

La Cachucha

(United States)

La Cachucha (lah kah-CHOO-chah) was danced in the early 1800s in Alta California as a solo or a couple dance - not as a general social dance. It was an exhibition dance performed by trained dancers at a baile or some other special occasion. Castanets were usually used for the dance but some early Californians remembered dancers waving a little cap (cachucha) above the head instead of playing castanets.

Lucile K. Czarnowski's original research on this dance is recorded in her book Dances of Early California Days. Information about other patterns and formations not used in the following routine can be found in her book. Subsequently, Virgil Morton did additional research using the records of various historical societies and interviews with several old-time families of Spanish ancestry. The result was the version of the dance described here. Madelynne Greene taught it at the 1953 College of the Pacific Folk Dance Camp.

RECORDS: Folkraft F-1047 (78 rpm) "Spanish Circle Waltz";
Folkraft 1047 x 45 "Spanish Dance" 3/8 meter

SCORE: Lucile Czarnowski, Dances of Early California Days, Pacific Books, Palo Alto, CA, 1950.

FORMATION: Cpls in a line, one behind the other, W to R of ptr, all facing head of hall. When much room is available, each cpl may dance by itself, still facing the head of the hall.

STEPS and STYLING:

Spanish Draw Step (L): With L arm curved high overhead and R arm curved in front of the body about chest level, step sdwd L on L ft (ct 1); with R toe turned out, draw R heel twd L instep (ct 2); put wt onto R (ct 3). Step repeats exactly. Avoid swinging or twisting the hips.

Spanish Draw Step (R): Same as Spanish Draw Step (L) but with opp ftwk, arm pos and direction.

Pas de Bourrée Change (L): With L arm curved high overhead and R arm curved in front of body, step sdwd L on L ft (ct 1); step on R in front (or in back) of L ft (ct 2); step on L across in front of R (ct 3). On cts 2,3 reverse the arm pos (R arm high and L curved in front).

Pas de Bourrée Change (R): Same as Pas de Bourrée Change (L) but with opp ftwk, arm pos and direction.

Step-Swing: Step fwd on designated ft (ct 1); swing free ft diag fwd in front of supporting leg, raising and lowering heel of supporting ft (cts 2,3). Step alternates.

Waltz: May be danced in any direction or while turning. Step on R (ct 1); step on L (ct 2); step on R beside or near L (ct 3). Step alternates.

Throughout dance maintain eye contact with ptr.

Except of Fig IV, M and W use opp ftwk.

MUSIC 3/8

PATTERN

Measures

4 meas INTRODUCTION No action.

I. SPANISH DRAW STEPS AND PAS DE BOURRÉE CHANGE

1-3 Move diag fwd away from ptr (M to L, W to R). Beg with outside ft (ML, WR) dance 3 Spanish Draw steps (move sdwd on the diag).

4 Beg ML, WR dance 1 Pas de Bourrée Change reversing arm pos.

5-8 Beg with inside ft (MR, WL), repeat meas 1-4 moving sdwd on the diag back to ptr and "home" place.

9-16 Repeat meas 1-8.

II. THREE STEPS AND POINT

If not playing castanets, W hold sides of skirt in a fan-shaped pos; M hold hands loosely behind back about waist level. If playing castanets, hands may be held either in front or in back at waist level, elbows curved.

- 1 Move fwd side-by side with ptr twd head of hall. Beg with outside ft (ML,WR) walk fwd 3 steps (1 to a ct).
- 2 Keeping wt on fwd ft (ML, WR) make 1/2 turn twd ptr to face "home" and point free ft in that direction (ct 1); hold (cts 2,3).
- 3 Shifting wt onto pointing ft, make 1/2 turn twd ptr to face head of hall and point free ft (ML,WR) fwd (ct 1); hold (cts 2,3).
- 4 Shifting wt onto pointing ft (ML, WR) repeat meas 2.
- 5-8 Repeat meas 1-4 with opp ftwk and direction.
- 9-16 Repeat meas 1-8.

Note: Each turn is a half turn, always made twd ptr. Free ft points either twd head of hall or twd "home" place. The 3 fwd stepd always begin with the outside ft.

III. STEP-SWING AND SPANISH DRAW STEPS

- 1-2 Face fwd on the same diag as in Fig 1. Beg ML, WR dance 2 Step-Swings. Both arms are curved overhead.
- 3-4 Turning 1/4 (M CW, W CCW) repeat Fig II, meas 1-2. Do not transfer wt on meas 4, ct 3 so as to end with MR, WL ft free.
- 5-8 Repeat meas 1-4 with opp ftwk and direction, returning to "home" place.
- 9-16 Repeat meas 1-8. End facing ptr one or two ft apart.

IV. WALTZ IN A CIRCLE

- 1-8 With arms curved overhead and both beg R ft, circle CCW around ptr with 8 Waltz steps. On every 2 Waltz steps make one individual CW turn. Keep the circle rounded. On meas 8, ct 3 end facing ptr with L ft free.
- 9-16 Beg L ft circle CW around ptr with 8 Waltz steps while turning CCW individually. End side-by-side with ptr ready to repeat dance.
Repeat dance from the beginning.

CASTANET RHYTHMS

BASIC PATTERN: Both (ct 1); Left (ct 2); Roll (ct 3).

Introduction No castanets

Figure I Meas 1-15 Basic Pattern
16 Both (ct 1); hold (cts 2,3).

Figure II Meas 1 Basic Pattern
2 Both (ct 1); hold (cts 2,3).
3-4 Repeat meas 2 twice.
5-16 Repeat meas 1-4 three times.

Figure III Meas 1-16 Basic Pattern

Figure IV Meas 1-16 Basic Pattern