

## El Chamamé

(Argentina)

Chamamé is a *baile popular*, a social dance, and is not considered to be one of the folkloric dances of Argentina. It is a couple dance with a closed embrace. There is no set choreography. The man improvises according to his taste, both with dance steps and Zapateo (see end of this section of instructions on Zapateos).

Chamamé is a fusion of many roots including the indigenous Guaraní, the baroque music of the Jesuit monks who arrived to the area in the 1600s, African rhythms of freed slaves from Brazil and then, in the 1800s, the European immigrants such as the Ukrainians, Italians, Germans, Russians, and Basques who brought their polkas and schottische, and the accordion – the instrument most associated with the genre.

Chamamé has its deepest roots in the northeastern part of Argentina called the Litoral, the land close to the rivers (in between Uruguay and Paraná rivers). The town of Yapeyú is considered the birthplace of chamamé music. There the monks and the Guaraní built the largest instrument factory in all of Latin America.

The music and dance were disdained by the middle and upper classes as music for country folk. It wasn't until the 1980s that the music became a vehicle for social commentary and embraced by more of the population.

Pronunciation: ehl chah-mah-MEH      Translation: My soul in the rain (Guaraní)

Music: 3/4 meter      *Música de Mi Pueblo*, Track 4 (Recordando San Cosme)

Formation: This is a variation on a traditional ballroom pos. W's L arm is high up on the M's R shldr and the R side of his back, and the M's R arm is farther around the W's back. M's head faces L and W's head faces R, so they look in the same direction, not at each other and not over the other's shldr. The joined hands (M's L, W's R) are held low, just below waist level and closer to the M's waist. M uses the joined hands to steer and direct the W's movements. He may raise the joined hands to allow the W to turn to her R.



Steps & Styling: The steps are similar to a waltz. However, while the cpl does rotate, there is *less emphasis* on rotating and moving around the floor in a CCW direction. Dancers often move CW, along a line, or stay in one place, as directed by the M. This dance is improvisational. M does whatever figures and order he desires.

<u>Meas</u>	<u>3/4 meter</u>	<u>Pattern</u>
2 meas		<u>INTRODUCTION</u> . No action.
	I.	<u>WALKING, CAMINATA</u> .
1		One large step beg M's L, W's R in a direction of the M's choosing (ct 1); two steps in place (cts 2-3).
2		Repeat meas 1 with opp ftwk.

II. BALANCE TURNING/BALANCEO GIRANDO. (Can be done in place or turning.)

- 1 One large step beg M's L, W's R in a direction of the M's choosing (ct 1); step on M's R, W's L behind (ct 2); shift wt back to orig ft (ct 3).
- 2 Repeat meas 1 with opp ftwk.

III. FWD AND BACK IN PLACE/BALANCEO ADELANTE Y ATRÁS.

M's R, W's L remain in place during this rocking pattern. This pattern takes four cts and requires multiple meas.

- 1 M: step L fwd (ct 1); step R in place (ct 2); step L bkwd (ct 3). Step R in place (ct 1).  
W: step R bkwd (ct 1); step L in place (ct 2); step R fwd (ct 3). Step L in place (ct 1).  
 This ftwk is repeated until the M signals the W to change the step by pausing when M's ft is fwd, W's bkwd.

IV. WOMAN TURN DURING MAN'S ZAPATEO/ZAPATEO DEL HOMBRE Y GIRO DE LA MUJER

- 1 Using the basic waltz step, M steps in place while turning the W to her R under the raised hands (M's L, W's R). Hands remain joined during the next sequence.
- 2 M does Zapateos of his choosing while moving in a CCW circle around the W, while the W uses waltz steps to continue turning to her R. W takes the edge of her skirt into her L hand and brings it to rest on her waist on her L. See instructions for zapateos at the end of this section.
- 3-8 Repeat meas 2 until the M signals the W to approach him and resume the orig pos.

End with a lunge back onto M's L.

Presented by Pampa Cortés

