SAHATSA

Sources : Videos of team, (1) is their promotional video borrowed from Eddie Upton and copied locally, (2) compilation video from JKL Vidoe Film Services from 1991 Sidmouth Festival.

SAHATSA is a mixed dance troupe that practice in a dance studio and are drawn from the villages of AZKOITIA and AZPEITIA in the UROLA VALLEY in the GIPUZKOA (Guipúzcoa) province, whose capital is Donostia (San Sebastián), of the Euzkadi (Euskasi), as the Basque Nationalists, Eskualdunak, would like to call an independent country of the SPANISH BASQUE PROVINCES (These are the Basque spellings, the common ones are in brackets). They specialise in local dances.

The 7 Basque provinces consist of 4 on the Spanish side, País Vasco, (Guipuzcoa, Vizcaya, Alava and Navarre) and 3 on the French side, Pays Basque, (Labourd, Basse-Navarre and Soule), of the Pyrenees. At one time (1160-) they were independent as the Kingdom of Navarre. The Basque inheritance was enshrined in the *Fueros* or charters which were established in the first territorial associations formed by Christians to war with the Moors. The fueros grew into a legislative code. They were abolished on the French side at the French Revolution and on the Spanish side in Navarre at the end of the First Carlist War (1839) and in the others after the Second Carlist War (1876).

Catherine of Aragon's father Ferdinand, who sponsored Columbus, attacked Navarre in 1512 and annexed it in 1515. Catherine came to England in 1501 and married Henry VIII in 1509. There has been much English mixing with the Basques since around the Newfoundland fisheries. There was a rapid industrialisation of the Basque coast in the 19th century with large scale export of very high grade iron ore to Britain, leading to an investment in local heavy industry after 1870, but also to a large influx of non-Basques.

The Basques chose to support the Republicans in the Civil War and lost. Franco had a policy of continuous cultural suppression that lead in the end by 1970's to a terrorist organisation called ETA. Many Basques emigrated and others were dispersed all over Spain following the end of the Civil War. To encourage a Basque identity efforts were made to give young people a common folk culture, but they made mistakes in what they did, although it was what all folk groups would have done at the time. They were taught standard, but the most spectacular dances from one area only. As there were no mixed country dances they were created. As the women had no traditional dances of their own, the dances were shared out. So far, said one of the visiting groups to Sidmouth, it is believed that about 700 traditional dances once existed of which about 400 have been recovered along with the details of the associated costumes, without which they would not have been complete.

There is a Department of Basque Studies at the University of Nevada in Reno because so many Basques settled in that part of the USA. It has its own dance group, produces a regular newsletter, and has helped the production of a Basque-English, English-Basque dictionary. The Basque language does not belong to the Indo-European group but to an older distribution which survives in only a few corners of the world. It is a distant relative of the languages of the second wave of American Indians to spread across northern America.

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A characteristic of some Basque dances is that they exist in a suite where the major difference between dances is the implement used. One long stick, two short sticks, a hoop, a garland, a sword or a sword and buckler.

FIGURES

To English dancers the idea of endless repetitions of a chorus does not make a good dance. Fortunately there are sets of movements in various dances that can be used as figures. The set chosen are based on back-to-backs.

1. **Back-to-Back with Opposite** : working in pairs, normal English Morris back-to-back, **across** the set, first right shoulders passing and then left shoulders.

2. **Back-to-Back with Neighbours** : working in pairs, normal back-to-back but with the dancer alongside, Nos. 1 with 3, 5 with 7 etc. **along** the lines of the dancers.

3. **Back-to-Back on the Diagonals** : working in fours, back-to-back along the second corners diagonal. No. 1 moves forward a little on the first diagonal to be in front of No. 3 on the second diagonal, etc and then leads No. 3 and No. 4 leads No. 2 similarly. Nos. 3 and 2 stay **behind** Nos. 1 and 4 throughout and both pairs go around each other, ie No. 3 does a back-to-back with No. 2.

4. **Back-to-Back on the Sides** : working in fours along the sides, the pairs do back-to-back, Nos. 3 and 1 with Nos. 5 and 7, Nos. 3 and 5 always in front and No. 1 doing a back-to-back with No. 7 etc.

CHORUSES

A. "WINDMILL" - each of the eight dancers has a long stick held in both hands. The hold is at the third points when clashing tips and butts, and both near the bottom for the big clashes.

In this the lines of four pass through each other, passing left shoulders with their opposites, then they bend the lines on the middles to face the other end of their original line, with the set now rotated 90°. The original middles are always middles and the ends are always ends. The chorus is done four times in all till the dancers return to where they started.

Bar 1 : Opposites clash tips r to l and butts l to r .
Bar 2 : Neighbours clash tips r to l and butts l to r .
Bar 3 : Opposites clash tips r to l , clash right diagonal r to l while moving forward and passing opposite by left shoulder, the ends, Nos. 2 and 7 hit the air.
Bar 4 : Clash neighbour with tips having passed opposites, do so moving forward and do not turn to face, so that left hand side of the pair are hitting more forward to their right side than r to l and the right hand side is hitting backwards over their left shoulder slanting their stick outwards. The pair are rotating around the centre of the set to face the other end of their original line. Then clash with dancer coming round to meet to be the new opposite.

Continue this sequence till back to starting place.

B. "CANOES" - each dancer has a long stick, held at the third points, tip above the right hand. Dancers hopstep throughout.

The dancers follow a zig-zag path, 1) change across with opposites, 2) change on side with neighbour, 3) change across with opposite (to be in neighbour's starting place) and then 4) change along the sides, as a pair with own neighbour, with the other pair. Repeat this pattern back to place.

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 2 4 6 8   1 3 5 7   3 1 7 5   4 2 8 6   8 6 4 2
m        to        to        to        to        etc
 1 3 5 7   2 4 6 8   4 2 8 6   3 1 7 5   7 5 3 1
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The dancers clash tips, going right to left but mostly forward, while dancing on the spot and then clash butts, going left to right but mostly forward, while surging forward, passing by the left shoulders. The dash along the side is more difficult to fit in and the dancers have only one clash (if that) with each dancer passed. Experience shows that there is no time to think about what to do. He who hesitates is lost!

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