

Jamictionary

Dear reader,

This is the first version of the Jamictionary : a compilation of music scores for some of the most danced tunes in the Portuguese Balkfolk scene. This first version was created by me, João Valente. I collected the tunes that seemed to be the most popular in the 2010 and 2020s Portuguese Bal Folk universe.

The what and why

The goal of the Jamictionary is to achieve a minimum common repertoire in the Portuguese Balkfolk jam sessions. Up to a point, it follows the blueprint of jazz's reference jam session book, "The Real Book." It then abandons the binding to exist as a shared folder on the internet that you can save on your computer. Each tune has two files: a PDF file and a MuseScore file. MuseScore is a software that allows you to edit the tunes, so we can create multiple versions of one score. There are no standards for the tunes—the melodies and chords I've provided are only suggestions.

Legal considerations

MuseScore is free (and legal!). I learned most of the tunes by ear and then painfully transcribed them into the software (which, by the way, is an excellent way to memorize them). Money is not a factor for me, the Jamictionary is not for sale. I created it because the rain wouldn't stop in November of 2022, and I wanted a way to pass the time. Unless I find out otherwise, all of this work is legal.

How it is organized

The Jamictionary is divided into Foreign and Portuguese tunes, and each of these sections has two subsections: the dance families (mazurka, waltz, bourrée, etc.) and the singles. "Singles" is a word I'm using to refer to tunes that are specific to certain dances (Tzadik Katamar, Sept Sauts, etc.). That separation already exists in traditional Irish folk music, and they refer to "singles" as "set dances."

The future

If everything goes well, the Portuguese jam sessions will get much livelier and they will be a meeting place for different generations and musical logics. There will be updates with more tunes and dance genres. It'll be a party. If everything goes poorly, this will be just another half-hidden musical database, and a handful of people will use it for gigs without ever mentioning its existence. Alea iacta est!

Let's jam!

João Valente,
Porto, April 2023