

Dance Musicians Resources

by Max Newman, Jill Allen and Susie Lorand

As part of our work on a Musicians Task Group for CDSS, we surveyed resources currently available for contra and English country dance musicians in North America. Here's an overview of what we found.

Advice and Support

- CDSS Online How-To Kits (www.cdss.org/advice-howto.html)—Good for an overview of playing for dances and related topics.
- Shared Weight Musicians List (www.sharedweight.net)—Possibly the most valuable resource on this list! Newer folks are encouraged to send questions to the group and learn from those with more experience. We can't recommend it highly enough.
- Ask one-on-one! The best resource of all is, without a doubt, your fellow musicians. Be daring and ask for advice from musicians you respect, even if you don't know them well.
- Fractured Atlas (<https://www.fracturedatlas.org/site/join/partner/cdss>)—Membership is free for CDSS members. Services available include health insurance, business and promotional support, and other special offers.

Finding Dances to Play

Aside from individual research, dance databases can be your friends for finding dances to play. These include:

- DanceDB—Did you know you can display dances-by-state in a schedule grid?
- The Dance Gypsy (<http://www.thedancegypsy.com>)—An online database for finding traditional dance events and performers all over the US and Canada.
- ContraDanceLinks.com—Probably the most up-to-date of contra dance events.
- TryContra.com—Check out the Day-By-Day List.
- CDSS's Centennial Map of Dances—This is new and fun to use. (And you can add to it!)
- Also, don't forget Other Musicians' Tours—Want a good idea for a tour? Check out what other bands are doing. And buy their album while you're at it.

Getting Booked

- "How to Get Rich and Famous as a Traditional Musician" (http://www.cdss.org/tl_files/cdss/documents/how-to/how-to-get-rich-famous-music-cdss-news-fall-09.pdf)—This article, by Ethan Hazzard-Watkins (of Elixir), appeared in the newsletter in the Fall 2009 issue. It's still great advice;
- Catapult Dance Showcase (www.catapultshowcase.com)—This national spotlight for newer contra bands and callers is taking a break right now, but keep an eye on it.

Camps

Look out for camps with a teaching focus from dance musicians. Some to look at:

- CDSS Camps (www.cdss.org/camp) in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and West Virginia; a Midwest camp is in the works for 2016 (see Letters and Announcements in this issue, pp 3-4).
- Ashokan Northern and Southern Weeks (www.ashokan.org) in New York
- Festival of American Fiddle Tunes (www.centrum.org) in Washington
- Bay Area CDS camps (www.bacds.org) in California
- 2015 CDSS Centennial Tour (www.cdss100.org)—Several of the stops will have musician workshops.
- If there are events nearby, you can always encourage them to put some music workshops on the schedule.
- If you need some money to make something happen...

Funding

- CDSS grants and financial backing assistance (<http://www.cdss.org/outreach-funds.html>)—They've been used for one-on-one study, weekend workshops, hiring an experienced performer to work with new folks at a series dance, and more. Grants are usually between \$250-\$500. Get in touch with Linda Henry, linda@cdss.org if you have an idea that needs a little financial support to make into a reality.
- Your local or state arts commissions might offer grants or other assistance.

continued on page 16

(Dance Musicians Resources, cont. from p.14)

Sound

It's good to know how a sound system works, especially if you get stuck doing your own sound. So you'd better read...

- All Mixed Up by Bob Mills. A remarkably enduring overview of sound for dances; online for free. (www.bobmills.org/amu)

Tunes

There are many places to look for tunes, but it's still hard to beat the standard tune books, among them:

- *The Portland Collection* (I, II, and just out III) by Sue Songer.
- *New England Fiddler's Repertoire* by Randy Miller et al.
- *English Country Dance Tunes* (I and II) by Peter Barnes.
- *The Waltz Book* (I-IV) by Bill Matthiesen.

All are available from the CDSS Store, of course, <https://store.cdss.org/>.

And, of course, there are plenty of other resources out there not specifically for dance musicians, from Kickstarter to arts grants. And videos online (e.g., YouTube) are an amazing way to see what your fellow musicians out there are doing. If there are resources you find particularly useful, or wish existed, let us know on Shared Weight or Facebook.

Happy music-making.
Jill, Max and Susie

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Denise Smith

(“People support...,” cont. from p.15)

appreciate all the work that you have been doing for the group. It seems, though, that here you are having trouble getting _____ done. Is there some help that I can provide, to help you with this?”)

Finally, we dealt with the challenge of *Encouraging Youth Participation in Dances*. To cope with this challenge, tactics included: having young people serve as greeters, providing rides to people without cars, providing good food and snacks (with no negative feedback for those who bring nothing), providing brief dance-skills workshops both before the dance starts and during the break, asking parents to bring their teens, asking all dancers to recruit among their friends (and friends’ children), charging young people a reduced admission fee, flash mob dancing at malls and colleges, and sponsoring a happy hour before or an ice cream social after a dance event. Very important, it was said, that dance organizers maintain a keen awareness of the effects of the cost, both in money and transportation efforts, to young people with little or no money. (Two good resources are “Putting on a Dance,” <http://www.puttinonthedance.org/post-conference/>, as well as “Advice and How-to” section under CDSS’s Resources, <http://www.cdss.org/advice-howto.html>).

¹ It was noted that, especially for new dancers, potluck suppers are very useful in drawing people in and making them feel part of the community (and more likely to come to future dances). Even those who do not or cannot bring homemade goods should be welcomed, it was said. Younger people especially (ex. college students) do not have fully-equipped kitchens and are unable to cook, yet they make excellent dance partners and to make them feel welcome can only help build up attendance.

² At this point, BIDA (Boston Intergenerational Dance Advocates) was mentioned as an example of an impetus that came from younger dancers to foster connections across generations via dancing and social events appealing to all

Susan Peterson has loved to dance since she started folk dancing at the age of five. She now lives near Philadelphia and dances with the Germantown Country Dancers.

