

## Body percussion and traditional dances. The case of Ball dels Moretons in Mallorca Percusión corporal y danzas tradicionales. El caso de Ball dels Moretons en Mallorca

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**Abstract.** The aim of this article is to propose the dance "Ball dels moretons" as a pedagogical resource within the corporal expression in the sciences of physical activity and sport, as well as in the subject of music, due to its psychomotor and choreographic richness. This traditional dance from Mallorca, which uses body percussion as a form of cultural expression, has very rich resources to work on motor coordination and dissociation, using exclusively small wooden plates called "els macetes". This research provides a historical and bibliographical state of the art on the origin and development of this dance. For this purpose, fieldwork has been carried out in Mallorca and its main representatives have been interviewed in order to understand its evolution, its learning strategies and its choreographic characteristics for its implementation in the classroom. In the fieldwork carried out in Manacor and the interviews conducted confirm that the learning of body percussion is done by singing and not with pre-recorded music that is listened to. This article can serve as a resource perfectly linkable with other dances in the world that use body percussion such as Esku Dantza, Flamenco in Spain, Schuplattler in Austria, Verbunk in Hungary, Haka in New Zealand, Gumboots in South Africa, and Juba and Hambone in the United States. For all these reasons, the subject "Body Percussion" is suggested as an optional subject to be implemented within the university studies as it already happens at the University of Alicante in the Master of Teaching because there is abundant academic bibliography as well as practical resources.

**Keywords:** Ball dels Moretons, Dance, Body percussion, BAPNE, motor control.

**Resumen.** El objetivo de este artículo es proponer la danza "Ball dels moretons" como recurso pedagógico dentro de la expresión corporal en las ciencias de la actividad física y el deporte, así como en la asignatura de música, debido a su riqueza psicomotriz y coreográfica. Esta danza tradicional de Mallorca, que utiliza la percusión corporal como forma de expresión cultural, posee recursos muy ricos para trabajar la coordinación y disociación motriz, utilizando exclusivamente pequeñas placas de madera llamadas "els macetes". Esta investigación aporta un estado de la cuestión histórica y bibliográfica sobre el origen y desarrollo de esta danza. Para ello se ha realizado un trabajo de campo en Mallorca y se ha entrevistado a sus principales representantes con el objetivo de entender su evolución, sus estrategias de aprendizaje y sus características coreográficas para su implementación en el aula. En el trabajo de campo realizado en Manacor y las entrevistas realizadas confirman que el aprendizaje de la percusión corporal se realiza cantando y no con música pregrabada que se escucha. Este artículo puede servir como recurso perfectamente enlazable con otras danzas del mundo que utilizan la percusión corporal como Esku Dantza, el Flamenco en España, el Schuplattler en Austria, el Verbunk en Hungría, el Haka en Nueva Zelanda, los Gumboots en Sudáfrica, y el Juba y Hambone en Estados Unidos. Por todo ello, se sugiere la materia "Percusión Corporal" como una materia o asignatura optativa a implementar dentro de los estudios universitarios como ya ocurre en la universidad de Alicante en el Master del Profesorado porque existe abundante bibliografía académica, así como recursos prácticos.

**Palabras clave:** Ball dels Moretons, Danza, Percusión Corporal, BAPNE, control motor.

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### Introduction

Body percussion in different cultures is known thanks to the first contributions of travelers, chroniclers, missionaries and researchers who in their writings narrated everything they observed during their travels to other cultures (Kartomi, 2010; Romero-Naranjo, 2008, 2013b, 2014a, 2014b, 2017, 2019a).

Regarding Spain, there are several musical expressions that use corporal percussion such as flamenco in Andalusia, Esku-dantza in the Basque Country, and *las panaderas* in Castile (Di Russo & Romero-Naranjo, 2021a, 2021b). In the Balearic Islands, in particular, we can observe the *Ball dels moretons*, a *dansa ritual* (Barrios-Manzano, 2021) and *de figura* (Sansó-Rosselló & Francesc-Vallcaneras, 1997) from the city of Manacor, located on the island of Majorca performed in May during the festivities in honor of Saint Domingo de Guzman in the neighborhoods of *Els Convent*, *S'Antigor i Tren*. It employs a precise motor sequence through which the dancers, els moretons, by striking *macetes*, wooden plates of different sizes, on their bod-

ies, produce certain sounds and chorally create a specific rhythm. The body thus becomes an instrument of musical production, perception and understanding (López-Cano, 2005) and bodily percussion a form of expression of Manacorens culture. This dance is not mentioned in the educational programs of physical activity and sport sciences or in music, so we observe a gap when it comes to promote and publicize the traditional dances of Spain. The characteristics that the Ball dels moretons presents at kinesthetic and neuromotor levels are such as to require its introduction within the corporal expression program in the physical activity, sport sciences and music.

This contribution belongs to the research group of the BAPNE method, which is involved in research in various areas thanks to its more than 90 researchers from 15 countries. The BAPNE method has nearly 200 scientific publications, more than 42 articles in Web of Science and 1500 academic citations. The methodology provides research in the educational fields, in the sciences of physical activity and sport as well as in the didactics of corporal expression and ethnomusicology. The research trajectory has earned

it the culture prize of the city of Alicante as well as a Doctor Honoris Causa in Brazil. The research presented here is part of Salvatore Di Russo's doctoral thesis, a line that has already been treated on several occasions in BAPNE with the aim of providing resources in a transversal way in body expression and musical expression. For this reason, the BAPNE method proposes the inclusion of traditional resources in the classroom such as Flamenco, Esku Dantza, Verbunk or in this specific case: Ball del Moretons, etc.

In order to answer the purpose of this study, we posed the following research questions:

1. Does the traditional dance Ball dels moretons possess specific characteristics that allow its inclusion as a pedagogical resource within the fields of corporal expression and musical expression?
2. Can its historical knowledge and its way of learning be an educational resource for a better understanding of the traditions of Spain?
3. Could body percussion be an optional subject in university curricula?

In order to solve these unknowns, we proposed the following objectives:

1. To provide historical resources regarding the evolution of the traditional dance up to the present day with the consultation of historical documents and semi-directed interviews.
2. To justify the use of the costume, paying special attention to the use of the "macetes" as an exclusive aspect of this dance.
3. To justify from a cinematic point of view its educational inclusion as a pedagogical resource and future perspectives.

### *Justification*

Movement and sport have more and more studies that indicate their benefits in the human being since our biomechanics and physiology are made to move (Martínez-Heredia et al., 2021; Romero-Naranjo & Sayago-Martínez 2021a). In education, in particular, movement is an important educational resource for motor (Burbano-Pantoja et al., 2021; Pérez-Hernández et al., 2022), language (Pacheco-Delgado et al., 2022; Padial-Ruz et al., 2022; Zambrano-Pintado et al., 2022), cognitive (Mezcua-Hidalgo et al., 2020), social (Aguilar-Herrero et al., 2021) and emotional (Luisde Cos et al., 2019) as well as a valuable tool in cases of Developmental Coordination Disorders and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (Palma-Marifil, 2021; Villa de Gregorio et al., 2019).

The importance of movement in the learning-teaching process of music has determined the inclusion of body language and the use of dance and body percussion in the methodological proposal of several pedagogues (Trives-Martínez et al., 2018). However, the educational value of movement does not only involve musical aspects. Dance is, in fact, a complex activity (García-Ruso, 1997) in which motor and expressive aspects interact with specific biological, psychological, social, cultural and aesthetic fac-

tors by conforming through spatial, temporal and rhythmic elements (Vicente-Nicolás et al., 2010). Thus, it is an activity that integrates different dimensions of the human being showing itself capable of supporting its integral development from its earliest years of life (Peña & de Hornos & Vicente-Nicolás, 2019). For this reason, despite the lack of an extensive and up-to-date bibliography on dance education (particularly folkloric) (Pastor-Prada & Morales-Fernández, 2021) it is possible to highlight how it has been included within the school curricula of many educational institutions (López-Núñez et al., 2020). The goal is to be able to create a socio-emotional environment conducive to learning through non-competitive physical activity (Álvarez-Ibáñez & Fernández-Hawrylak, 2022), which allows to increase self-esteem (Padilla-Moledo & Coterón-López, 2013; Vergara-Vilchez et al., 2021) and creativity in pupils (Torrents-Martín et al., 2013) while improving their academic performance.

### *Body percussion as a pedagogical resource. State of the academic question*

In this section we justify the use of body percussion as an optional subject to be implemented within university studies due to the abundant academic literature. For this reason, we detail it by modules and based on academic engines. The bibliographic justification on the state of the art in body percussion should focus exclusively on publications collected in primary (Web of Science and Scopus) or secondary search engines (Eric, Jstor, Dialnet, etc) in order to give a serious and academic reliability. Body percussion is an interdisciplinary resource that allows the learning of other subjects after reading Bibliometric and Review studies (Arnau-Mollá & Romero-Naranjo, 2022a, 2022b; Romero-Naranjo, 2013b; Serna-Domínguez et al., 2018).

It is important to note that there is no evidence that body percussion cures any type of disease. It is also important to note that there is also no evidence that it improves Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, Brain Damage or ADHD (Romero-Naranjo & Romero-Naranjo, 2022).

#### *Body percussion & Neuromotricity*

Body percussion has uses, meanings and functions that allow it to be used in various fields in an interdisciplinary manner, as argued by the BAPNE research group (Romero-Naranjo & Sayago-Martínez et al., 2023). From the opposite point of view, social networks have encouraged the vulgarization of body percussion and therefore they have undervalued it.

Body percussion has fallen into the field of "entertainment pedagogy" when we observe proposals along the lines of "karaoke" typical of a pedagogical amusement park, coming from "pedagogies or low-cost methods" that seek more to represent and show in a gimmicky way, like a soap bubble, because the objective is to entertain and not to form with a scientific basis. For this reason, we observe a "herd thinking" focused more on being famous than on being a good professional. As a result, primary school

children no longer play hand-clapping games at recess because they have moved on to Tik-Toks.

With this entertainment culture approach, body percussion is an excellent resource for people who do not know how to sing, nor how to maintain a rhythmic structure autonomously. On the contrary, if we observe what happens in dance conservatories, they never work with a pre-recorded musical base, but hire a piano accompanist; the same happens in Flamenco conservatories where they hire a guitarist and do not rehearse with a recording of Pa-co de Lucia.

In this respect, the BAPNE method is a faithful advocate of the use of the voice and its link to cognitive functions. For this reason, it provides a concrete classification between the terms motor, psychomotor and neuromotricity.

A. Motricity: it is the ability to control body movements in a voluntary and coordinated manner involving the motor system. Activities such as walking, jumping, running, rolling, crawling, going up or downstairs, etc. clearly represent motor skills.

B. Psychomotricity: it is the set of "cognitive, emotional, symbolic and sensory-motor interactions in the capacity to be and to express oneself in a psychosocial context".

C. Neuromotricity: it is the educational and neurorehabilitative procedure that affects cognitive stimulation through the executive functions in which the dual task and mainly the language (spoken, sung, recited, etc.) thus providing a superior function to the stimulation (Romero-Naranjo, 2018a; Romero-Naranjo & Llorca-Garnero, 2023; Romero-Naranjo & Andreu-Cabrera, 2023).

#### *Body percussion and cognitive functions*

There is an extensive literature collected in academic engines that provides an overview of everything that has been published about this discipline until today (Romero-Naranjo, 2012, 2013a, 2013b; Fernández-Molina et al., 2020). The BAPNE method is the only exclusive research group on this topic with more than forty publications in Web of Science. There is a scientific production focused on the study of cognitive and executive functions, especially focused on dual tasks (Kim et al., 2017; Romero-Naranjo & Sayago-Martínez et al., 2023; Romero-Naranjo et al., 2023) with a research together with control and experimental groups who use validated tests, and with several months of intervention (Álvarez-Morales & Romero-Naranjo, 2019; Arnau-Mollá & Romero-Naranjo, 2020; Carretero-Martínez et al., 2014; Castelló-Juan et al., 2019; Cozzutti et al., 2017; González-Sánchez et al., 2019; Latre-Nava et al., 2019; Piqueres-Juan, et al., 2019; Romero-Naranjo, 2014c; Romero-Naranjo et al., 2022; Ros-Silla et al., 2019; Torró-Biosca et al., 2019).

#### *Body percussion and Socioemotional aspects*

It is also important to note that there are publications of a socioemotional nature (Fabra-Brell & Romero-

Naranjo, 2017; Moral-Bofil et al., 2020; Sayago-Martínez et al., 2021). BAPNE is an acronym that stands for Biomechanics, Anatomy, Psychology, Neuroscience and Ethnomusicology. Through these five pillars, the methodology attempts to justify all possible parameters of movement through neuromotricity (Andreu-Cabrera & Romero-Naranjo, 2021). Following this acronym, the research we present here is within the block of Ethnomusicology where we are concerned with the study of the body, dances and their movements in different cultures, as well as their possible interpretations and didactic contributions. The BAPNE method is linked to cognitive and executive functions in relation to movement, articulating its teaching in three large blocks called: initiation rite, cognitive stimulation and closing rite.

#### *Body percussion and musical language*

The University of Alicante is a pioneer in several educational programs using body percussion in a transversal way. One of them is linked to the sciences of Physical Activity and Sport and the other is linked to the learning of musical language through Neuromotricity. Learning musical concepts can be very boring if we use very old pedagogical strategies. Therefore, strategies with manipulative materials such as cones, hoops, strings, etc., are proposed (Romero-Naranjo, 2020b). In the same way, there are other proposals to work on concrete musical concepts such as offbeat or different types of musical figures as well as measures (Romero-Naranjo, 2018a, 2018b, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c 2022a, 2022b; Romero-Naranjo & González de Banatuil, 2022b, Romero-Naranjo & Sayago-Martínez 2021a, 2012b).

#### *Body percussion and Creativity*

The research group of the BAPNE method has chaired several International Congresses exclusively dedicated to body percussion and creativity from an academic perspective. The contributions are very diverse from traditional dances (Arnau-Mollá & Asurmendi-Telleria et al., 2022), from the applicability of urban rhythms at an educational level (Arnau-Mollá, & Romero-Naranjo, 2022e), from children's coordination clapping games (Romero-Naranjo & Arnau-Mollá & González de Benatuil et al., 2022); from traditional rhythms such as "Las Panaderas" (Di Russo et al., 2022); the incorporation of rhythm from important figures such as Bruno Mars (González de Benatuil et al., 2022) or from the perspective of musical language and singing (Romero-Naranjo & Arnau-Mollá & Di Russo et al., 2022).

#### *Body percussion for Children (3-6 años)*

The possibilities offered by movement from the age range from 3 to 6 years old is very wide, which is why the research group of the BAPNE method provides numerous resources shown in several books on this subject (Romero-Naranjo, 2018a, 2018b, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c 2022a, 2022b).

### *Body percussion and corporal Expression*

Body expression is an important transversal resource that can be used in the field of performing arts, physical activity and sport sciences as well as music. The research group of the BAPNE method has created an exclusive protocol for its work that is implemented with students of physical activity and sport sciences (Romero-Naranjo, 2019).

### *Body percussion and the sciences of physical activity and sport*

Body percussion in the sciences of physical activity and sport requires a specific protocol for this subject that identifies it as exclusive and its own. Another thing is that it has some interdisciplinary contents and that it connects with other areas, but it must have its own identity. Even so, there is very little serious academic literature on the subject. There are specific contributions linked to a specific line such as kinematic analysis, cardio, didactic resources or Ergospirometry (Alonso-Marco & Romero-Naranjo, 2022; Romero-Naranjo, 2020a; Romero-Naranjo & González de Benatuil, 2022a; Romero-Naranjo & Llorca-Garnero, 2023). From Body Expression's point of view, the research group of the BAPNE method has several books on this subject, providing numerous resources that are used at the University of Alicante (Romero-Naranjo, 2019).

### *Body percussion and ethnomusicology*

As far as the ethnographic and ethnomusicological context is concerned, the existing publications are very few. There are many data from missionaries, chroniclers or travelers such as Bartolomé de las Casas, Livingston, the Lander brothers, Bernardino de Sahagún, etc. that still require a detailed study in relation to body percussion. It is true that there are some introductory studies (Di Russo & Romero-Naranjo, 2021a, 2021b; Kartomi, 2010; Ortiz-Fernández, 1951; Romero-Naranjo, 2008; Warner-Dietz & Olatunji, 1965) but more precise studies are needed, such as the one presented in this article dedicated to the "*Ball dels Moretons*".

For this reason, we consider that there are enough activities and publications that would help the creation of a specific subject, as it already exists at the University of Alicante.

### *Ways of writing about body percussion*

There are several systems of choreographic notation using different symbols and types of movement analysis (Guest, 1998). None of these, however, can be called exhaustive since each system contemplates advantages and disadvantages depending on its intended purpose. Some exhibit a high level of sophistication in motion description such as the system devised by Laban (2011). Due to the high level of scientific accuracy in the choreographic transcription and each kinesthetic sequence, it has been employed in different research fields (Aristidou et al., 2015; Heiland, 2019), especially the ethnomusicological one for the study of traditional dances of different cultures (Kurath & Marti, 1964; Rakočević, 2012) and for the con-

struction of movement study methods as in the case of choreometrics (Lomax, 1968a, 1968b, 1971). Despite this, the Labanian system has some critical issues such as:

- an excessive complexity of notation that can be solved only through specific knowledge of the system;
- the transcription of choreography in a vertical sense that does not facilitate its reading;
- the impossibility of its application in the study of some traditional dances (Jankovi, 1975);
- the difficulty of a representation of the proxemic aspects of choreography;
- the lack of a homogeneous transcription system due to the development of some adaptations of Labanotation such as

### *Motif Notation*

For these reasons, in this study on the *Ball dels moretons*, whose purposes fall within the principally didactic sphere, it was deemed appropriate to employ a transcription system that is more immediate and closer to the logic of musicians, teachers, and many dancers that requires a less specific degree of understanding of the components of a movement such as that offered by the BAPNE Method (Sánchez-González et al., 2018), which employs drawings rather than symbols.

At the conclusion of this section we could argue that there are other proposals on body percussion, but that in no case are they contrasted for several reasons: their self-published books do not appear in any academic search engine, nor do they have intervention studies with control group and experimental group, nor do they use validated tests. For this reason, they are proposals that belong to the pedagogy of entertainment that seek to approach a public with very little critical spirit on the basis of entertaining and not seriously educating students.

### **"Ball dels Moretons" as a pedagogical resource in Physical Activity and Sport Sciences**

This dance from Mallorca, has many elements that invite it to be part of a pedagogical resource, within the contents of the subject of corporal expression, by unifying kinesthetic and musical aspects. This dance provides very characteristic elements because "as an activity it has in itself meaning and application, but it can also be a springboard to access other more technified corporeal-expressive manifestations" (García et al., 2013). This is the reason why corporal expression clearly connects with:

- Anthropology of movement: games, dance, acrobatics....
- Movement arts: dance, dance-theater...
- Social communication: non-verbal language, proxemics...
- Literary arts and sound arts
- Psychology applied to movement (eutonia)
- Creativity

Having seen these aspects, it is important to emphasize that within the corporal expression some objectives linked to the artistic-expressive activities are pursued within the educational environment (Batalha, 2004) such as:

1. To promote that the student understands its usefulness.
2. To teach the student to use his body with a technical language to communicate and interpret an idea about a subject.
3. To encourage the student's aesthetic judgment.
4. To help the student to master codes and symbols that are used socially.
5. To encourage students to use new technologies to create productions and give visibility to the choreographies.
6. To develop a critical awareness of the meaning of the works and of the effectiveness of their messages.

For this reason, the objectives lead to the following paradigms of dance and other forms of Expression, where the dance "*Ball dels Moretons*" is perfectly included (Batalha and Borges, 2012):

- Dance Languages and other forms of Expression.
- Creativity.
- Communication-Expression.
- Aesthetic-Artistic Sense.
- Historical-Cultural Context.

Therefore, it is placed within the framework of the basics of corporal expression and this dance is suggested as a pedagogical resource to be used.

### Methodology

The information and observations in this article are the result of work conducted through a thorough literature review and direct field research experience. The study of sources, primary and secondary, scientific and popular, containing any reference to *Ball dels Moretons* and referable to different disciplinary fields, ethnographic/ anthropological (Amades, 1982, Enseñat-Estrany, 1975; Temporal i Olear & Villalba-Arasa, 2012), historical (Fuster-Forteza, 2006; Riera-Benet, 1913), literary (Alcover, 1997), and of different types such as dictionaries (Alcover & Moll, 1930), journals (Anonymous, 1916, Anonymous, 1970), repertoires of various kinds (Huguet, 2007, Massot, 1984), and archives (Ros-Fàbregas, 2023), represented an important stage in the foundation and justification of the investigation.

#### *The Ball dels Moretons. A historiographical approximation.*

The paucity and fragmentary nature of the available sources does not allow the genesis and evolution of the ball dels moretons to be precisely established. Several authors, including Castro et al. (1995) highlighting a profound relationship with Arab customs assert that it has its roots in ancient times. Other scholars argue, however, that the dance appeared more recently. Pujol & Amades (1936) state that the ball dels moretons is a "ball de creació moderna, compost l'any 1854 (...) fet publicament per primera vegada durant les festes que feren l'any esmentat en celebració de la proclamació del dogma de la Concepció Immaculada de la Mare de Déu" [dance of modern creation, composed in 1854 (...) performed pub-

licly for the first time during the festivities that took place that year in celebration of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary] (p. 331). According to this thesis, which is the most credited, the introduction of the dance would be attributed to Fray Pius Caldentey Perelló, custodian of the convent after the exclaustació of the Dominicans in 1835 as well as a fervent supporter of the Marian dogma. This is also corroborated by the fact that at the same time a specific chapel was being built at the same convent (Fuster, 2006).

Only later, probably in the late 1880s, was the ball dels moretons adopted by the Obreria of Saint Domingo and employed to solemnize the festivities in honor of the order's founder on August each year.

Two events have allowed the feast of Saint Domingo and the ball del moretons to come down to the present day: the decision to bring this event forward to the twenty-fourth of May, the day of the translation of the saint's mortal remains to the patriarchal basilica of Bologna dedicated to him, and the process of recovering the ball in 1985 by a group of former moretons gathered around the figure of Guillem Nadal Gual as observed in Figure 1. Its protection and promotion is currently entrusted to the Asociación Cultural de Saint Domingo (Figure 1).



Figure 1. The recuperation of the dance in 1985. Jaume Perelló Ligeró's private archive

#### *Fieldwork in Manacor*

The anthropological work carried out in Manacor (Balearic Islands) in May 2022 as observed in Figure 2 on the occasion of the feast of Sant Domingo de Guzman was proposed with the objective of analyzing the Ball dels moretons on an ethnomusicological level. The two-week stay in the island city allowed a deep contact with the local culture and a participatory observation of the entire phase of preparation and implementation of the festivities in honor of the saint of Caleruega. This allowed the carrying out of a series of semi-structured interviews in order to acquire further historical, evolutionary and gender-related information on the Ball dels moretons. For this purpose, a sampling of the subjects (Delitala, 1992), to whom the questionnaires were to be addressed, was carried out ex ante and an "Informant Identity Card" was drawn up for

each of them. During the fieldwork in Manacor more than 14 hours of recording were collected with the interviews to numerous people (Jaume Perelló Ligeró, Francesc Perelló Nadal, Domingo Bernabé Mayol, Monserrat Nadal Fullana, Antoni Oliver Perelló, Monserrat Nadal Fullana, Antoni Pasqual Andreu, Domingo Bernabé Mayol, Margalida Rosselló Riera, Cristina Duran Truyol, Albert Carvajal Mesquida, Antoni Gomila Grimalt and all moretons of 2022) (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Last day of investigation in Manacor. Salvatore Di Russo's private archive

The interviews and recordings made at each performance of the *Ball dels moretons* form part of a larger investigation being conducted as part of a doctoral program. Bearing in mind the objective being pursued in this article and the profile of this journal, which specializes in the field of physical education and sports, only an excerpt from this repertoire is therefore shown. The statements that are reported are intended to highlight interesting aspects related to the dance learning process, the role of error, style, and genre that were not possible through the literature search. Below is a short excerpt from a much more extensive but informative interview.

- Francesc Perelló Nadal - ex moreton and father of Jaume

S.D.R. (Salvatore di Russo): How did you learn the dance?

F.P.N. (Francesc Perelló Nadal): The children sing the music and do the body percussion with the "macetes". They don't do it with pre-recorded music and dance. On the contrary. They sing it and we have seen that they learn it better than using a recording [...].

S.D.R.: How are the learning steps?

F.P.N.: The first thing we did was to teach them the repit de macetes [...]. Once they had internalized it, we taught them the dance. It is an elegant dance that we sing while we learn the steps.

- Domingo Bernabé Mayol, ex moreton and teacher of "Ball del Moretons".

S.D.R.: How much time do you spend preparing the dance?

D.B.M. (Domingo Bernabé Mayol): From the month of March approximately, the sooner the better?

S.D.R.: How does a rehearsal go?

D.B.M.: A rehearsal starts with a first section in which they have to learn the "repit". This is how they learn the sections, they look at them in detail so that everything comes out well coordinated. We have to start with a base so that everyone knows how to handle "macetes" and everything is done by singing.

S.D.R.: Is there a dance manual?

D.B.M.: I personally don't have a dance manual, but on the Els Moretons website you can see the dance.

S.D.R.: Can you highlight a style of each moreton?

D.B.M.: No, they are all the same.

S.D.R.: What role does the female figure play in this dance?

S.D.R.: It's good, it's a new thing. When I started there were no girls. [...] time goes by and everything changes and flows.

As a conclusion to this section and to the interviews, it is important to emphasize that their learning is not done with pre-recorded music. The learning of the movements of body percussion and dance is done by singing, arguing that it is learned much better. The previous generation used a cassette at some point, but they observed that their learning is internalized much better when sung. Another aspect to highlight is the inclusion of girls in the dance, which until now was exclusively for the male gender, and the possibility of being able to create further choreographies built on kinesthetic and musical elements considered fundamental.

### *Els moretons*

El *Ball dels moretons* is performed by a group of six boys and girls of both sexes, els moretons. The introduction of the female figure in the dance dates back to the 2021 Saint Domingo de Guzman's festival (Bauzá, 2021). We encounter an exception to the number of dancers in 1944, when an additional six singing moretons were added to perform the text composed for the occasion by Gabriel Fuster (Carvajal et al., 1999). An additional character, whose first appearance would date back to 1942, accompanies the group of dancers: a seventh child, disguised as Saint Domingo, presides over each performance of the dance by placing himself between the dancers or to their side depending on the choreography to be performed.

Recruitment of moretons is done on a voluntary basis. They do not have to possess particular social or economic status or special physical requirements or choreographic skills. The moreton is a "sentimiento" [feeling] and therefore "puede ser un moreton cualquier niño que lo desee" [any child who wants to can be a moreton] (Antoni Oliver Perelló), "toda persona, niño o niña, que siente esta danza como propia y que quiere participar y fomentar el patrimonio cultural de Manacor" [any person, boy or girl, who feels this dance as his or her own and who wants to participate and promote the cultural heritage of Manacor] (Monserrat Nadal Fullana).

### *Context of the Ball dels moretons dance performance*

The *Ball dels moretons* opens and closes the religious festivities in honor of Saint Domingo de Guzman. There are three contexts in which it is performed:

A. Inside the cloister of the convent of San Vicent Ferrer, as observed in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Moretons in the cloister of the convent of San Vicent Ferrer. Salvatore Di Russo's private archive

B. In the streets and squares of the neighborhood, as evidenced in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Moretons in the neighborhood. Salvatore Di Russo's private archive

C. Inside the church of San Vicent Ferrer in the opening and closing of the liturgy as shown in Figure 5.



Figure 5. Moretons in the Church. Salvatore Di Russo's private archive.

### **Clothing**

Galmés, (1950), Temporal I Oleart & Villalba-Arasa (2012) and Mullet (1988) state that references to ancient Berber and other Moorish and traditional Majorcan dances subsist in the moretons' garment. The elements that most distinguish dels moretons' garment, however, are:

A. The crown with yellow and red oblique stripes, as shown in Figure 6, in whose front.



Figure 6. Crown of the moretons. Guillem Salas Lliteras' Private archive

B. Is placed horizontally a silvery medium moon. Posteriorly to it are joined, alternate, six parallel red and yellow stripes at the tip of which, triangular in shape, is placed a white pearl, one of the symbols of Manacor. The first and sixth stripes, red and yellow respectively, are worn on the chest of the moretons while the others remain loose along the back.

C. Els macetes (Orpi, 2009), wooden plates of circular shape, as can be seen in Figure 7, four of which, small in size, are placed above the knees and two in the palms of the hands. They are secured by means of black belts with Velcro fasteners. The fifth, on the other hand, which is larger in size, is placed on the belly and held secured again with a belt but with a buckle closure.



Figure 7. Els macetes. Guillem Salas Lliteras' Private archive

### **Body percussion in the ball dels moretons**

Corporal percussion is the most interesting element of the *Ball dels moretons*. It is carried out by the dancers during

the choreography, accompanied by a musical formation of wind instruments performing a melody, the tonada (Alcover, 1930; Pol, 1923). They beat els macetes that they have in their hands, on their thighs and bellies to produce the sounds and create the rhythmic sequence that characterizes this dance.

### **The learning process**

The *Ball dels moretons* is a traditional dance that lives on through oral tradition. In fact, unlike the Dansa dels Cosiers, the lessons planned with kindergarten students on the *ball dels moretons* by the Escuela Municipal de Malloquín near the feast of Saint Domingo do not have any objective of institutionalizing and formalizing its learning but only of spreading its knowledge. Instead, the tradition takes place through the figure of the dance master, who is designated by the Asociación Cultural de Saint Domingo and chosen from among those who previously held the role of moreton and who, as such, can pass on the legacy.

The teaching-learning process proceeds sequentially in three stages. In the first, the teacher presents individual movements by emphasizing them with a verbal description: these are internalized by the dancers through a process of imitation and repetition. In the second, all the learned movements are assembled forming a single kinesthetic sequence. Only in the last stage are the various choreographies shown. This learning structure is, by necessity, influenced by the personality and teaching style of each teacher.

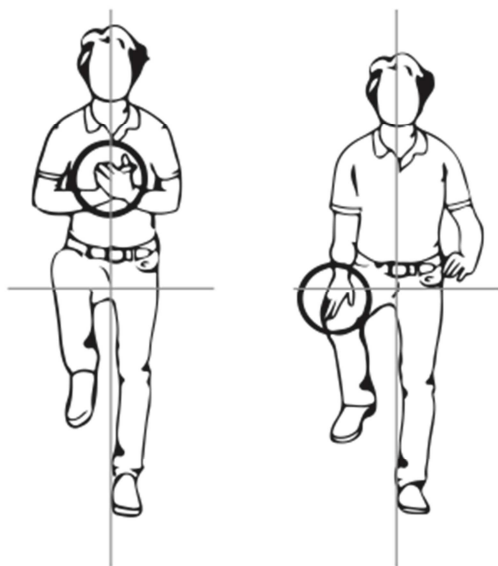


Figure 8. The jump in the ball dels moretons

It is important to note that over the years the teaching method has undergone an interesting change. Previously,

in fact, moretons learned the dance through listening to a previously recorded musical base. Currently, however, the dance melody is performed directly by the dancers through a kind of lallation. This is intended to promote the memorization of movements and the internalization of the pulse and it involves more neuromotor engagement.

### **Kinesthetic aspects**

The *Ball dels moretons* is developed around two kinesthetic units (Martin & Ernö, 1961) that revolve around the combined use of the horizontal, upper and lower biomechanical planes. The first, as shown in Figure 8, is el salt, during which two handclaps are performed, one, at chest level, during the ascending phase and the other, in the descending phase.

The second is el repite macetes, a series of four blows inflicted on the wooden plates through as many alternating movements on the thighs and belly as can be seen in Figure 9. The execution of the movements is done in a group manner and requires high coordination and rhythmic precision among the dancers in order not to make mistakes.

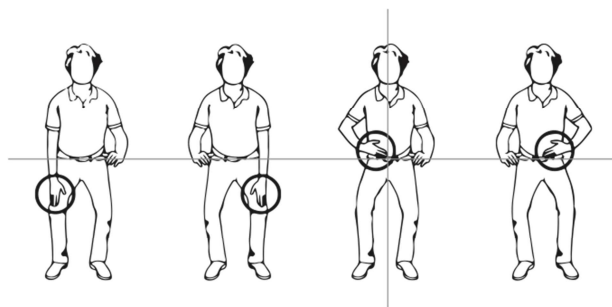


Figure 9. Bumps with the macetes

### **Choreographic aspects**

The *Ball dels moretons* consists of seven numerically named choreographies. It is difficult to establish an exact chronology of their introduction, which is, however, attributable to the moretons themselves and their dance masters. They include four categories of actions: the gesture, the jump, the locomotion, and the turn (Brandt, 2010; Preston-Dunlop, 1979). The first three are present in all choreographies while the turn is not covered in ball 1, as shown in Figure 10, and ball 3.

Accompanied by the same melody composed in a 4/4 meter and performed in the same kinesthetic sequence, they are developed through two forms of performance: circular in ball 1,3,5,6, and by frontal parallel rows, in ball 2 and 7. Exclusively in the opening of the concluding liturgy of the Saint Domingo festivities, the ball is performed in a processional manner by arranging the ballerini by lateral parallel rows.



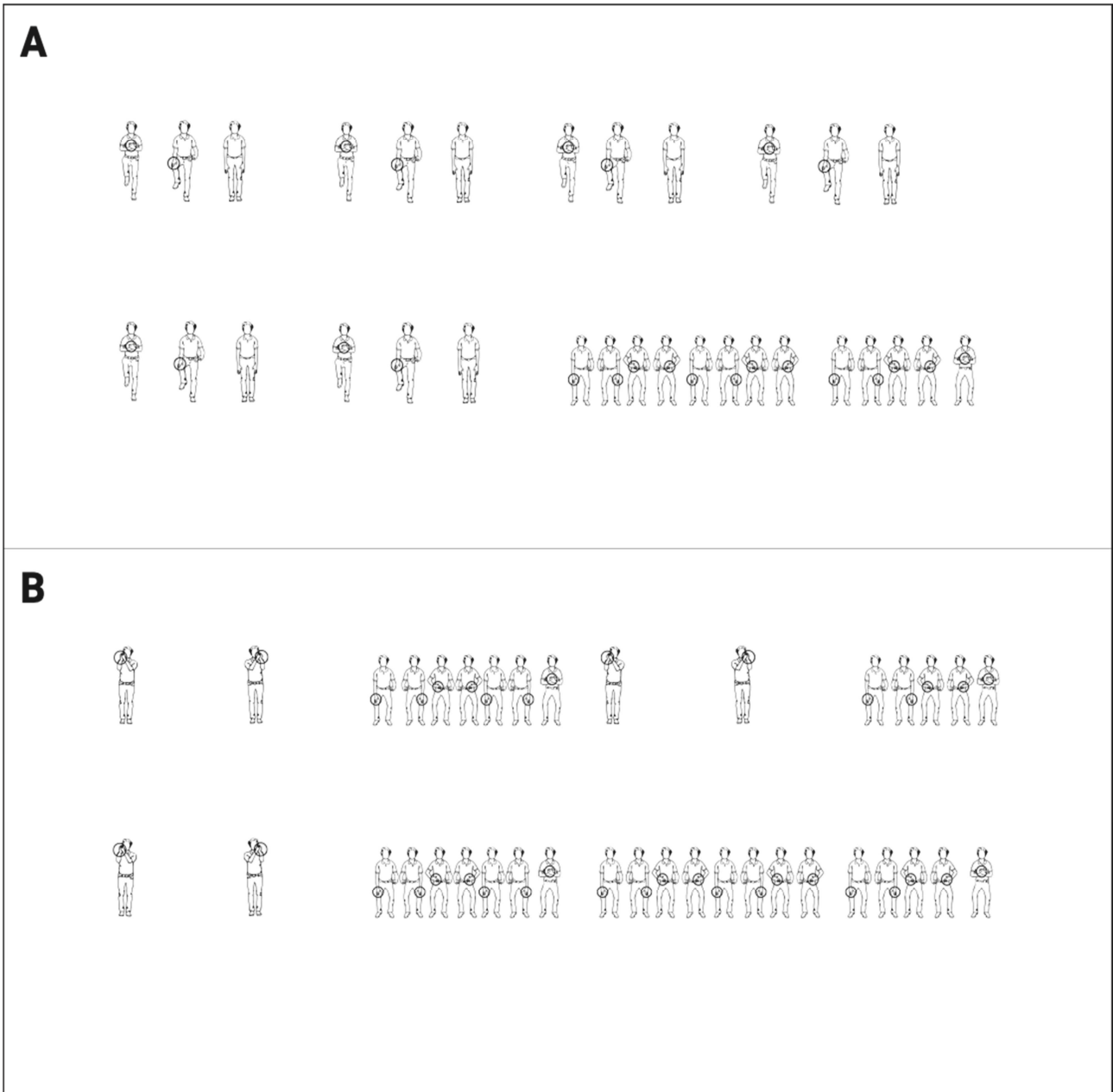


Figure 10. Ball 1

**Musical aspects**

The corporal percussion in the *ball dels moretons* is closely related to musical aspects that can be classified according to two dimensions: timbral and rhythmic.

**Timbral aspects**

The different size of the macetes worn by the moretons allows the production of two sounds of different pitches: lower when the one on the belly is struck, higher pitched when the ones placed between the hands and on the knees are struck. Macetes, however, do not have a melodic function. As can be seen in Figures 11 and 12 in the same way as the rubber boots in the Gumboots, and the soles of shoes in the Schuplattler, it serves to amplify the rhythm of the bodily percussion so that it can be perceived distinctly from the musical base accompanying the dance.

It is possible to observe different traditional dances in the European area in which the dancers use body percussion for timbral, dynamic and rhythmic purposes by striking with specific movements discs of wood, as in the case of Rossendale Valley Coconut Dance (Bearon, 2018;



Figure 11. Schuplattler

Buckland, 1990), or other material positioned in different parts of the body as in Lei Cocot (Cadet, 1864).



Figure 12. Gumboots

### Rhythmic aspects

The rhythmic structure of the corporal percussion reflects that of the tonada. During the display of theme A in fact, the dancers produce two sounds that coincide with the first two pulsations of each measure. This rhythmic sequence is interrupted in A' where the percussion follows the melodic line homo-rhythmically through the binary subdivision of the pulse. In the performance of theme B, the corporal percussion instead acts as a homorhythmic support to the melodic response, falling silent, also for reasons of choreographic movement, at the thematic ring. The choreography of the corporal percussion combined with the melody is depicted in Figure 13.

Figura 13. Score and coreography Ball dels moretons 1

### *El Ball dels moretons in the classroom*

Through the description of the *Ball dels moretons* that has been carried out so far as a pedagogical resource, it is possible to emphasize a series of benefits that it can bring within the classroom of physical activity and sport sciences (Alonso-Marco & Romero-Naranjo, 2022) particularly from the point of view of:

A. Kinesthetic/Anatomic since it promotes:

- Postural control, spatial and temporal structuring, balance and motor coordination.
- Learning by biomechanical planes and axes.
- Audio/visual/motor coordination at the manual level.
- The development of the proprioceptive and vestibular

system.

- Work on strength and endurance.
  - Knowledge of joints and bone structures in relation to neuromotricity.
  - The learning of various timbres and rhythms with the body.
  - The development of bodily expression.
- B. Psychological as it:
- Increases CASA emotions (Aguado-Romo, 2014).
  - Increases motivation, self-concept and self-esteem.
  - Includes error as a vital process of learning.
  - Stimulates a sense of belonging to the group.

- Learning is based on imitation.
  - Allows internalization of a cultural value system.
- C. Neurological/Cognitive because it stimulates:
- Cognitive functions such as memory, praxis, spatial orientation, attention, social cognition.
  - Executive functions including working memory, inhibition, dual task, cognitive flexibility, planning, and decision making.
  - Different brain areas such as the frontal, parietal, occipital and cerebellum.
  - The production of oxytocin, dopamine, serotonin.
- D. Ethnomusicological since it includes learning a traditional dance referring to a particular geographical area and culture.
- E. Musical since it allows:
- The internalization of pulse, rhythm and measure.
  - The learning of different musical figures.
  - The understanding of musical form.
- F. Creative since it:
- Develops the understanding and the use of body language.
  - Expands the possibilities of carrying out activities based on performance functions and ethnographic aspects.
- G. Evaluative with respect to:
- Sequencing of learning.
  - Responsibility for a well done work.
  - Management of error and social-emotional context.

## Conclusion

The use of body percussion linked to traditional dances is a topic little studied so far because it has few studies focused on that topic (Lomax, 1971; Kartomi, 2010; Ortiz-Fernández, 1950). For this reason, in conclusion, the aim of this article was to present this dance of Mallorca as a didactic material and as a pedagogical resource that should be included in the educational program of physical activity and sport sciences, as well as music. First of all, it is important to emphasize that we still lack studies linked to all tribal dances that use body percussion mentioned by chroniclers, travelers and missionaries where we need a state of the question that provides us with the knowledge of the dance and its contexts in that period.

This is the reason why we have made a first study on its origin, historical development, costumes, choreography of the dance and especially on an analysis of the kinesthetic, psychological, cognitive and emotional aspects that can be worked through *Ball dels Moretons*. In this article special attention has been paid to the use of body percussion and its particular use of wooden plates (els macetes), to learning processes and creative possibilities that can be developed.

There are other dances worldwide where the corporal percussion is included in its execution as it can be ob-

served in the Verbunk of Hungary, Schuhplattler of Austria, etc. where it is important to emphasize that all this repertoire should be included inside the traditional dances to be applied in the sciences of the physical activity and the sport and the music with its sequences and structured learning. With this contribution, we wish to help teachers to have a first contribution on this interesting dance of Mallorca.

It is useful to point out that body percussion is learned by singing and not with background music and that creativity is open to new dance or choreography.

## Prospects for future development

This study offers the possibility of development in different perspectives:

- Anthropological to deepen the concept of tradition;
- Educational pedagogical as a resource for developing creativity;
- Musicological in order to reconstruct the origin and the spread of dance;
- Ethnomusicological through a comparative study with other choreographic expressions from other cultures that share common characteristics such as Rassendale Valley Coconut Dance and Lei Cocot Dance in Provence.

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