

report that they have a core of 20-40% of their dancers who return each time and the rest are either one-time or occasional attendees. The reality is that we would all like to have a few more dancers on the floor, both to pay the bills and, more importantly, to contribute to that wonderful energy that happens when the hall is full to overflowing.

Pretty much every group reports using social media, email lists, and flyers to promote their events. Others go further and send out regular press releases to community calendar listings, blogs, and media outlets. Some feel that it is worth the money to buy space in the local paper or to boost the ad on Facebook. Especially in smaller communities, the media are happy to cover dance events as a 'feel-good' piece and may even come and film the event. Posters are still widely used but appear to be falling out of favour as other strategies prove more effective. Where the dance happens in a town that also has regular contra dances, there are often verbal announcements from the stage.

Finally, virtually everyone agrees that word of mouth is by far the best strategy. Once people have had a good time at the dance, they talk it up with their friends and encourage them to come. For this reason, it is worthwhile to reach out to groups like homeschoolers, Waldorf schools, hiking clubs, Christian youth groups, seniors and Guides/Scouts. People have been known to bring their whole birthday party or retirement celebration to a dance. It is a good idea to ask people to take flyers back to their communities and ask them to promote it there.

Conclusion

Organizing a community dance series can be a valuable contribution to the life of a community, but it does come with significant organizational and logistical challenges. The next article in this series will continue the topic, focusing on music, repertoire, and non-dance activities that contribute to a successful series.

Contributors to this article include Sarah Lee, Rick and Chloe Mohr, Dean Herrington, Chrissy Fowler, Bruce Snider, Sam Baumgarten, Andy Davis, Jennie Inglis, Leslie Gotfrit, Emily Addison, Paul Rosenberg and Sue Hulsether.

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Contra Dance: The Lowdown

by Alan P. Winston

For the Gillie Wheesels, San Luis Obispo Contra, Dance to Larry Unger's Lowdown Hoedown + Beth Cohen's Reel

Duple minor improper contra

- A1: Balance the ring, slide or spin one place to the right.
Repeat.
- A2: Balance the ring; gents roll lady (partner) in front and step to the other side
neighbors brief swing, face across.
- B1: Circle left three places, swing partner on the side, face across.
- B2: Ladies chain over to neighbor;
ladies ricochet,
gents ricochet, look for new neighbors.

Last time through, ladies cross back and swing partner on side.

Click on the screenshot for a YouTube video of the Gillie Wheesels playing the tunes.



David Foster-Evans: octave mandolin; Guy Wallace: guitar; Barry Johnson: bodhran; Judi Brown: violin
Video: Terry Simons

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