

Sarabande. The *sarabande* (Sp., *zarabanda*; Eng., *saraband*) was a dance in triple meter that was popular from the sixteenth to the second half of the eighteenth century. The term also refers to a Spanish poetic form associated with early versions of the dance and to an instrumental dance piece that was one of the standard movements of the Baroque suite. The saraband has both fast and slow versions.

The name has been variously explained as coming from the Arabic *ser-band* (“turban”) or Persian *sar-band* (the wreath that holds a woman's headdress in place), from the word *zaranda* (from *zanandar*, meaning “to move nimbly”), or from the name of a Spanish dancer and actress who first performed the dance. Musicologist Daniel Devoto believes that the dance and its poetry are Andalusian in origin; Robert Stevenson asserts that the saraband originated in Latin America.

The earliest literary references to the *zarabanda* come from the New World. The *zarabanda* is first mentioned in 1539, in a poem by Fernando Guzmán Mexía in a manuscript from Panama. In 1569 a *carauanda a lo divino*, a sacred processional, was danced in Pátzcuaro (Michoacán, Mexico) on the feast of Corpus Christi. Ten years later the form is mentioned in Diego Durán's *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España*.

The first Spanish mention is a strongly worded prohibition, issued in Madrid in August 1583, of all singing, reciting, and dancing of *zarabandas* either in private residences or in the streets. Citizens who disobeyed the official decree were liable to a fine and, if they were men, to six years of servitude on a galley, or, if they were women, to exile.

The roots of the dance reach back into the days of Roman colonization and into folk traditions of Catalonia. Women were involved in the performances from the beginning, and the use of traditionally feminine instruments such as castanets and the *tambour de basque* is documented early. The sexual explicitness of early group sarabandes, which may have had ritual origins, appears to have been maintained through the sixteenth century. It gave the dance a reputation as licentious and even obscene: Juan de Mariana (1536–1624) calls it “a national disgrace” and describes the sarabande as “a dance and song so lascivious in its words, so ugly in its movements, that it is enough to inflame even very honest

people” (*Tratado contra los juegos publicos*, first published under the title *De spectaculis*, Cologne, 1607).

The Swiss physician Thomas Platter saw a saraband in Barcelona in 1599 performed by “fifty men and women, playing castagnettes, moving mostly backwards with ridiculous contortions of the body, the hands, the feet.” The chorus of irate voices of moralists and authorities condemning the saraband as “a creation of the devil” (Devoto, 1960) serves, however, as testimony to the popularity of the dance. It even gave its name to a fashionable hairstyle in the early seventeenth century.

Spanish *zarabanda* texts have a fairly strictly maintained poetic form consisting of six rhyming verses, the last two of which constitute a refrain. All known verse saraband date from the second half of the sixteenth and the early years of the seventeenth century.

Mentioned repeatedly in Spanish literature of the Golden Age, the dance in its early form had a number of choreographic shapes. It is documented as a processional through the streets at sacred and secular festivals in Seville in 1593 and in Barcelona in 1599. It was also performed in enclosed spaces, city squares, dance halls, and ballrooms as a circle dance by women alone or by men and women together. It also occurred as a couple dance or as a solo. It could be either lively and licentious or grave and mannered.

From Spain, the *zarabanda* traveled to France and became part of the *ballet de cour* (as in the “Sarabande des Espagnols” in *La Douairière de Billebahaut*, 1625). Around 1635 the lovesick Cardinal Richelieu reportedly (Gédéon Tallemant des Réaux, *Historiettes*, written c.1657–1659) danced a *sarabande* with castanets and silver bells at the knees for his lady.

In England the dance is mentioned as early as 1616 in Ben Jonson's play *The Devil Is an Ass*. John Playford includes two sarabands in the first edition of his *English Dancing Master* (1651), but both are traditional English longways, one for six, the other for “as many as will,” and show no trace of Spanish origins.

Most surviving examples of early saraband music occur in Italian tablatures for the Spanish guitar. Michael Praetorius gives music for two types of sarabands in his *Terpsichore* (1612), “La Sarabande” in even four-measure phrases without upbeat, and “Courrant Sarabande” with upbeat. As late as 1676 Thomas Mace still describes the saraband as a fast dance: “Sarabands, are of the Shortest Triple-Time; but are more Toyish, and Light, than Corantoes; and Commonly of Two Strains” (*Musick's Monument*). The repeated strains and the predominant harmonic pattern are common to all early sarabands.

Meanwhile, in France as well as in England, the famous rhythm patterns of the later *sarabandes* were beginning to emerge. By 1670, the slow triple meter was favored everywhere, giving rise to the notion of the *sarabande* as slow and stately, but faster types remained common.

When the guitar *zarabanda* was joined with other dances, the suite was born (earliest examples in Angelo Michele Bartolotti's book of guitar music *Libro primo di chitarra spagnola*, Florence, 1640). Nearly all Baroque composers wrote suites for various instruments, including keyboard and instrumental ensembles. The *sarabande* reached its highest stage of artistic idealization in the works of Johann Sebastian Bach. In music after the end of the eighteenth century, the *sarabande* occurs mainly as a nostalgic look backward in compositions by Daniel Auber, Claude Debussy, Camille Saint-Saëns, and others (Hudson, 1980b).

As a dance, the Baroque *sarabande* was a favorite ingredient of French operas and ballets (sometimes called *entrée espagnole*, as in, for instance, the third *entrée* of *Le Ballet des Nations*, 1670) and became one of the most popular ballroom dances at the court of Louis XIV. Less "solemn and grave" than the *courante*, *sarabandes* for the ballroom nevertheless vary in speed from "very slow" and "slow" to a quicker, lighter pace equivalent to Jean-Philippe Rameau's "gracieusement" and Michel-Richard de Lalande's "légèrement." The steps, usually one stepunit per measure, go across the accentuated second beat and the hemiola at the end of each couplet, resulting in an intricate relationship of music and dance.

Writers of the period compare the *sarabande* to a slow *menuet*. Johann Mattheson speaks of the *grandezza*, the "haughty condition" of the *sarabande* for dancing.

In keeping with the Spanish associations of the dance, theatrical *sarabandes* in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries seem always to have been danced with castanets. In 1700 Raoul-Auger Feuillet gives a castanet score for the "Folies d'Espagne," which Gottfried Taubert calls "the most famous of all *sarabande* melodies." This practice can probably be applied to other fully notated *sarabande* choreographies. Jean-Jacques Rousseau refers in his *Dictionnaire de musique* (1777) to the use of castanets in *sarabandes*. By then, it appears, the *sarabande* was on the wane; Rousseau also refers to the dance as a thing of the past.

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