



Limbo

Limbo is a popular form of dance that originated on the island of Trinidad. The dancer moves to a Caribbean rhythm, then leans backward and dances under a horizontal pole without touching it. Upon touching it or falling backwards, the dancer is "out". When several dancers compete, they travel in single file, and the stick is gradually lowered until only one dancer — who has not touched either the pole or the floor — remains.

In Jamaica, the trendy limbo music of the 1950s was often based on a clave rhythm. It is also widely heard in Jamaican mento recorded in the 1950s, in songs such as "Limbo" by Lord Ticker and Calypsonians or "Limbo" by Denzil Laing & the Wrighglers, as well as many others songs not directly related to the limbo dance theme.

In recent years, limbo dancing has been conducted as a social "icebreaker" game for tourists at Caribbean and other tropical resorts. The winning dancer often receives a prize.

The name comes directly from the Trinidad dialect of English; Merriam–Webster lists the etymology as "English of Trinidad & Barbados; akin to Jamaican English limba to bend, from English limber".

The word 'limbo' is used to denote a form of dance that dates back to the 1950s. Limbo is a West Indian English derivative of 'limber'. Limber is a sixteenth century word used in the dialectical sense to refer to a cart shaft, alluding to its to and fro motion. "Consistent with certain African beliefs, the dance reflects the whole cycle of life". The dancers move under a pole that is gradually lowered from chest level, and they emerge on the other side, as their heads clear the pole, as in the triumph of life over death". This dance is also used as a funeral dance and may be related to the African legba or legua dance.

