[Intro music]

**Julie Vallimont:** Hello and welcome to Contra Pulse, I’m Julie Vallimont. In this podcast series we’ll be conducting interviews with contra musicians and talking to them about their craft. What kind of music do you play for contra dancing? Why do you choose the tunes that you do? How did you learn to play? What, in your mind, makes the dancers move? How do you think contra dance is changing? What’s your idea of perfect contra dance music? We’ll be exploring all those things, hearing stories from their experiences, stories on the dance floor. And we’ll begin to get a sense of what’s happening and how the contra scene is changing. Thanks for joining us.

Today we’re hearing from Dudley Laufman. I was very happy to be able to find some time to sit down with Dudley in the woods at Maine Fiddle Camp last summer along with his daughter, Linsday Holden. Dudley is often at Maine Fiddle Camp in the summertime. He comes to teach accordion and share stories and he also leads the evening dance. The barn dance is a big hit, there’s always lots of people who come and the stage is full of musicians who sit in with him, as is tradition - so many folks that they often don’t all fit on the stage. Dudley has been playing and calling dances for over 50 years. He’s been the leader of the Canterbury Dance Orchestra which has several recordings. Dudley helped keep contra dancing going, and Dudley Dancers, as they are called, went to his dances in the 60s and since then have spread them throughout the country. Many of our contra dances today around the country day can be traced back to Dudley Dances.

He is the recipient of a 2009 National Heritage Fellowship awarded by the NEA which is the United States’ highest honor in the folk and traditional arts. We’re very happy to talk with him today and hear some of his stories and experiences over the years. Thank you so much, Dudley, for joining us.

**Dudley Laufman:** Okay, fire away!

**Julie:** Fire away! Okay, thank you so much. So I’m curious to get a sense of how contra music has changed over the years, and the tunes that you’re playing then. I know you’re still calling now. So where do you want to start? Do you want to talk about the kind of dances that you call now versus then, and the tunes that go with them, or how do you pick tunes--?

**Dudley:** Oh, all right. I’ll answer that. For a whole evening, I like to make a more or less even arrangement between jigs and reels.

**Dudley:** So one dance will be for a jig, the next one will be for a reel or a hornpipe, and I try to vary that. And then when I’m working with people who don’t dance very much, I very seldom do squares.

**Dudley:** Takes too long to get ‘em in the squares, particularly at a wedding. You get them all in there and then somebody says, “Oh, I gotta say goodbye to the bride,” and they’ll leave.

**Julie:** [laughs] And then the square can’t--

**Dudley:** Yeah. So I don’t usually do the square dances. But when I choose a tune, like I said, either like a jig or a reel--but I also like to arrange the keys, although I’m not too fussy about that. But if that’s something--if I’ve got a whole bunch of tunes in the key of G, I’ll try to find something that’ll go into D,  just to give it a little variation on it. But in the regular--no, not regular, but the contra dance, from what I see of it, they use three tunes per dance--

**Dudley:** --called “medleys”?

**Dudley:** I never do that.

**Julie:** Hm.

**Dudley:** I never have. The only time that I did medleys was the original Sir Roger de Coverley Virginia Reel. It was done to--the first part where the corners come, that was done to a jig, and then the reel, the Strip the Willow was done to a reel, and then the processional, the marching around was done to a march. And at the dance that I used to go to at Mistwold Farm, he played Larry O’Gaff for the jig--

**Dudley:** Macloud’s Reel for the reel--and John Brown’s Body for the march. And they never changed. That was right out of the Henry Ford book. And so that was--you could call that a medley.

**Dudley:** And, as a dancer, you had to pay attention to, ‘cause you couldn’t go marching around while they were still playing the reel, and if we did, Betty Quimby would let us know--in no uncertain terms. But otherwise, I rarely will do a medley.

**Dudley:** First of all, I got enough to do: play the accordion, call the dance, manage the floor. If Sylvia is playing for me, and insisted on doing a medley, I say, “You pick it and tell me when you’re gonna change,” and that sort of thing. Otherwise, I don’t. But that seems to be a big thing with the modern contra dance bands. Medleys for three tunes per dance, mostly. And then the kinds of tunes, I think a lot of them are traditional tunes, but it’s the way they’re played. They’re played faster, and sometimes there’s some blues riffs in it, or jazz--

**Dudley:** --but mostly it’s the speed, and there’s the difference between when I was a kid. When I was a kid growing up, the first dances I went to were at Mistwold’s Farm, and when he’d play for the Virginia Reel--well, I just told you what he’d play for that, but they would do a square dance to Hinky Dinky Parlez Vous, and they would do another one to--there was another tune they used to--oh yeah, Captain Jinks. And until I went off to agricultural school, I thought that’s all it was. I went to the aggie down Walpole, Mass. My pomology instructor--that’s the trees, apple trees--

**Julie:** Yeah!

**Dudley:** He and his wife ran square dances. We had square dancing every Monday night--at the gym, and then they were—that was where I learned about dancing, more to it, and one of the fellows told me, he said, “You know, if you’re gonna continue doing this, you gotta stop skipping,” and I said, “Well, that’s the way I did it.” “Doesn’t matter,” he said. “You gotta stop skipping. Keep your feet close to the floor.”

**Dudley:** So I learned a little bit more about the proper way of doing it. And when you went off to Square Dance Sundays, you’re going to dance to Ralph Page, and he had a dance every Tuesday night at the Boston YWCA, and he had a band, it was his Boston Orchestra. They did not do medleys.

**Dudley:** And they were a lot--all--two of the musicians played with the Boston Symphony. I mean, they were very--

**Julie:** --skilled musicians.

**Dudley:** Yeah. And they were good, too. And they could play--Walter Lob could play The Devil’s Dream like you never heard it, it was really something, you know. He just died recently. And--so that hall, the YWCA, it was all white with the chandeliers and it had a very polished feeling to it, and the dancers were very smooth. Most of them from MIT, you know. They just sort of glided across the floor. And occasionally Ralph Page would do the Money Musk, and everybody groaned, including me, ‘cause it wasn’t much fun.

**Julie:** Ha!

**Dudley:** But I went up to a dance in Peterborough one time, and Ralph had his New Hampshire Orchestra there, which consisted of Dick Richardson and Russ Allen on fiddles, and Johnny Trombly on the piano--he’s the one that taught Bob McQuillen about chording—and Junior Richardson on the stand-up bass, and then Bob McQuillen on the accordion. And that music was the best I’ve ever heard.

**Dudley:** And Ralph did more squares than contras in those days. He was a singing caller--

**Dudley:** He was one of the boys, he was in the union. He was--he really liked the square dances, and he would play in town halls, and had a pretty rough crowd come, and he did that for a long time. But the band--the New Hampshire Orchestra--

**Julie:** Yeah, let’s talk more about the band.

**Dudley:** Okay, they were something.

**Julie:** Yeah! What about it? You say it was like the best music you ever heard. What--

**Dudley:** It’s the sound.

**Julie:** Yeah

**Dudley:** It’s the sound. They played--when I heard them first was at the Bell Studio, which is a place called Folkways in Peterborough, and it was a old barn, and it had a sprung floor.

**Dudley:** And the people who came were local farmers and woodchoppers and factory workers and summer folks. It was quite a mixture. There was no computer programmers then. And it was a great mixture for the dance. And Ralph Page did squares like Red River Valley, and Hinky Dinky Parlez Vous and Golden Slippers, sang all the calls. And then when he did contras, why, it was—Money Musk, Chorus jig, Lady Walpole’s, Rio Morning Star --and that was another thing, there was another caller there, Gene Gowing, and he would do Durang’s Hornpipe, things like that. But the music itself was very rich--

**Dudley:** --and--

**Julie:** Instrumentation-wise?

**Dudley:** Yeah, there was the accordion--

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** --and two fiddles--

**Dudley:** --and they were playing mostly in unison. Russ would go into harmony once in a while.

**Dudley:** He was trained, you know. Dick was not trained. But I one time had Dick’s fiddle. His daughter gave me the fiddle and I had it for a while. Because I wasn’t using it, I gave it back, but it was one of his fiddles.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** One time, we were asked to do a dance in Marlborough, where Dick came from, and Marlborough Historical Society wanted me to--I wrote a book about Dick--and they wanted me to do a culminating event where we had a talk about the book and we would have some dance. And so, Walt was there, playing one of these big old accordions--

**Julie:** Mm-hm. And Johnny on piano?

**Dudley:** No, he was gone by that time.

**Julie:** Okay. So you’re talking about a different time.

**Dudley:** Yeah. Carl Jacobs played the bass, but he had heard Junior so he knew what to do.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** I was playing Dick Richardson--and Jacqueline was playing Russ Allen

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** --and, yeah, that was the crowd.

**Julie:** Who would have been on piano?

**Dudley:** Ah, Larry Siegal. He’s the one who wrote a play about me, Dancing Master of Canterbury.

**Julie:** Yeah

**Dudley:** And so I told--I played them recordings of the band and...we just could not get that sound. Close! We came very close. But it didn’t have that magic.

**Julie:** Yeah!

**Dudley:** One of the things about the magic of that was that when you get the whole band playing, it was great, but during the Korean War, McQuillen went off, went to a dance in Hancock where it was Junior and Russ and Johnny and Dick...and it had that sound. No accordion, but it still had that sound. And then I went to another dance one time, and Russ wasn’t there, so it was Junior, Dick, and Johnny. And then one time I had a dance at my house, and Junior and Dick came down and played for it, didn’t even have Johnny And then another dance, we just had Junior sick or drunk or something-- and we just had Dick...and that was it! Dick was the key.

**Julie:** He was the magic!

**Dudley:** He was the one that made that magic, yeah.

**Julie:** What was his fiddle style from? Do you know?

**Dudley:** He was untrained. It was all in his wrist.

**Dudley:** His right wrist was bigger than his left wrist--

**Julie:** Huh! Wow.

**Dudley:** --and it was just the way he played. And it just had a--and I’ve tried to duplicate it, I can’t do it, and I wasn’t able to do it even with instrumentation. Was not able to. Came close, but not the same.

**Julie:** Yeah. Are there recordings of him?

**Dudley:** Well, you know, they made some recordings. I think it was late ‘38, or in the ‘40s, a new disc label, the 78s--78 RPMs.

**Julie:** Yep.

**Dudley:** And he--Ralph--did an album of New England singing calls, and so there’s Jingle Bells

and Girl Left Behind Me, and Red River Valley, Soldier Joy was on there too, but he sang, he sang.

**Julie:** Oh!

**Dudley:** He sang the notes to that. And the combination, it was Dick Richardson, there was a banjo player, Junior on the bass, Johnny Trombly on the piano, someone else. It was close, pretty close, and then—but anyway, later on, Michael Herman, down in New York City, ran a folk dance house, folk dancer, and he got Ralph to come down there and put on some dances, and then finally decided to make some recordings. So he got--there were two sets. Ralph had a band in Boston, and that was good.

**Dudley:** And he also brought his--Phil Jamoulis, and they had a very Boston sound, very smooth, a little fast. So I did a bunch of recordings with them. We recorded Petronella and Opera Reel and Turkey in the Straw and Canadian Breakdown, a couple of others. And--oh, no, the ones that he did with just the Boston Boys were Crooked Stovepipe, Chinese Breakdown, and Silver and Gold Two Step, and a couple

of others, just the three. So they recorded those, and then Ralph would put them on and call to them, so they had both with and without calls. And it was pretty smooth music, you know. And then, then they were joined by Walter Erickson, and he was an accordionist, a studio accordion player from New York.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** So he changed the sound. He was very loud. And then, they did Opera Reel, Petronella, and the Canadian Breakdown, and that was, again, with and without the calls. And then he did a batch with Dick and Junior and Johnny.

**Dudley:** Just those three. And they recorded Chorus Jig, Money Musk, Climbing the Golden Stairs, Stumpy Reel, and a couple of others, and did those without the calls, and then did the same thing with the calls.

**Julie:** Do you know where those recordings are now?

**Dudley:** Yeah, the Ralph Page Memorial Collection in Durham, and I’ve got some at home.  And then they were joined by Walter Ericson, and they did Glise de Sherbrooke. And then Glise de Sherbrooke sold over a million copies.

**Julie:** Wow!

**Dudley:** In those days, that was something.

**Julie:** Yeah! That’s a lot of copies.

**Dudley:** Ten-inch, and then a twelve-inch 78. But Dick didn’t like Walter. Because when Walter plays, it’s very emphatic. He would inch closer to the microphone and he would drown Dick out, and Dick didn’t like that too much. And they recorded a little bit too fast. It was evident Ralph had to squeeze a certain amount of the dance into the amount of time--

**Julie:** Oh, I see

**Dudley:** So it was played a little fast, but--

**Julie:** A little fast for dancing-- [crosstalk]

**Dudley:** --not bad, but--

**Julie:** --which is good to know, because listening to those recordings now--

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** --they had to know that’s not the tempo they would’ve danced to.

**Dudley:** Yeah. And it was also, for a while there, until they did something that you couldn’t--they’d play a harmonica along with the record, make the same pitch. But that got changed, because when I was learning to play harmonica, I was able to use the record.

**Dudley:** But I thought I’d died and gone to heaven when those records came out, and I just played 'em over and over again.

**Julie:** How old were you then?

**Dudley:** Uh, sixteen, seventeen?

**Julie:** Yeah? So you’re kinda growing up playing those--

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** Like, when I wanted to learn to play contra music, I listened to the New England Chestnuts albums-

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** --and Bob McQuillen albums.

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** And so for you, this was like that for you.

 **Dudley:** Sure

**Julie:** These are the albums you were listening to.

**Dudley:** And I didn’t use--when I called my first—I called my first dance to it, in Norfolk County Agricultural High School, near Walpole, Mass, and I used a recording, and it was on Star Label.

It was French. And the two of us Reel de  Gondolier, which was really the Crooked Stovepipe except, it was crooked, and it wouldn’t wait for me when I was calling.

**Julie:** [laughs] It wouldn’t wait for you!

**Dudley:** I said, “Mrs. Ashman, can you do this on the piano?” And from then on, I’ve never used live music—I mean, recorded music.

**Julie:** Okay, makes sense.

**Dudley:** I did--for a while there, I was training myself to call, and I would use those records to train--teach myself how to call. And then when I was up at the University of Mass, we had a dance at Bowditch Hall. It was the 4-H hall. And I liked to dance, so--and I didn’t have any musicians. So I put on the record, and that was about—and it didn’t take me long to get into live music, and then stay that way.

**Julie:** Mm-hm. Now, did you--when you moved to New Hampshire and you joined the dancing there, what was that experience like?

**Dudley:** Well, when I first moved, at that particular time, there was really a dearth of musicians.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** They were all dying off. Up in that area, we had Howard Gardner, and then there were a couple of others who played the fiddle, and at that time, Bob McQuillen was playing, and he was only playing the keyboard--accordion, he wasn’t playing the keyboard--

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** Yeah. So I could get him, and Sylvia--and there were a couple of others, but

really, there wasn’t much, you know?

**Julie:** Piano players?

**Dudley:** Uh, no.

**Julie:** Hm!

**Dudley:** But I had Joe Ryan. Did you ever hear of him?

**Julie:** No

**Dudley:** Well, he lived in Northfield, New Hampshire, and he lived off in the woods, built some yurts, and encouraged people to come live there so--you know Bonnie Raitt?

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** Her brother. So--

**Julie:** Huh!

**Dudley:** --and her father. And Bonnie. She lived there for a while. And then the Hanson brothers. So we began to get some young people involved, interested in music. And then my ex-wife, Cynthia, played the piano, and Sylvia on the accordion, and Nicholas S. Howe was playing fiddle, and I was playing accordion and calling.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** And at the beginning, to get that going—and then we got invited down to Newport Folk Festival, in 1965.

**Dudley:** So I’ve pulled together a bunch of musicians. Not McQuillen. He was off on some other track and wasn’t interested. But, Walter Lob, and Dave Fuller--Dave played the accordion, and Nicholas Howe and Newt Tolman on the flute.

**Julie:** Oh, yeah!

**Dudley:** And then I brought a bunch of dancers down from Nelson--

**Julie:** Yeah, and the rest is history, as they say.

**Dudley:** Oh, we stole the show. That was the same year that Bob McQuillen went electric.

**Julie:** Bob McQuillen went electric?

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Lindsay Holden:** Bob Dylan.

**Julie:** Bob Dylan!

**Dudley:** I’m sorry.

**Julie:** Good, okay, I was like, “But this is another story!” That would be cool.

**Dudley:** Yeah, I’m sorry.

**Julie:** That would be cool! [laughing]

**Dudley:** I got my words confused.

**Julie:** Yeah!

**Dudley:** Anyway, and I didn’t find out about him doing that till I was on my way home. It was on the radio, Bob. Bob Dylan went electric.

**Dudley:** But when we came off the stage from playing, there was about ten of us playing, and it was a pretty rich sound. And there were about ten--six or seven—eight couples dancing. And I asked everybody to dress up like they do in Nelson. I was wearing a white suit, and everybody wears a suit and tie, women had very long dresses. But there was one couple that came, Lauren Puffer, he lived in Loudon, New Hampshire, and he didn’t--he wasn’t a Monadnock region, and he and his wife had only been to a couple of dances. But I wanted ‘em. I wanted people there so the audience could see what this is like.

**Julie:** Mm-hm. So was that normal for everyone to wear suits, or was this like a special occasion?

**Dudley:** No, they dressed up, a pretty tweedy bunch.

**Julie:** So if you were just playing a regular dance, what would you wear?

**Dudley:** Suit and tie.

**Julie:** Suit and tie.

**Dudley:** Yeah.

**Julie:** Yeah. People would dress up to kinda--

**Dudley:** There’s no sneakers and jeans, in those days.

**Julie:** Yeah. Now people just wear whatever they want, shirts, t-shirts--

**Dudley:** Yeah.  [crosstalk] It’s changing a little bit. Most women dress up, when I see ‘em at dances these days. But the guys, they wear black shoes, black socks up to here, and then shorts, running shorts, and white legs and they haven’t tanned yet--

**Julie:** [laughs]

**Dudley:** --and then a tank top. I can’t imagine a woman wanting to dance with him.I just can’t imagine it.

**Julie:** Yeah

**Dudley:** But they’re beginning to change. Guys are beginning to wear trousers and--

**Julie:** So you’re talking about this full, rich sound.

**Dudley:** Yeah.

**Julie:** What would be your perfect fantasy contra band?

**Dudley:** Yeah.

**Julie:** What would it have in it?

**Dudley:** Accordion--

**Julie:** Two fiddles--

**Dudley:** Fiddles, accordion, string bass, and piano.

**Julie:** String bass, piano, no guitar?

**Dudley:** No.

**Julie:** You haven’t talked about guitar at all, really

**Dudley:** Well, I mean, recently, you know--we’ve got a guitar player now, Bob Reed

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** He’s in the--Tuftonboro, New Hampshire, and he plays guitar for us a lot. And he’s the only one.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** He’s really good.

**Julie:** Mm-hm. And is it guitar and piano, or one or the other?

**Dudley:** One or the other, he used to play them both.

**Julie:** Yeah, no, not at the same time.

**Dudley:** Sometimes we would. The other night we had a dance in Nelson and we had Gordon Peery on the piano and Randy Miller on the fiddle and Lindsay on the fiddle and me on the accordion and Sam....

**Julie:** Oh yeah, Sam the accordionist! From here!

**Dudley:** Yeah, well, he lives in Nelson, you see [crosstalk]

**Julie:** Oh, cool!

**Dudley:** So he showed up, and then there was a fellow playing electric guitar, and then we had a saxophone player for a while.

**Julie:** Electric guitar, bold.

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** Cool! I mean, like, Airdance had guitar and piano for a long time.

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** With David Surette, sometimes the mandolin--

**Dudley:** Yep

**Julie:** What do you think of that sound?

**Dudley:** That’s a nice sound. And I guess the thing that I lament is that we never found anybody to reproduce that. And Barbara Paul and I both agree that that was a very elusive sound.

**Julie:** Yeah, what was--I would love to go back to listen to those recordings of him and figure out, is it the groove he’s playing with? Is it the way he plays the tunes? [crosstalk]

**Dudley:** Yeah. Well, the 78 recordings with Walter Ericson on the accordion were close. But, again, didn’t have it. Didn’t have it. There was an echo to that barn. But like I said, it was Dick Richardson. It was just him.  No matter where he’s playing. Even in my cellar, you know and it just had a thing to the way he played it--

**Dudley:** --the way he played the lilts and the boing...fantastic. [laughs] Never seen anything like it. But you were asking about -back in those days, they didn’t do medleys.

**Julie:** Yeah

**Dudley:** They didn’t do medleys. And the tempos were apt to be more moderate and fast--

**Julie:** Yeah, let’s talk about tempo for a second. ‘Cause I think modern dancers expect faster tempos--

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** --and I think it’s a big difference in the way they’re moving. And some people say, well, you know, it’s about the footwork, that people--like, say you have a dancer and there’s actives and

There’s inactives, and you’re out and You’re not dancing, you could be doing some footwork, and then slower tempos are better--like, can you talk about how the tempos fit the dance then--

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** --and how you like ‘em now?

**Dudley:** Yeah, well the tempos then were slower, and that made the music feel richer. That was in the Monadnock region. In Boston, it was faster--and the people doing step-dancing in those days, they didn’t.

**Dudley:** When they were inactive, they were inactive.

**Julie:** They just hung out.

**Dudley:** Yeah, watched what was going on, learning something, but they didn’t have to be boogie-ing all the time. Now you’ll hear Chorus Jig now, besides the fact that they played a ridiculous tune for the second tune, when the actives are going down the side, the inactives are going swinging in the middle. That changes it.

**Julie:** Yeah

**Dudley:** It’s not Chorus Jig anymore.

**Julie:** Yeah. So would you rather no Opera Reel? You’d just rather have it straight?

**Dudley:** Yeah, well why did they pick that up anyway, the Opera Reel? It’s a great tune but--

**Julie:** It’s a great tune, but why there?

**Dudley:** Well, the only reason that I can think of is, the dance is similar to Chorus Jig, the dance Opera Reel.

**Julie:** No one dances the dance Opera Reel anymore.

**Dudley:** Well, they do it if I play it for them. If I play for contra dances, I’ll do that dance--

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** --and I suggest to them, play Chorus Jig as an alternate tune--

**Julie:** [laughs]

**Dudley:** They don’t like it. They just don’t like it. [laughs]

**Julie:** [laughing] That’s funny.

**Dudley:** [laughs] But Chorus Jig? I’ll drop out if it’s not that tune, you know, it’s gotta be that tune. I remember one time down at Buffalo Gap, I was hired to come down there and play, I had Sylvia and Tim at my side, and Vince. After supper, they’ll have a little aperitif, and then the evening program will start, they’ll do some dancing. So we lined up there in the dining room and Isaid, Oh, let’s do Chorus Jig. So, they had a bunch of musicians there, so I danced. Sylvia was playing. I got down there at the end and see she’s switched into...The Deer Song ??? --it’s a song Bob McQuillen wrote about deers.

**Julie:** Hm, I don’t know.

**Dudley:** Not The Deer Hunter. Oh, Dancing Bear!

**Julie:** Oh, Dancing Bear! Yeah.

**Dudley:** She switched into that. Well, it’s in minor.

**Julie:** Oh yeah, she told us about that. [laughs]

**Dudley:** [laughs] Yeah, switched into that. So afterwards—and so I dropped out!

**Julie:** [laughs]

**Dudley:** And then afterwards, I came up to give her hell. I said, Jesus, girl, what the hell’d you change into that for? She said, If you know which side your bread’s buttered on, you’ll do it! [laughs]

**Julie:** [laughs]

**Lindsay:** [laughs]

**Julie:** So, where--

**Dudley:** But then I used to be able to say, You haven’t won the Governor’s Award. But she did! [laughs]

**Julie:** Well, then you couldn’t hold that over her anymore.

**Dudley:** Yeah.

**Julie:** So how long would you--like, today it seems very standard, this is like a little thing I wonder about, it seems very standard for a band to need to play like two or three tunes, and I almost think most of the time the one tune is like, you shouldn’t do that; it’s like, too boring--

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** --needs to be interesting. And--are the dances being run longer than they used to, or did people just expect something different back then? Like, would you do Chorus Jig for eight minutes, ten minutes?

**Dudley:** Yep!

**Julie:** Not get bored of that tune?

**Dudley:** Nope. Never. Never ever get bored.

**Julie:** No.

**Dudley:** In fact, if anybody gets bored playing this music, they have no business playing it. They should go do something else. The tunes are meant for constant repetition, and you can do things with them if you want; I like playing them the same way all the time, but you can play them in such a manner that you can play around with the tunes. You don’t need to switch to another one.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** One time, we went to a dance in Concord, Mass. It was the Cotillion, and it was Tony Parkes that was calling, and the—a mixture of Wild Asparagus and Swallowtail bands. And they’re good, they have a good sound. So anyway, Tony said, We’re going to do the Money Musk. So I get up there with Ernie Spence. Did you know Ernie Spence?

**Julie:** Yeah.

**Dudley:** Great dancer. And so we went down the line together. Well, we got about three-quarters of the way down, and they changed the tunes. So we both dropped out!

**Julie:** Of the dance.

**Dudley:** And went and leaned against the wall. We said, We can’t dance this to Money Musk. And they would switch back, so we jumped back in.

**Julie:** [laughing]

**Dudley:** Afterwards, you know, I went up to Tony, I went up to--What’s his name?--Peter and I said, What’s this? What are you changing for? and he said, Well, the fiddlers get tired, they get bored, and I said, The feet won’t work unless it’s that tune, and he wrote it down in his notebook, and It’s still there, as far as I know. Dudley says feet won’t work unless we use the tune. [laughs]

**Julie:** Well, that’s the thing, you learn the dance and you learn how your body goes with the phrases of the tune.

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** Why would you wanna change that halfway, you know?

**Dudley:** They get bored.

**Julie:** Yeah.

**Dudley:** Now, Money Musk is hard to play. That’s tough on the fingers. But there’s ways of getting around that, too. You don’t have to play all the notes.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** John Kirkpatrick wrote the--I think it was John Kirkpatrick, he was an accordion player from England? Wrote a great essay called Medley Mania--and he said, One of these days, I’m gonna run a workshop and we’re gonna play Bobby Schafto until it comes out our ears.

**Julie:** [laughs]

**Dudley:** [laughs]

**Julie:** [laughing] That’s great. So...if you were playing the Canterbury Dance Orchestra, would you just pick one tune and play that--

**Dudley:** Yup

**Julie:** --for a dance?

**Dudley:** Yup

**Julie:** Yeah. Do you call dances that feel like modern contra dances?

**Dudley:** No. Well, I--of course, I don’t—I’ve been to dances where they do modern dances--

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** --and I’m not particularly enamored of it. Now, partly is that I’m losing my balance, and I don’t like to move that fast, and--but I don’t feel that I have to be moving all the time.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** I don’t mind standing still and watching. You might learn something when you watch.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** So I’m not particularly enamored of ‘em. And a lot of them, I get the feeling that the callers are inventing new ones. Now there could be a reason--lots of reasons why they do it, but one is they want the time in the limelight, because everybody’s doing something and it’s creative--

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** --you know, and so they wanna make a show, so they make something that may be more difficult than the one before them--and so you get these dances that have gypsies and heys, and once and five-eighths around, you know, I mean, it gets--I just don’t enjoy that. I rather have my feet close to the floor and do jigging and be able to relate to my partner and anyone else on the floor, and I’m not interested in doing a dance that has a partner-neighbor swing. Doesn’t matter. Don’t have to be—as long as you get your partner swinging.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** That’s why I don’t like Lady Walpole’s Reel, because they Don’t swing with your partner, you swing with your neighbor.

**Dudley:** But I have written a couple of dances. But they’re all in, you know, really traditional. But I wrote one to Morgan Megan, the tune Morgan Megan, which--do you know that tune? It’s an Irish tune.

**Julie:** I’ve heard it.

**Dudley:** Yeah. Well, it feels like it’s got 28 measures, but it’s not. It’s got 32. It’s just the way they fall. So I wrote a dance to fit that. And then I’ve written a couple of others, but that’s not particularly what I’m interested in doing. I’ve written 15 tunes also--

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** --and then three tunes that are variations.  I’ve got one called Mozart which is a variation on his K417--

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** --and one on Haydn and one on Handel.

**Julie:** But you turned ‘em into New England dance tunes, too?

**Dudley:** Yeah, a little bit.

**Julie:** Yeah?

**Dudley:** Yeah.

**Julie:** So what is a good dance tune, in your mind?

**Dudley:** Oh, Money Musk. [laughs]

**Julie:** [laughs] Even though you said people didn’t like the dance much.

**Dudley:** In Boston.

**Julie:** In Boston.

**Dudley:** Oh no, I want to finish that one. I went up to NewHampshire. There was that band, the New Hampshireband, andthere was a girl there--there were three of them, they were all redheads, the Ramsey girls. Their father ran the post office. So June Ramsey was the one I wanted to dance with, and I went up and asked her for a next dance. She said, Well, I’ve got the next two booked, but the one after that’ll be Money Musk. You can do that one. I said, I don’t wanna dance Money Musk with you! and she said, You wait. Jesus! The Williams twins were there. Alan Williams, still alive. Art Williams, Alan Williams, little taps on their shoes.

**Julie:** Hm

**Dudley:** And they did a shuffle-clog on the thing. Music was slow, it had a nice tempo, and Ralph chanted that call, and like I said, there was that great band. But--everybody knew the dances. And if they didn’t, they’d get pushed and shoved through it. But Money Musk was just--that had a special quality to it, the way they were dancing it.

**Dudley:** So, I don’t know what I was talking about

**Julie:** You were talking about the thinner sounds.

**Dudley:** Oh yeah, they wanted a thinner kind of sound, and they really wanted Irish music, and they wanted us to go that way, wanted The Canterbury Orchestra  to go that way, and I-- ‘Sorry,’ I said, ‘You guys gonna go off on your own,’ which they did-- So anyway, that--I just said, ‘That’s okay--’

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** ‘I mean, it’s not what I wanna do.’ But I did make a recording with Randy and Fred Breunig and Jack Perron. It was called Itinerant License. Itinerant License. I formed it, did it myself. And I wanted to appease those guys, so I tried to do it their way. And I was in charge of selling the recording, and it went out of print. That wasn’t my favorite. **Julie:** Hm

**Dudley:** It wasn’t my favorite And the recording that Bill [Spence]-- runs the record company over there in Vorheesville New York,‘‘‘--can’t think of the name of it. Anyway, it produced a recording called--oh, jeez ‘‘‘--it was a reel, an Irish reel, I can’t think of the name of it. But anyway, he wanted us to do that, and we did. We spent a week there. **Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** Had to play every tune five times.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** When we do the Canterbury Orchestra ones, it’s once.

**Julie:** Yeah

**Dudley:** That’s it. Just one time per--

**Julie:** One take, that’s all you get.

**Dudley:** Yeah, and if it doesn’t work, forget it. We won’t do it. So--and no medleys. We don’t do any medleys.

**Julie:** Mm-hm.

**Dudley:** No.

**Julie:** I notice the bands today play a lot less jigs these days.

**Dudley:** Well, we played one a few--

**Julie:** Yeah!

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** What do you like--like, what roles do jigs have for the dance?

**Dudley:** Well, they just fit the dance. They’re bouncy.

**Julie:** Yeah

**Dudley:** You know? Some dances work both ways.

**Julie:** Yeah

**Dudley:** Morning Star works well to a jig or a reel. And some dances work much better as a jig.

**Julie:** Yeah. So you think of jigs as being bouncy?

**Dudley:** Well, sort of.

**Julie:** Most of the time.

**Dudley:** But I went to a dance out in Wisconsin one time, and a girl came--a woman came in, and she was kinda tough. She had a big badge on, said, ‘No Jigs’. [laughs]

**Julie:** [laughs] That’s funny! ‘Cause now a lot of callers ask for jigs when they want something smooth. They say ‘smooth jigs’.

**Dudley:** Yeah. Well, they don’t know what they’re talking about, most of them.

**Julie:** Yeah. It’s interesting. I feel like, as a dance musician, that the role of jigs has changed, where jigs used to be bouncy, but now people ask for them when they want something smooth, which I don’t always understand.

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** ‘Cause a good bouncy jig is a--

**Dudley:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Julie:** --a mighty thing.

**Dudley:** Yep.

**Julie:** And also, I feel like most musicians think reels are what you play most of the time, with the occasional jigs--

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** --sprinkled in.

**Dudley:** Well, in the southern mountains, they don’t do jigs. In fact, I’ve got a recording of somebody playing, and he tries to play Pop Goes the Weasel, and...it just [laughing]  segues into 2/4 time.

**Julie:** Wow....So those guys are trying to bring in the Irish influence. What was it like for you when you saw bands like Swallowtail forming, or Wild Asparagus, or eventually Nightingale?

**Dudley:** Yeah. I didn’t know much about ‘em. I was very busy--

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** --at that time. Had all the gigs I couldhandle--

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** --you know, and then some, so I really wasn’t paying much attention to it. But, like I said, I thought, ‘Well, maybe I should at least learn something about this.’ That’s why we did the record, Itinerant Musicians License. But...the Canterbury Orchestra was the way I wanted to do it.

**Julie:** So if you were gonna think of the quintessential contra dance band--like, what was it like, well before you and the Canterbury Dance Orchestra Do you think it was fiddles and pianos--

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** --mostly’

**Dudley:** Yeah. And McQuillen came along with the accordion. But it was mostly fiddles. String bass, cello type of thing.

**Dudley:** And if they didn’t--you know, before the day of the keyboard, they had drums, or a cello--

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** --to carry the bass.

**Julie:** Mm-hm. Why do you think the tempos are faster in Boston?

**Dudley:** Well, they lead a faster life. It’s a faster paced sort of life.

**Julie:** Huh, that’s interesting.

**Dudley:** I think that has to do it, do with it, and also the complicated answers have to do with it. They bring their work right into the dance.

**Julie:** Yeah.

**Dudley:** Which is kinda too bad, I think.

**Julie:** Huh.

**Dudley:** I kinda like it like--the dance is kind of an entity unto itself, got a life of its own, and I don’t think it’d be reflecting the computer programmers. But that’s me. [chuckles]

**Julie:** Hm. ‘Cause I’ve noticed the dancers kind of want a certain kind of thing. They want a certain kind of calling, and they want a certain kind of music.

**Dudley:** Yup.

**Julie:** So these things, like, feed each other--

**Dudley:** Yup

**Julie:** --in a way, and it seems like dancers want faster tempos and they want flashy tunes--

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** --and they want kind of exciting moments--

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** --things like that.

**Dudley:** Yeah. And I think that a lot of the dancers, when the band will change keys--

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** --and the band starts to--and the dancers will go ‘Hoo!’ They’ll holler. You know.

**Julie:** Yeah

**Dudley:** My guess would be that most of them don’t even know that something’s happened. They make a holler because everybody else is.

**Julie:** [laughs]

**Dudley:** But they’re not aware that something has happened.

**Julie:** So, the magic in a slower dance, when—I had a friend call it ‘shock and awe’ contra dancing, when you’re, like, taking the dancers on a rollercoaster ride, but you’re taking the attention away from the community, and putting it, like, on the music, like--

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** --rather than on the dancing experience.

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** So, when it’s, like, a slow tempo, and one tune for a long time, how do you spend—how do the dancers spend their time’ Like, chatting to each other, or--like, where is our focus if it’s not on the music’ ‘Cause you can kind tune the tune out, at that point, if it’s, of course--jig’s been goin’ on for five minutes straight. I just wonder if it’s, their attention is in a different place.

**Dudley:** Well, I know that in my particular case, if I’m dancing with Lindsay - eye contact, you know, even though we’re not active.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** So I’m relating to her as well as to the whole dance. To me, it’s a social function.

And it doesn’t matter whether I’m working with adults that dance or adults that don’t dance or kids. It’s courtship. Even with kids. They may not know it, and their teachers may not know it, but that’s--I think that’s what’s happening. And I think that’s the role of this kinda dancing, and it’s important in that it’s--it has a little bit more to it than rock and roll. There’s nothing wrong with that, either.

**Julie:** Mm-hm.

**Dudley:** But it has more to it, and it really does tie into the community and the courtship part.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** More, I think. And that’s--you know, I mean, some of the tunes can--there’s a lot of emotion with some of these tunes, and some of them can bring tears to my eyes, just the way they’re played, when they’re played, where they’re played. But it’s just—the way those notes rise and fall--there’s a tune called Enrico, I taught it to Katie—was it Katy, Katy Newell. The daughter.

**Lindsay:** Maisie.

**Julie:** Maisie.

**Dudley:** Maisie! Yeah.

**Julie:** Yeah!

**Dudley:** When she was a kid. She still plays it. Even when she was a kid. It’s a tune called Enrico or Jacob. It’s a hornpipe. But when Thomas Hardy was a young boy, he was four or five years old, played it in the family band, he had one of those little melodians, and his dad would play that tune, and he had to leave the room. He cried. And he was embarrassed, so he would go in the other room and cry.

**Julie:** Mm

**Dudley:** He cried.

**[Music]**

**Julie:** So, yesterday we left off talking about--I’m interested in this idea of, like, what in your mind is the perfect contra dance music.

**Dudley:** Oh, yeah, okay. Did I say anything?

**Julie:** [laughs] Yeah, you did. You talked about fiddle style a little bit, and we talked about medleys and tempo.

**Dudley:** Yep

**Julie:** Do you know what kind of tempo is ideal for you?

**Dudley:** Well, for me, I have a tendency to play a little fast, because I’m used to playing for children, who dance faster.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** But my preference is to have it fairly slow And, of course, then I played for a morris side, and I have a tendency to go with Bampton tradition, which is faster-- So the leader of our morris team is always going, “Slow! Slow down!”

**Dudley:** But I like ‘em moderate tempo.

**Julie:** Is that like “ka-dun ka-da-dun” kinda tempo, or--

**Dudley:** Hm, let’s see. [vocalizes on da-da-dum] About like that.

**Julie:** Okay.

**Dudley:** Yeah. Moderate.

**Julie:** Good, that’s good to know. That’s good to know. So what in your mind makes a tune the perfect tune for contra dancing?

**Dudley:** Well, there’s more than one.

**Julie:** Yeah.

**Dudley:** Yeah. I like Enrico or Jacob.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** That’s the tune that Thomas Hardy played when he was a kid. Well, and of course, the standards, you know, Money Musk and--but, you know, those are names. Do you want a generic tune that would be perfect?

**Julie:** Yeah, like if you’re playing for a dance that doesn’t have a tune that goes along with it, or--?

**Dudley:** Well, Enrico is a good one.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** Yeah. And then for jigs--well, there’s a number of them. Rolling Off a Log is a good one, Blackbird Quadrille--

**Julie:** How does Rolling Off a Log go?

**Dudley:** It’s in two keys. [vocalizes on da-da-dum] So it’s called Rolling Off a Log and in Maine they call it Upriver.

**Julie:** Mm-hm. Upriver.

**Dudley:** Yep.

**Julie:** That’s great...yeah, what else?

**Dudley:** Well, those--another jig that I like is...Maid of the Mill

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** It’s a morris dance tune but it’s also an early American tune. So there really is--you know, it depends on  who’s playing it, and we have favorites. Like, I--I like Speed the Plow

**Julie:** Yeah!

**Dudley:** But I like it as the English version, in the key of G--

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** --so they don’t play all the heavy notes.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** I like that. And there’s others.  I can’t just bring ‘em to mind now, but there’s others that would be good for it. But some would be good one night, and not the next night.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** Depending on?

**Dudley:** On the dancers, weather--

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** Yeah. The hall, the time of season--

**Julie:** Your mood.

**Dudley:** Yeah. Yeah. [crosstalk] Oh, the dancers were--

**Lindsay:** Don’t you use, like, Road to Boston, Redwing, Cock of the North? I don’t know if that helps at all?

**Julie:** Yeah.

**Lindsay:** Welcome Here Again

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Lindsay:** Well, the other night, we did Zinnia’s Reel

**Julie:** Saint Az

**Lindsay:** Crooked Stovepipe. What were those others? Couple that I couldn’t play.

**Dudley:** Leather Away the Wattle Hole

**Lindsay:** Oh yeah, that one.

**Dudley:** Yup

**Lindsay:** But in Nelson, there’s a couple others.

**Julie:** Hm!

**Lindsay:** He’s got a million tunes.

**Julie:** Yeah!

**Lindsay:** [laughs] That’s the thing!

**Dudley:** Well, I don’t give ‘em all out. You know, back in the day, a fiddler, you only needed to know maybe 20 or 30 tunes, and that would suffice for the lifetime.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** They weren’t in the habit of learning new ones. Preferred the old ones. Didn’t really wanna learn anything new. There’s that book called 66 Years of Fiddling. It’s about George Overlock?

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** His son put the book together. George was a fiddler in this area, right around here, and he played for dances, and the favorite dance was Lady of the Lake. They’d do it two or three times a night, four times a night.

**Julie:** Wow, really?

**Dudley:** Yep. And he had a list of tunes which included Campbells Are Coming and the White Cockade, tunes like that, and that’s the ones they used.

**Julie:** So they’d do three or four times a night, with the same tunes every time?

**Dudley:** Not always.

**Julie:** So you could do it a few times, but with a different tune each time?

**Dudley:** Yeah, if you wanted to. But Bob McQuillen wrote new ones all the time, and I never got the feeling that George Overlock wanted to learn anything new. And I know Dick Richardson didn’t want to learn anything new, either. He fiddled for me.  He just liked the old tunes.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** So--and I’m more inclined to be like that than I am wanting to learn something new, but I learned a new one today from, I forgot really how it goes, but I learned it from Pascal?

**Julie:** Yeah

**Dudley:** It’s called...The Waves of St. Lawrence

**Julie:** Oh, I don’t know that tune.

**Dudley:** It’s nice.

**Julie:** I’ll have to learn it from him.

**Dudley:** Yeah.

**Julie:** How has what you call and play changed over the years? Like, you’ve had a really long calling career.

**Dudley:** Yeah. Well...

**Lindsay::** Oh, you had asked him how much all of this has changed

**Dudley:** Oh, yeah yeah yeah

**Julie:** Yeah, I asked how what you call and play--

**Dudley:** Oh, oh yeah--

**Julie:** has changed over the years

**Dudley:** Well, when I first started calling dances, I only knew a couple of squares, Crooked Stovepipe, Darling Nellie Grey, Golden Slippers. And then I did contras: Lady of the Lake, Chorus Jig, Money Musk, Petronella, Hull’s Victory. And that’s all I did...for contras. And that went along pretty good for quite some time, and I had a large crowd of kids following me around. But it changed, like, you know, these things change, and new callers came in. It became--it was quite easy to get a contra dance band going. It was not like a rock and roll band. Buy yourself a fiddle and you’re in business.

**Julie:** [laughs]

**Dudley:** And so--but anyway, the competition became very stiff, and the youngsters wanted more difficult dances, and faster, and it just wasn’t my cup of tea. So I started--and then the Canterbury Orchestra stopped playing for a while. And then my partner Patty and I broke up, and--so I was doing stuff on my own, and I found it was--well, at that time I was also working in schools, and dancing with kids in schools is a lot different from dancing with the back-to-the-land hippies, you know. So I started doing some very easy whole set dances, and I got those from the Community Dance Manual. But then I went to England, and I found out what they were doing over there, and then I wanted to go back to find out what they were doing over there. That was the change. And that’s what I do now, and only once in a great great while, maybe four times a year I’ll have a bona fide contra dance where I’m calling contras. Otherwise it’s the other things. **Julie:** So, to see if I understand right, you—there was a lot of different competition among callers and bands.

**Dudley:** Yup. Yup.

**Julie:** And it was going in a direction that you didn’t wanna go in.

**Dudley:** Yeah. Yeah, well, you know, I hadn’t really too much choice. I mean, I just wasn’t getting hired.

**Julie:** Yeah.

**Dudley:** And, you know, we have to struggle now to get gigs.

**Julie:** Yeah

**Dudley:** I mean, I don’t do much in the way of advertising or soliciting, but--don’t have as many as you used to have. I mean, two years, three years in a row, I’ve had over 300 gigs a year.

**Julie:** [laughs] Whoa, I can’t even imagine.

**Dudley:** But--

**Julie:** Wow

**Dudley:** --the last couple years, it’s gone down to about 80 or 90.

**Julie:** Yeah

**Dudley:** But still, a lot.

**Julie:** That’s still a lot.

**Dudley:** Yeah.

**Julie:** Yeah, I play about 100 gigs a year--

**Dudley:** Yeah.

**Julie:** --so I can’t even imagine doing--

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** --300. That’s a busy schedule.

**Dudley:** Yeah. It was work.

**Julie:** Yeah.

**Dudley:** On the road a lot.

**Dudley:** Oh yeah. And your star falls, and new people come along, and that’s okay, ‘cause that shows that the dancing is healthy.

**Julie:** It’s like a living tradition and it’s gonna evolve

**Dudley:** Yeah. But it’s something we have to deal with ourselves. We can’t take it out on the crowd.

**Julie:** [laughs] Right.

**Dudley:** You’d like to, but you can’t.

**Julie:** Right. As long as the dance doesn’t go in a direction that’ll make it extinct, you know? Like, people tell the story of, like, Modern Western Square Dancing--

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** --and how it got so complicated--

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** --that then, you know, you had to be in a club to do it, and--

**Dudley:** You wear an outfit

**Julie:** Yeah

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** And now, contra dancing, the magic of it right now is you can go anywhere in the country, and you can do it.

**Dudley:** Yeah, ‘course you used to be able to do Western square dancing too.

**Julie:** Yeah.

**Dudley:** Not only in the country; in the world.

**Julie:** Yeah

**Dudley:** But it’s--same thing’s happening to the contra dances, keep getting more complex--

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** --and more adaptable to people who like it complex, and--but David Millstone said that he sees on his observations bit at the contra dancing is on a low ebb--is slowing down.

And that’s happened--it’s happened in this current revival. Since I first started, I’ve seen it do that twice.

**Julie:** Mm-hm. When were the first times you saw it do that?

**Dudley:** Oh, it was when I--when I stopped working with the Canterbury Orchestra, it went into a low ebb then, and it was sort of built back up again.  Well, with the first time it started building up was after The Beatles came to town--

**Julie:** Mm

**Dudley:** --and then right after that, Bob Dylan. And we hit the bottom, and bounced right back up again.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** And both those guys, The Beatles and Bob Dylan, contributed a lot to our popularity.

**Julie:** How so?

**Dudley:** Well, they had a following, you know, and a lot of those people were--sort of left the cities and went back to the land and they found the contra dance was--it fit their image.

**Julie:** Mmm!

**Dudley:** You know, they were dancing, you know, they were touching each other. You know, of course, in rock and roll, you don’t. Not always. You don’t always. And, you know, it just fit their image more, what was going on. Not so much the Beatles. More Bob Dylan. The Beatles just sing.

**Julie:** So these ebbs and flows happen in all sorts of things.

**Dudley:** Oh sure.

**Julie:** So, you know, you have the perspective of someone who’s, like, seen this come and go a few times. What’s your take on what’s happening now?

**Dudley:** Oh, well...we don’t do that much in the way of contra dances, so it’s really hard to tell.

**Julie:** Yeah.

**Dudley:** But in general, up in central New Hampshire, for the most part, it’s an aging crowd. It’s not--there’s not too many young people. We don’t see them. But we hear that here up in Belfast, they have a terrific younger crowd.

**Julie:** Yeah.

**Dudley:** Yeah. And other parts. Around the Boston area, there’s some young people. But we don’t--I don’t see it up in Concord.

**Julie:** Mm-hm.

**Dudley:** As much. There’s--once in a while, a bunch of kids will come in from St. Paul’s School, but it’s not a regular--there’s not any regular kids. One of them dances quite a lot. What’s her name? She’s here.

**Lindsay:** Theresa?

**Dudley:** No. Late George’s friend. She plays the fiddle.

**Lindsay:** Oh, Sara.

**Dudley:** Sara. Sara what’s her last name?...Well anyway, she’s part of that young crowd.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** And she’s here. But she’s one! You know--

**Julie:** Yeah

**Dudley:** --there’s a lot, there’s a lot of young people here, though. And--

**Julie:** How about in Nelson? You ever go to Nelson?

**Dudley:** Yeah, well, we played for a dance there the other night. There were hardly any real young kids there.

**Lindsay:** Not really young, no.

**Dudley:** There used to be. It’s an older crowd.

**Julie:** It’s probably [crosstalk] about five years since I’ve been there.

**Lindsay:** But they did a younger group from--

**Dudley:** Well, the Monday night dance they

had a crowd.

**Lindsay**: Yeah

**Julie:** Maybe it’s the Monday dance where I saw a bunch of teenagers--

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** --and stuff like that.

**Dudley:** Well, they come from that music school. In Sullivan, there’s a music school there.

**Julie:** Oh, interesting.

**Dudley:** A lot of kids come from that. And, but during the wintertime, they still get a good batch of young kids.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** But we don’t see it, so we’re not seeing too much of the way they’re dancing, but some of the callers really will do dance—almost every dance has a hey in it.

**Dudley:** And if not that, a gypsy and...those are all English terms. We never did--well, the colonials, early American dances, they did the heys. They didn’t do gypsies, but they did the heys. And then it just stopped. I would say around...Civil War, they just stopped using those terms. Oh, a lot of it was, you know, telling England, “Go to hell!”, you know ‘Look, Pa, no hands’

**Julie:** [laughs]

**Dudley:** --and that didn’t change until Ted Sanella and Tony Parks and--what was the other guy?—Tony Saletan started putting some of the English moves back into the dances. So they started doing the heys and the gypsies. Like, a gypsy is easy enough, but I don’t enjoy it. That eye contact? I just don’t like it. When you’re going by, say, on a gypsy--

**Julie:** Yeah

**Dudley:** I remember one time I was at a—I was in--where was it?--here in Maine, they were doing a--one of those with two, two of your partners, beside you, and across from—what was it called?

**Lindsay:**: Becket?

**Dudley:** Beckets! Yeah. So I was dancing a becket, and so I had to do something with the opposite lady, and I—she said, “You’re supposed to look me in the eye.” You know? Who says?

**Julie:** That’s a lot of eye contact.

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** When--I was just in England, in March, and when they dance contas over there, they don’t use so much eye contact.

**Dudley:** No, absolutely

**Julie:** And when they do what they--what we call “English contra dancing”, which they often call “Playford”, they don’t do nearly as much eye contact as we do here.

**Dudley:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Julie:** So it seemed--but did it always used to be that way? It probably didn’t.

**Dudley:** No, it was somebody who danced English dancing here introduced it.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** And--but if you tried that in some parts of England, somebody’d take you out in the parking lot.

**Julie:** [laughs] Yeah.

**Dudley:** You know, it’s just not--and I hate it. You know.

**Julie:** And it’s one of the harder things for new dancers.

**Dudley:** Yeah.

**Julie:** I had a friend who wanted to dance, and he’s like, “There’s people in my

personal bubble.”

**Dudley:** That’s right.

**Julie:** They’re not used to having--

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** --everyone in your space.

**Dudley:** A lot of women feel like they’re being assaulted, and--

**Julie:** Yeah

**Dudley:** Billy Martin, Wild Billy Martin lived out in Oregon and Washington, and he said, “If I want somebody to look me in the face, I’ll go to my eye doctor.”

**Julie:** [laughs]

**Dudley:** And then--and then Ralph Sweet used to say, “What, have I got spinach in my teeth?”

**Julie:** [laughs]

**Dudley:** [laughs]

**Julie:** Do you think the music relates to that at all? Like, do you think the changing music and dancing together are just a reflection of dancing--like, changing times and different desires from the dancers?  Or maybe dancing serves a different role in people’s lives?

**Dudley:** I think the callers are responsible. But most of the callers don’t play the music.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** A lot of them have nothing. A lot of them are afraid of the band. And I sense that some of them are--’cause they’ll turn to the band, say, “Gimme some jigs,” and then turn away, they’ll look away.

**Julie:** [laughs]

**Dudley:** You know. And a lot of times they don’t know what they’re talking about when they say, “Give me some jigs.”

**Julie:** Uh-huh

**Dudley:** And so, in order to gain some of the attention that the band’s getting, they want these more complicated dances, and then it becomes a competition between them and another caller, who can write the most complicated and interesting dances.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** And so there’s a crowd out there that likes complicated. Their life’s, their work is complicated work, computers and teaching and whatever--

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** They like that. They don’t know how to leave it there and do something else with their recreational time. They bring that right into their work.

**Julie:** Yeah, they want to be, like, mentally stimulated--

**Dudley:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Julie:** --in a way.

**Dudley:** And as far as I’m concerned, you dance with your feet, not your head.

**Julie:** Mm-hm. Yeah, there’s been times when I was dancing to some really complicated choreography and it was fun as, like, a change--

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** --like, a variety. But I wouldn’t want it to be the bread and

butter of-

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** --you know?

**Dudley:** And the average crowd we play for can’t even begin to do heys and gypsies,so I don’t--because they don’t teach,you know, those.They don’t spend any time teaching, youjust get ‘em going.They’re just simple moves.But I know that--well, not so much Nelson,because Nelson had Ralph Page, but there’reother dance places, like in Canterbury, wherethey had a--it was a Baptist community, sothere was no dancing.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** And in Northwood, neighboring town, they had a lot of Baptist people there that—and they had--they didn’t call them “dances”,  they call them “marches”.

**Julie:** Hm

**Dudley:** But they did similar dances. But, anyway, town of Canterbury burned to the ground in April of 1943, and they had a night when the temperature dropped down to 30 below in April--

**Julie:** Whoa

**Dudley:** --and a wind came through, a 60-mile-an-hour wind, and it rattled the stovepipe close to the grange hale--

**Julie:** Oh, yeah

**Dudley:** That came down and caught the building on fire. And so, anyway, it burned the church, and

burned two or three houses, and it burned--itdidn’t burn the town hall, but it burnedthe store and the grange hall.And in order to raise money--and they didn’thave a fire department.Some people lived on the west side of town.It was during mud season, and they came totown to get the mail and there was no town.

**Dudley:** And so to raise money to do that, they formed a band. And in a Baptist town, that was a chore, but they had Paul Ambo play the banjo, and Ruth Rogers played the piano--

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** --and Charlie Walter played the drums. And then the minister--I don’t know his name--played the clarinet.

**Julie:** Huh

**Dudley:** That was the band.

**Julie:** It was the contra band.

**Dudley:** Yeah. Well, it was a band.

**Julie:** Right

**Dudley:** And they did flower waltzes and polkas and--

**Julie:** Nice

**Dudley:** --and foxtrots. But they would to two Virginia Reels, Portland Fancy  twice, The Paul Jones, and a Grand March.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** You didn’t need a caller for those.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** And they’d use the same tunes, the same dances, and everybody loved it. And that was just finishing when I came into town.

**Julie:** Yeah

**Dudley:** Now, in Canterbury, we have--on January 26th, we celebrate the birthday of Robert Burns.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** Burns night.

**Julie:** Burns night!

**Dudley:** And then in February, we don’t do anything. In March, we do a maple sugar party and a Irish party.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** We call it--Irish party’s called ???. Play in a sugarhouse, that’s how we

get our supply of syrup. If we don’t do anything in May, we do the Sweets of Mays, a dance called the Sweets of May. The we do that wherever we can, town hall or grange hall or our house. And then, June, we don’t do anything. July, there’s the Canterbury Fair--

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** --and the morris dancers dance there. August, we take it off. September, we get into--from then until Christmas, we have several nights. And it was--what was it?--on Boxing Day, we have a dance.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** And so--but, they’re at different times, different venues, and there’s—I don’t think we could get away with running a dance on a weekly basis.

**Julie:** Yeah

**Dudley:** I don’t think we could. It’s--

**Julie:** It wouldn’t be enough.  It’s more of a community kinda thing.

**Dudley:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Julie:** Pull the community together

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** Which you need in a small town, more than a big city.

**Dudley:** Yeah. Canterbury’s an upwardly-mobile town. There’s a lot of black-top driveways and a lot.

**Julie:** Yeah

**Dudley:** A lot of doctors and lawyers and some professional people who sort of go to one and said, “Been there done that.” But there’s enough people there so we can keep it going. And so there’s a lotta communities around, Where--well there’s George Overlock on the--he played--I saw in his book there was a dance card.  They were playing for the senior high school graduation in the town, in Walter County, here. And they would have Lady of the Lake on the program five times.

**Julie:** [laughing] Wow!  Wow!

**Dudley:** It’s--they loved it.

**Julie:** Yeah! And you can dance with a different partner every time.

**Dudley:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Julie:** So, that’s fun. That’s interesting. It’s so different then.

**Dudley:** But what’s her name--I’m havingan awful time with names, but--fellow wrotea--did a film called Dancing in New England [New England Dances, by John Bishop],and it goes around to different venues, andone of them is the Blue Goose Ballroom herein Maine.

**Dudley:** And they’re doing a dance that the

band is a clarinet, saxophone, drum, and piano.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** And there’s a woman doing the calling, and they’re filming the Lady of the Lake, and they’re dancing it to Babyface, which is a foxtrot.

**Julie:** Huh.

**Dudley:** So the dancing--contra dance rhythm, but--

**Julie:** Wow

**Dudley:** but the basic rhythm is a foxtrot,  and the caller— "Will you please go down the center?”

[laughs]

**Julie:** What would you say?

**Dudley:** Oh, “down the center.”

**Julie:** [laughs]

**Dudley:** But, anyway, it was interesting tosee that, “Please go down the center.”And the ladies chain, they didn’t stickto any phrasing, it would tend to go--it wentall across the hall.They danced one long line, and one side wason one side, and one side was on the other,so they did the ladies chain.Took ‘em a long time to get all the wayto one and all the way back.

**Dudley:** But they didn’t pay any attention to phrasing.

**Julie:** Yeah, that’s interesting. Now people think a lot about phrasing.

**Dudley:** But I went to another dance one time,in Paris, Maine, down in the lakes, down inMissabega Lake, and they did a contra dancethere, and they did Haymaker’s Jig, Ladyof the Lake, Boston Fancy, and Mountain Ranger.Were all pretty much similar.And when they went down the center, when theycame back, they wouldn’t cast off.They came back to their new place and wentright into the ladies chain.

**Julie:** Huh.

**Dudley:** That is to say, that would be so much easier to teach. Cast-off is hard to teach.

**Julie:**Yeah. Yeah. So can I share a thought and get your reaction to it? I’m curious

**Dudley:** Okay.

**Julie:** It’s--for me--like, I’m just curious, like, how the role of music and dancing has changed over the years.And from your world--like, your corner ofthe world of music and dance--for me, oneof the things that made me want to play forcontra dances was--First of all, I was like,look at this, there’s people, like you said,they’re touching each other, they’re havingfun in a room full of music.The music, like, lifts you and carries youand it’s really good, like you’re talkingabout, really good music.And I love the connection between the musicand the dance.And there’s times when I’ve been contradancing and other bands have been playing,like Crowfoot back in the day when they werestill a band, and I just felt like the wholeroom was moving as one, you know?Everyone’s bouncing together and swingingtogether.How does that fit--like, when did that kindof thing start to happen?

**Dudley:** Well, I think it’s always happened.

**Julie:** It’s always happened. That’s what I’m wondering.

**Dudley:** Yeah. Yeah. There are various degrees, various ways of doing it, but it’s always.

**Julie:** Like what I want to get at the heart is, what is the magic of contra dancing? Like, you can change the choreography, you can make it more or less complicated, but if you do too much to it, you lose its essence. It’s like that fiddling you were talking about. What is the magic that makes--

**Dudley:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Julie:** --that good?

**Dudley:** Well, to me, it’s all three things: the band, the caller, the dancers, and the music, and the hall, and the weather.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** They all--you know, when you go to a dance in the wintertime, old town hall, and when you arrive you can smell woodsmoke, it’s very important. To me, anyway.

**Julie:** Yeah

**Dudley:** But to me, it’s all of it. It’s all of it. It’s not about the caller, it’s not about the music.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** It’s all together--

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** --making it happen. And I don’t think there--nobody is--I mean, I’m aware of that, but nobody says, when you come in the door, “Pay your way and you’ve got to be part of this” They’re gonna be anyway. You don’t have to plant it.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** It’ll happen by itself.

**Julie:** Yeah. People-- ‘cause I feel like as long as contra still keeps that essence of what makes it magical, I think the essence of contra dancing is the kind of dancing that you don’t have to know a lot to do it. Now there’s a caller--

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** Maybe when people used to know the chestnuts, like in Gilmanton in New Hampshire, they could dance Chorus Jig all by themselves. They don’t need anybody.

**Dudley:** Yep.

**Julie:** But most of the time, as long as you have a caller to tell you what to do, anybody could walk in off the street and do it.

**Dudley:** Yep. Yeah.

**Julie:** And I find that modern dancers get caught up in, like, flourishing each other, and they’re not dancing for the whole hall anymore. They’re kinda showing off, or dancing for the--

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** --for themselves.

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** Has it always been that way?

**Dudley:** Well, yeah, it’s--well, it all depends. Like, Walter Hall and Louie Pascarelli and some of those dancers from the Keene area, wonderful step dancers.

**Julie:** Mm-hm

**Dudley:** And Ralph Page raves about it, says Walter Hall and Louie Pascarelli are the best dancers in the Monadnock region. And they were! They were excellent. But they were just into it for the--I mean, they were part of the whole thing, but they were also getting a lot out of it themselves.

**Julie:** Right

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** Which is what I feel like good flourishing can be--

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** --where you’re having a great time, and you’re--

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** --keeping it stimulating for you, but also you’re--

**Dudley:** Yeah

**Julie:** --there for everybody.

**Dudley:** Yeah.

**Julie:** Yeah.

I’m just curious. It’s--

**Dudley:** We have to go.

**Julie:** Well, thank you.

**Dudley:** Did you have any other questions?

**Julie:** No, I think that’s great. We had a lot--I have a lot of fun recordings to look at.

**Dudley:** Yeah. All right.

**Julie:** I can’t wait.

 [Music fades in]

**Julie Vallimont:** Thanks for listening to Contra Pulse. This project is supported by the Country Dance and Song Society, CDSS, and is produced by Ben Williams. Happy dancing!

*This transcript has been lightly edited and condensed for clarity*