

THE SARDANA

INFORMATIONS

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The Sardana is a symbol of union, fraternity, affirmation of belonging to a culture, it is also a way of life, a philosophy. Everyone can dance, whatever your age. This circle dance is a complicated one where the steps are meticulously counted. Groups of friends or entire villages come to the squares, not only to take part in this folklore dance, but to **feel a certain fraternity, a unity.**

History

First we hear a flabiol (flute) begin with quite an irregular melody, then the tambori (small hand drum) sets the tempo. Alternated men and women form a circle and take each other by the hand. Most of the time the dancers are wearing traditional “vigatanes” shoes, and they move to the rhythm of the “cobla” (accompanying orchestra). This traditional orchestra is made up of eleven musicians: a string instrument, the double bass, and ten wind instruments: a flabiol, two tenors, two Catalan shawms, two trumpets, a trombone and two fiscorns. The musician playing the flabiol also has a small tambori, to accompany the double bass in keeping the rhythm.

The Sardana dance that can still be seen in Catalan countries today originated in Greece. It is a one-of-a-kind dance in the world because it uses a rather original mathematical rhythm. Musicians and dancers, both men and women, united together by holding hands, perform to a rhythm of exactly 55 points in one minute.

In the 19th century, composer Pep Ventura (1818-1875) replaced the short Sardana by the long Sardana. He is the prolific author of 500 Sardanas, of which only the “Toc d’Oracio”, Per tu ploro” and “Cant dels ocells” are still played today. Max Havart is one of the worthy successors of this Sardana composer. Antoni Agramunt, Enric Morera, Josep Serra, Juli Garreta, and many more followed.

Until the Second World War, the Sardana was not really performed anymore in the Pyrénées-Orientales, only in Prats-de-Mollo and Le Perthus. Then, upon the initiative of a great number of Catalan citizens from the south who had arrived from the Retirada, the dance flourished in the villages and then spread to the whole department. It really began to develop throughout the region when the Fédération Sardaniste du Roussillon was created in 1979, upon the initiative of the late Roger Raynal. It was grouped into four “foments” (groups). Today, there are 68 “foments” in Toulouse, Marseille, Montpellier, Lille and Tarbes. Every year, around February, a guide is published with an events’ calendar detailing all the events related to this dance.

How is it performed ?

Each Sardana includes two very distinct pieces of music. The one for short steps (eight measures), that can be compared to the chorus of a song, and the one for long steps (sixteen measures), which acts as the verse. The ancient version of a Sardana began with the short steps (twice), the long steps (twice), the short steps (twice) and then the long steps (four times).

In a standard performance, the musicians play six sardanas. Taking into account their break (essential), this represents two hours of music.

“La Santa Espina” composed by Enric Morera is often considered the most iconic. The most prestigious of the Coblas is currently “La Principal de La Bisbal”. The Sardana was a source of inspiration for many artists. Picasso created his famous “Sardana of Peace” in 1953 in Céret, where an Aplec (meeting) big festival / competition is organised every year on the theme of the Sardana.

In 2019, [Perpignan](#) was given the title of “Capital of the Sardana”, created in 2013 to take over the former title of “Ciutat Pubilla de la Sardana”, introduced in 1960 by the Obra del Ballet Popular (Barcelona). The goal of this title is to promote and nurture the social prestige associated with the Sardana, while developing the dance within the cultural sector of the towns and villages in northern and southern Catalonia, as well as in Andorra.

This title is awarded to a different town each year and it means that throughout that year, the town will organise various activities and fun, cultural events to promote the Sardana.

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