

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

www.traditionalmusic.co.uk

Hilli Ballu

Hilli Ballu

Hilli ballu ballai!
Hilli ballu ballight!
Hilli ballu ballai!
Upon a Saturday night.

Put all your right feet out,
Put all your left feet in,
Turn them a little, a little,
And turn yourselves about.

Chu! Hilli ballu etc.

Put all your right hands in,
Put all your left feet out,
Shake them a little, a little,
And turn yourselves about.

Chu! Hilli ballu etc.

Put all your noses in,
Put all your noses out,
Shake them a little, a little,
And turn yourselves about.

Chu! Hilli ballu etc.

Put all your right ears in,
Put all your left ears out,
Shake them a little, a little,
And turn yourselves about.

Chu! Hilli ballu etc.

Put all your neighbours in,
Put all your neighbours out,
Shake them a little, a little,
And turn yourselves about.

Chu! Hilli ballu etc.

skipping round in a circle. "At `Put all your etc.' you do it, and swing round at `Turn etc.' The first verse is repeated after every other verse. At `Chu,' instead of skipping round to the right, skip to left." Variants are given of the spelling and instructions: 1.1 and 3 Hilly; ballu balla / bill lo bill la; [and as one word] Hillibilubila! 1.2 bill lo bill light; [one word] Hillibilubilate! 2.3 Shake them 2.4 twirl. After 1.4 one informant says "You cry Chu and turn the other way saying the same verse." His second version, or second stanza, is "(2) Hillibilubila, etc. Put all your left feet in, Put all your right feet out, Shake them a little a little, And turn yourselves about." Stanzas 4 & 6 (noses, neighbours) omitted by one informant. N. notes that the directions vary at the whim of the speaker, e.g. st. 1 Put all your right hands in,/ Put all your left hands out, and st. 2 Put all your right feet in, Put all your left feet out. Cf. "Hinkumbooby".

Nicholson tries to connect the arcane words with He-ba-laliloo (as in Chambers), interpreted as Ha bas! l... le loup!, i.e. a hunting cry, adapted to lullaby and other songs; and this explains the divergences of forms, the reason why bulalow is not a South British lullaby word (viz. no wolf-hunting), the reason why a child's game begins thus (a jovial cry), and the reason for the meaning of the word hullabaloo. N. also notes that this version "seems to have been learnt by the Golspie children about the middle of 1891, from young folk named Munro who lived in Edinburgh but sometimes spent their holidays in Golspie."

Stray stanzas of this in Rodger, Lang Strang (1948), 5:
Hallabuloobaloo/ Hallabuloo-ba-light,/ Hallabuloobaloo/ Upon
the Saturday night.// Put your right foot in;/ Put your right
foot out,/ Shake it a little, a little,/ And turn it round
about, etc.

MS
APR99