

Grants Far and Wide: Ashland Community Dance and Song Weekend

by Brooke Friendly, Ashland, OR

When a group of us in Ashland, OR, wanted to create a new weekend of family and community dance, music, and song, we turned to CDSS and applied for (and received) a community outreach grant. The Ashland Community Dance and Song Weekend was born! Held January 12-13, 2019, in Ashland OR, the event was also a way to encourage more youth involvement and help build a collaborative relationship among several area organizations — Rogue World Music (RWM), the Ashland Country Dancers (ACD, a branch of the Heather and Rose Country Dancers), Southern Oregon Contra Dance (SOContra), and Creekside Strings.

About 130 people total participated in the various events, with folks coming from Southern Oregon and Northern California. Participants included contra dancers, English country dancers, international folk dancers, singers with Rogue World Music and other local choirs, Irish dancers,, and a French music group.

On Saturday, the 12th, we had two singing workshops, followed by a family dance that I called to music provided by Creekside Strings fiddle students. The event was attended by 24 - 30 people, and included a performance during the break by a trio of teens.

I also called the evening community dance (a mix of English, contra, ceilidh, Scottish, Irish, and Breton dance), this time to music by the internationally-known band Roguery (Anita Anderson, Dave Bartley, Shira Kammen, and Jim Oakde). At the break we had a performance by Rogue Morris and Sword and a song led a Rogue World Ensemble singer. A local group of folks who play French music joined us and played some bourées and waltzes. This was hugely successful, with more than 80 people in attendance. On Sunday, the 13th, we closed with a community meeting and potluck.



Afternoon dance at the Ashland Community Dance and Song Weekend (photo by Brooke Friendly)

Some comments on the music/singing improvisation workshop:

- “I feel so much more comfortable and inspired to take risks with my singing.”
- “I feel like I had a small breakthrough in my singing.”
- “I learned I can listen and then trust I can create a sound I want to hear.”

And here’s what one of the participants had to say about the community dance:

“So much FUN! I was a total newbie and was wonderfully welcomed and taken care of. I had a blast!”

We now have a successful model. Ashland Country Dancers hosted another community dance on April 5th (with marketing help from RWM and SOContra), and we are talking about options for another family dance.

This event could not have happened without financial assistance from CDSS. We may not be able to again bring a full band from outside the region for something like this but we will continue to cultivate our local musicians and build on the connections made with this collaborative project.

English Country Dance: A Trip to Provence

by Susan Kevra (to “Voyage de la Diabline” by Rachel Bell)

Duple improper

- A1 Ones ½ figure eight down
Balance right hand; box the gnat
- A2 Twos ½ figure eight up
Balance right hand; box the gnat
- B1 All join hands, balance in; Rotate left (clockwise) 1/4
Do that again
Pass partner right; turn in to face opposite gender neighbor and left shoulder round*
- B2 Open Ladies Chain over and back (men cast left as women start the chain) [1st Gents can do an extra curly cue ccw after the chain to avoid standing around before starting the next figure 8]

Background on the dance: In the fall of 2014, Susan served as Professor in Residence at the Vanderbilt in France study abroad program in Aix-en-Provence. Rachel came for a visit and upon her arrival, Susan and Rachel took a ride on a diabline, a kind of souped up electric cart that transports people around the pedestrian part of the old city. It’s mostly intended for old people, but it works well for jet lagged musicians with heavy accordions, too. Rachel wrote the tune, “Voyage de la Diabline” for Susan a few months after her trip, and Susan’s choreography came shortly after. It was the first of quite a few collaborations; the two of them hope to publish a book of their tunes and dances and a companion recording. Stay tuned!

Le Voyage de la Diabline

for Susan Kevra

Rachel Bell, 2015

Click on
the tune to
download a
PDF copy.
The dance is
included in
Barnes Vol III,
available in
the CDSS
online store

* This is the figure previously known as “gypsy.” Though CDSS has not jumped into the fray to endorse another term we are aware that some communities have made a substitution for this figure. See page 24 for more on this topic.