

## The Playford Ball: An Introduction

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The Playford Ball is a very important text both in the history of ECD and for current dancers, musicians, and callers. We recommend it as a good place to start learning about calling for ECD. The Playford Ball (Second Edition, by Kate Van Winkle Keller and Genevieve Shimer, copyright 1994 Country Dance and Song Society) is available in the CDSS online store.

Below you'll find an introduction to The Playford Ball written by Philadelphia area caller, teacher, and dancer Joanna Reiner. After that we offer some clues about how to find what you need in Playford. Good luck, and have fun!

### THE PLAYFORD BALL: AN INTRODUCTION

*by Joanna Reiner*

Every beginning English dance caller and musician needs a collection of resources to help get them started: dance instructions, music, dance histories, manuals, etc. One of the first books I purchased as a fledgling caller was Kate Van Winkle Keller and Genevieve Shimer's *The Playford Ball*. In this volume from the 1990s, Keller and Shimer collect in one place the core of the traditional ECD repertoire: dances published by Playford beginning in 1651, interpreted by Cecil Sharp, Pat Shaw and others, and dances still danced and loved throughout the United States today.

Not only does *The Playford Ball* contain a brief history of John Playford and his English Dancing Master, Cecil Sharp and the English folk revival, and a glossary of formations, figures and steps, it contains 103 dances that you've danced, played, or at least heard of from Fandango to Mad Robin to Sun Assembly to Sellenger's Round. If you've ever done an older dance and wondered where to find the instructions for it, this is the place.

Skim the pages and you'll find not only a wealth of familiar dance names, but fully interpreted instructions, tunes, facsimile of the original manuscript page from Playford (with tune and original instructions), histories, illustrations and nuggets of information on English dancing and its history.

Whether you're starting an ECD group, or just beginning to call or play English dances, *The Playford Ball* will be an invaluable addition to your library!

### FIND WHAT YOU NEED IN PLAYFORD

Here are some of the basic kinds of information you'll find in *The Playford Ball*:

- **The Dances with Music:** This is the bulk of the book. Each page contains the instructions (figures) for the dance, written music for the accompanying tune (in modern notation, as well as reproductions of older musical sources), suggestions about tempo, and historical information about the dance and the tune.
- **Bibliography:** Descriptions of original sources from the 17th, 18th and 19th Centuries, as well as other works cited in the text.
- **Historical Information:** the history of English Country Dance, it's interpretation, and re-interpretation; information about John Playford and Cecil Sharp; methodology.
- **Formations, Figures, and Steps:** Descriptions and diagrams of the various dance formations, the most common dance figures, and steps used in ECD.