

Centennial Reel

by Rick Mohr

Contra, Duple Proper

- A1 Long lines forward and back (8)
Right and left through (chestnut-style) (8)
- A2 First lady and second gent (right-hand person of each pair) cross, passing right shoulders (2)
Gypsy and swing partner (14)
- B1 Down the center, four in line (6)
Sliding doors (trade places as couples and turn alone) (4)
Return (face center, still in line of four) (6)
- B2 3/4 hey (center couple pass right shoulders to start) (12)
Other couple push off (forming new long lines in progressed places) (4)

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Notes: Choreography has evolved hugely in the one hundred years CDSS has been promoting contra dancing. This dance includes some figures from a hundred years ago, some just hitting the scene, and some from the years in between.

- The dance starts proper (gents in one line, ladies in the other) as did most dances a hundred years ago. Back then all dancers knew the chestnut-style “right and left through,” but these days it will be unfamiliar to many. Same-role neighbors pass through across (without taking hands) and do an arm-around cast on the other side—right-hand person goes forward, left-hand person backs up. If your community does “right and left through” with hands, try calling “pass through” and “arm-around cast” instead.
- Down the center four in line is a staple of many old dances. Here it appears with the emerging “sliding doors” figure, where couples dynamically trade ends of the line. Here’s one way to teach it: “Go down the hall six steps, and stop. Stay facing down. Right hand couple take a step forward. When I say go, still facing down, as couples move sideways to trade places with the other couple. Go! Now turn alone to face the music.”
- Some call this figure “tag the line,” the name of a related figure in Modern Western square dancing. But “sliding doors” is preferred as the two figures are rather different.
- After returning in the line of four, dancers face in and the center couple (second lady and first gent) pass right to start the hey. When the other couple (first lady and second gent) meet in the center for the second time they push off with both hands, moving back and left to end proper and progressed.
- Heys are everywhere in English and Scottish dancing but weren’t used in contras until modern times. According to Tony Parkes, the first modern contra with a hey is thought to be Ted Sannella’s “Bonny Jean,” written in 1975. More recently the hey inspired improvising dancers to invent “push offs.”
- As the dance begins again with forward and back, dancers should shift focus to their new neighbors, doing the right and left through with a new person.

R.M.

Rick Mohr’s contra calling and choreography have been delighting dancers across North America and beyond for twenty-five years. Many of his dances (posted at <http://rickmohr.net/Contra/Dances.asp>) are coast-to-coast favorites, and he is a popular caller at dance weeks, weekends and local dances. Rick lives in Philadelphia with his wife Chloe and son Evan. He wrote “Centennial Reel” for the Country Dance and Song Society’s Centennial in 2015.