

BAO (Philippine)

Record: Imperial is best available, although it does not have exact timing.

Formation: Couples facing each other; in the Philippines it is usually done in sets of three couples, girls on one side, boys on the other. Each dancer holds two half-coconut shells, one in each hand, and strikes the backs together to produce sounds in different rhythms. "Ba-o" means coconut shell and is used for many things besides a musical instrument, such as fuel, water dippers, food containers, and savings banks!

Entrance:

Boys in one line, girls in the other, waltz into position, facing partner. Click own shells together in front and back alternately, on first beat of measure. (Some records do not have this entrance music.)

Figure 1. Waltz

Waltz forward and back, ^{8 meas} four times, clicking own shells in front and back alternately on the first beat of each measure. Waltz sideward to the right and left alternately, four times. Click shells to right and left side. Repeat all.

Figure 2. Moving to the side.

Take three steps sideward (right, left, right), point left foot in front (for one measure). Hold shells overhead and click them together once as you point left foot. Repeat moving to the left, pointing the right foot. Repeat all, three more times.

Figure 3. Hopping step

Take two steps forward, right, left. Hop twice on left foot as you raise the right foot and kick it inward and then outward. With three steps turn to the right in place, right, left, right. Hop twice on right foot, kicking left foot in and out, then turn left in place with three steps. Hopping on left foot, kick right in and out. Then take two steps back to place, right, left, close right foot to left, and pause. During the hopping step, click shells together in rhythm with the footwork -- one, two, one, two, three. Do not click on the steps forward and backwards. Hit shells together in front of you.

Both partners do step together first; then boy dances while girl keeps rhythm with shells; then the girl dances while the boy strikes the shells.

Bao (cont.)

Figure 4. Brushing step

Take three steps forward to meet partner at center, right, left, right; brush left foot forward, taking one measure. Hands on waists on the waltz forward, strike right shell against partner's right shell on first beat of second measure. Take three steps backward to place, brush right foot forward, click own shells together overhead. Repeat all. (Some records have enough music to do this step four times in all.)

Figure 5. Patticake.

Take three steps forward to center to meet partner, then do the following shell rhythms. Pause on count one, then click own shells together twice. Strike right shell with right of partner, then own shells together twice. Strike left shell of partner, own shells together twice. Strike both shells with partner's, own shells together twice. Strike right shells, then own shells twice. Strike left shells, then own shells twice. Partners then change places by taking three steps forward and turning, passing right shoulders. Repeat all, finishing at proper place.

Figure 6. Changing places.

Take two step hops forward, right, left. Click own shells together in front on the third beat of each measure. Then take two waltz steps forward to partner's place, passing by right shoulders. Click own shells in front on last two beats of each measure. Face right and take three slide steps sideward to proper places, passing in front of each other. Click own shells overhead at the third beat of each measure. Step to right sideward and point left foot in front, arms stretched out on either side, right arm high; bend the body to the left and look at partner (this pose is held for two measures). Repeat all, starting with the left foot, passing by left shoulders, and facing left for the slide steps.

Figure 7. Circle

In sets of three pairs, dancers take eight waltz steps in a circle, clockwise, starting with the right foot. Click shells in front and back of you, alternately, on beat one of each measure. Turn to the right and repeat, moving in a circle counterclockwise back to place. Click shells to right and left side, alternately, on first beat.

Figure 8. Diamond pattern

Boy kneels on right knee in place and clicks own shells together, to the right and left side alternately. Girls dance in a diamond shaped pattern around the boy. Take two waltz steps obliquely forward to each corner of diamond and take two waltz steps to turn to the right at that spot. (Some records have enough music for the boy to also dance around the girl as she clicks the coconut shells.)

Bao (cont.)

Exit:

Boys in one line, girls in another, do a two-step off. Click shells three times to each measure, sideward right and left alternately.

The dance is presented here as described by Francisca Royes Tolentino in her authoritative book, Philippine National Dances. This is the way the dance is done by members of the Philippine Embassy in Washington, D.C.

The style of the dance, throughout, is graceful and delicate. Arm movements are executed in a relaxed and flowing manner; steps are small and elegant.

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