

**Forlana** (It., *furlana*; Fr., *forlane*, *furlane*). A lively couple dance in compound duple meter, the **forlana** derives its name from Friuli, the region of its origin, which lies to the northeast of Venice. A courtship dance in which the man and woman repeatedly approach and flee each other, the **forlana** has existed as a folk dance, in the ballroom, and on the stage. Its strong associations with Venice have led to its use in theatrical evocations of that city and its famous masquerades during Carnival season. The most concrete choreographic descriptions of the **forlana** come from early eighteenth-century France, where the **forlana** flourished as both a theatrical and a ballroom dance for a number of years.

### Italy

The early history of the forlana is obscure. It may have derived from Slavic dances, as Friuli was subject to a substantial amount of immigration from the Slavic parts of Europe. The dance was already in existence in the late sixteenth century, for there are two duple-meter dances called *ballo furlano* in Pierre Phalèse's collection of dances *Chorearum molliorum collectanea* of 1583. In 1609, Jean-Baptiste Duval, secretary of the French ambassador to Venice, reports watching an evening of galliards, passamezzos, and dances "à la *furlane*" (Écorcheville, 1914). Duval did not specify what characterized the Friulian style of dancing, but in 1683 a French visitor to Venice described the Carnival festivities there for *Le Mercure galant*, saying, "The prettiest of [the Venetians'] dances is the *furlane*. It is done by two or four people, with an equal number of men and women, who turn in a circle while jumping and agitating their feet with marvelous speed and lightness. They then approach each other, still turning in the same way, and sometimes take each others' arms which they interlace and pass above their heads." To James, Earl of Perth, who visited Venice in 1695, the forlana seemed "somewhat like the way our Highlanders dance, but the women do it much more prettily than the men." These and others accounts by visitors reveal that the forlana was done both as part of street festivals and in ballrooms, sometimes by aristocrats dressed as "country people."

Both the circling figure and the vigor of the dance are attested to by Casanova, who described in his memoirs a forlana that he and a partner performed in Constantinople in 1744. After dancing six forlanas in a row, "I was burning hot and out of breath, for there is no national dance more violent." His partner, however, was unruffled, and "during the turning part of the dance, which is the most difficult part, she seemed to float." In 1762 Giovanni Gallini remarked that

the favorite dance of the Venetians, is what they call the Furlana, which is performed by two persons dancing a-round with the greatest rapidity. Those who have a good ear, keep time with the crossing their feet behind; and some add a motion of their hands, as if they were rowing or tugging at an oar.

In the nineteenth century, the forlana appears to have been danced very little, although in 1894 Gaspare Ungarelli classified it as among those dances still in use. It was danced occasionally on the operatic stage, however, when a bit of Venetian local color was desired, as, for example, the forlana danced by masqueraders at the end of act 1 of Amilcare Ponchielli's *La Gioconda* (1876). In 1914 a ballroom version of the forlana bearing little resemblance to the traditional dance was created by Enrico Pichetti in response to the concern of Pope Pius X over the increasing popularity of the tango. The sudden thrust of the forlana into the spotlight sparked a renewed interest in the dance. Despite the support of the pope, the success of the ballroom forlana was short-lived. The forlana has, however, enjoyed a modest revival as a folk dance in twentieth-century Italy.

### France

At the dawn of the eighteenth century, the French fascination with the lavish Venetian Carnival season

found expression in a series of ballets and *opérballets* with Venetian themes performed at the Paris Opera, among them André Campra's *Carnaval de Venise* (1699), Michel de La Barre's *La Vénitienne* (1705), and Campra's *Les Fêtes Vénitienes* (1710). The forlana, along with its close relatives the *véniennne* and the *saltarello*, figured prominently among the dances used to evoke the ambience of Venice, particularly the masked balls. Of these three dance types, fourteen French choreographies survive in Feuillet notation, all but one of them dances for a single couple. Although drawing their inspiration from Venice, these dances are clearly French in technique, step vocabulary, and layout of the figures. Some of the choreographies are transcriptions of the forlanas as they were danced by the professional dancers of the Opera; others made use of the tunes of the well-known stage forlanas but were choreographed for inclusion in the various collections of ballroom dances that appeared starting in 1700. All the choreographed forlanas are in 6/4 time and have one step-unit per bar. Most of the tunes are built on repeated two-bar phrases, often with dotted figures in the first measure of the pair and a rhythm in the second. (See Example 1.)

The structure of the music is not binary, as in most French dance music of the period, but a rounded form in which the eight measures of the first section are repeated at the end of the dance following a middle section or sections. By making use of such devices as step repetitions, pairing of steps, and changes in direction, the choreographies generally adhere to the phrase structure of the music without slavishly imitating every musical repeat.

The forlana reached the height of its popularity in France during the first quarter of the eighteenth century. Along with many other French dances, it was also in use on the other side of the channel, as the three English forlana choreographies show. That the forlana also reached the German-speaking countries can be seen in various musical forlana settings, including one by Johann Sebastian Bach, and by the inclusion of a forlana for a gondolier in Gregorio Lambranzi's series of theatrical dance pictures. A similar nautical character is ascribed to a forlana from Jean-Philippe Rameau's ballet *Les Indes Galantes* (dance added after 1743), which is subtitled "Sailors' Dance." When Jean Jacques Rousseau stated in his *Dictionnaire de musique* in 1768 that the forlana was a dance popular in Venice particularly among the gondoliers (a remark since repeated by numerous lexicographers), he was perhaps reporting on practices more in use among the gondoliers on the stages of Europe than on the canals of Venice.

Although the forlana declined in popularity as a dance after 1725 (Rameau wrote only two in all of his stage works), some of the forlana tunes were reused as the melodies for *contredanses*.

See also **Ballet Technique, History of**, article on **French Court Dance**.

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