDO or BALLO TONDO**

(Bahl-lo Sahr-do)      (Bahl-lo to, - do)

### Italy – Island of Sardinia

Sardinia is the only region of Italy that still has a line dance similar to the ones of the Balkan countries and the Near East. It is called "Ballo Sardo", Sardinian dance or "Ballo Tondo", round dance. We know it was danced in pre-Christian times because Homer, the Greek poet, mentions it and has Ulysses marvel at the agility of the dancers of the island.

It is often danced by couples standing side by side in open circle formation, but also in an open circle or spiral with no partners. In old times a man and a woman who were not married were not allowed to hold or touch hands. In some parts of the island it is danced rather sedately often to the singing of three or more people standing in the middle of the circle. In other parts of Sardinia it is very lively and danced to the music of the "Launeddas", the goatskin bag-pipe or, more recently, the accordion; and in the absence of all of these to the ringing of church bells.

The "Launeddas" is a primitive instrument, made of canes of varying lengths, separate one from the other, which the player interchanges depending on the sound desired. Because some of the pipes are quite long, when there is much excitement, the musicians stand in a corner facing away from the dancers in order to avoid the possibility of accidents.

There is no bouncing or springing in the Ballo Sardo, it is always done close to the ground, almost giving the effect of skating; however when the music becomes lively, the men will kick higher and add a little fancy footwork. The women continue to dance smoothly in a very dignified manner as becomes their regal looking costumes.

A few notes of the music of his favorite dance is all a Sardinian needs to get up and dance.

The figures follow each other according to the music and to the whim of the leading couple. However, from observing the Sardinian people dance, a pattern similar to the one described below seemed to emerge.

Record:      Folkraft No. 1407 B      Presented by Vyts Beliajus, Idyllwild, 1962

Formation:      Open circle composed of couples or individuals facing center. A couple may be composed of a man and a woman, 2 women, or 2 men. Leading couple is at the left.

Position:      Partners stand side by side, very erect and serious, shoulder touching shoulder, arms straight down holding nearest hand. Occasionally all hold hands in the open circle, but more often just partners hold hands.

Opening Figure: Dancers move rhythmically in place to the music for 12 counts (4 to a measure). The movement comes from a springing motion in the legs. At the 9th count, the leading couple raises the arm and hand holding partner straight forward; all others do the same; then on the 11th count all arms are lowered rapidly to indicate the beginning of the dance.

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MUSIC

PATTERN

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FIGURE 1. STEP POINT, STEP POINT

A and Repeat Throughout the dance the group inches gradually to the left, clockwise.  
Step on foot (count 1), point with L foot in front of R (count 2), step on L foot (count 3), point with R in front of L (count 4),  
Repeat 5 more times (meas. 2 to 6, counting 24).

FIGURE 2. STEP POINT, STEP TOGETHER STEP

B Step on R foot (count 1), point with L in front of R (2), then moving to the left with L foot, step-together-step (count 3 & 4), feet hardly leaving the ground. Repeat 5 more times (meas. 7 to 18, counting 24). Music accelerates.

FIGURE 3. TO CENTER AND BACK

C and Repeat All moving toward the center of the circle and back.. Walk forward on R foot (count 1), L (2), R (3), point with L in front of R (4); step to the left on L foot (5), swing R foot across the L (6); back, away from center with R foot (7), L (8), R (9), point with L foot in front of R (10), step on L (11), swing R foot to the left (12), (measures 13 to 18 & Repeat). Repeat this figure 3 more times.

Note: each time this figure is started again, the R foot which has just swung toward the left, makes a little circular motion in the air while the shoulders and upper part of the body help by moving forward momentarily.

FIGURE 4. STEP POINT, STEP TOGETHER STEP

D same as B Same as Figure 2 except usually faster. When the music accelerates, the men enliven their dancing by lifting their leg higher and tilting foot as in sketch, instead of just pointing or swinging leg. Girls continue to dance close to the ground, smoothly.

REPEAT AS MANY TIMES AS DESIRED.

To join the circle or change position, couples often take several small slides in one direction or another in time with the music.

