

## FTM Ep 30 - Jeremy Korr - Transcript

**Mary Wesley:** Hi everyone - welcome back to From the Mic. Today I'm so happy to share a chat with a long-time caller friend of mine, the wonderful Jeremy Korr. Jeremy is a bicoastal caller, based in Southern California most of the year and in Eastern Massachusetts during the summer. A second-generation dancer and dance leader, he has been calling children's and family dances and international folk dances since 1993 and contras and squares since 2003. He has called at festivals, camps, dance weekends, and other events in 20 states and provinces from California to Alaska to Maine to Florida. He has choreographed a handful of contra dances, but in his calling he mostly draws on the rich bounty of modern dance compositions and venerable traditional dances.

Since 2014, Jeremy has served on the national steering committee for Pourparler, the conference for community dance leaders and school teachers mentioned by various other callers on this podcast, which rotates around the country each year. He also plays clawhammer banjo, leads group folksinging, and worked with Peter Blood and Annie Patterson on the team of volunteers that developed *Rise Again*, the sequel to *Rise Up Singing*. By day he is a university administrator to help pay the bills. Beyond dance and music, he solves piles of crossword puzzles (he gives a shout-out to Maia McCormick's stellar cruciverbalist skills) and enjoys tabletop games. Here's Jeremy!

## Introduction

**Mary Wesley** Okay. Jeremy Korr welcome to From the Mic!

**Jeremy Korr** Mary Wesley—what a pleasure to get to talk with you.

**Mary Wesley** I couldn't agree more. We've been having some email tag back and forth to set this up, so I congratulate both of us on getting it on our calendars and just really looking forward to catching up a little bit and getting to have an extended conversation about calling with you. We've known each other for a while, although I'm going to confess that I now was racking my brain and couldn't remember when we first met. Did we do a caller's course together?

**Jeremy Korr** We did not. I believe it was when you called at the Ralph Page Dance Legacy weekend in 2010, you called Benjo by Jo Mortland. It was my introduction to that dance, which was exciting. And the first time that I got to dance to your calling.

**Mary Wesley** Okay. There we go. Yes, because that was going to be my next jump because I associate you very much with the Ralph Page Dance Legacy weekend. And so, of course, that's where we first crossed paths and have been caller buddies ever

since and seen each other at different events...when possible because you are speaking to us from the West Coast. Where are you calling from today?

**Jeremy Korr** I'm in Claremont, California. It's about 30 miles east of Los Angeles, southern California. And as far as dance communities go, it's part of the Los Angeles contra dance community.

**Mary Wesley** Wonderful. So, yes, we have bi-coastal friendships. But you do make it to the East Coast now and then, too. So it's always great when we cross paths.

**Jeremy Korr** Absolutely.

**Mary Wesley** Well, as I often say, I'd love to start at the beginning. So would you kind of introduce us to your history with traditional music and dance? You know, how did that come into your life and how did you find your way to the caller's mic?

**Jeremy Korr** Sure. I have strands of international folk dance, Israeli folk dance, contra dance, community folk dance or community dance. I'll try to touch on and connect all those strands and get us to the present. I grew up "contra adjacent." I didn't know that at the time. Eventually I moved on to the contra track, but I grew up in Maryland, right outside Washington, D.C. My parents, Bonnie and Rocky, are Israeli and international folk dancers. They have been dancing together since college. My dad, Rocky, taught Israeli folk dance a lot. He was out in the D.C. area when I was growing up. He was out several nights a week, often various events that he ran or that he taught at or different dance troops. And so I was brought along a lot of the time. I remember countless nights sleeping on the blanket on the side with coloring books. I was that kid and then my sister and my brother were too. But it meant that many of the grown ups in my life were dancers and Rocky's fellow teachers. Those were my lullabies. And the people who gave me the time of day and played around with me from age 6 to 10.

I was in my parents' Israeli folk dance troupe a couple of times. That was my first time performing on stage. I haven't actually done a lot of performing since then, but I got some dancing in early on. Every Memorial Day weekend my family went to the local Israeli folk dance Memorial Day camp, so I became a dance camp child pretty early on. My dad, Rocky, was on staff usually, and so that was part of my life early, too. Starting in second grade my parents had me in after school, weekly Israeli folk dance class with other kids, where I learned basic Israeli folk dance repertoire mostly, but also some other stuff like the Salty Dog Rag and crossover dances like that. Rocky, my dad, ran international and Israeli folk dance programs, but he also ran a lot of community dance. He called programs for schools and bar mitzvahs, synagogue events, and retreats and things like that. And even as a kid, he brought me along to help him set up and take down the audio set up, and especially to carry boxes and boxes and boxes of cassettes—because it wasn't live music. He had hundreds of ten-minute cassettes, which I never saw anyone else using. Five minutes on each side, one tune or one dance on each side. And from that I learned the basics of programming a dance while I was a teenager.

We would get there and we'd set up the audio and then he'd say: "Take out this cassette and that cassette and that cassette and that cassette and that cassette. I'm probably going to call some of these 14 or 18 dances. We'll start with this Rondo," which, Rondo is a synonym for Grand March. So we'd start with a grand march and he'd say, "Now I'll probably do this basic longways set next, and then a circle dance." Does this sound familiar?

**Mary Wesley** It definitely does.

**Jeremy Korr** He was generally calling easy dances out of the Israeli folk dance repertoire. But the formations I learned decades later, very similar to the Anglo community dances, barn dance. And so I learned from him how and why he would choose which dances in which order. And I realized later on, once I started doing it on my own, that that was pretty much baked into my brain at that point. Around seventh or eighth grade, I stepped away from doing the Israeli folk dance class and dancing elsewhere, mostly because of a lack of confidence in being able to remember the increasingly complex choreographies. Because at that point, my classmates and I were learning more and more complex dances. But in international folk dance, you don't have a prompter. There is no caller prompting the same way. It's not quite the same tradition as in contra. So ultimately, you as the dancer are expected to just remember the sequence, and the sequences started getting complicated. And I felt self-conscious, especially with parents and friends who seemed really good at it and able to remember everything.

So I stepped away for the rest of high school. But I did keep helping Rocky with his gigs and learning more from doing that. I didn't know really about contra dance yet at this point in my life, but my family had long had the record album by Gunther Schuller and the New England Conservatory's Country Fiddle Band that had Money Musk and Fisher's Hornpipe and On The Road to Boston, Devil's Dream. We listened to it all the time when I was a kid, and so I grew up with these chestnut tunes in my head. I just didn't know that they belonged to dance at that time, but I learned the music.

When I got to college during my first year at the University of Maryland I started reengaging in Israeli folk dance. I got over my self-confidence issue, and now here's where Woods Hole, Massachusetts, comes into the picture, because that played a really key role for me and still does. I spent my first 28 years in Maryland, and since then I've been in Southern California. But I've spent almost every summer of my life in Woods Hole in Massachusetts. My grandfather was a scientist and he spent summers in Woods Hole, which is a scientific hub. He spent summers there for scientific reasons. As a kid, I went and spent time with my grandparents there. But then I went into education as a career with summer flexibility, and that enabled me to continue going as an adult as well. Woods Hole is a tiny little village at the bottom tip of Massachusetts, but it's got a long tradition of square dance, country dance, international folk dance. A lot of local musicians.

It still has a monthly contra dance that started in 1973. Back then, it was a square dance with contras. Now, of course, it's a contra dance with squares. And it also has a weekly international folk dance series that began in 1961. Now it's still a weekly, but just during the summer. Growing up there in the summers, I would walk by the community hall where these dances occurred and I'd hear the music. And sometimes my parents brought me in, but I didn't really engage in the dancing. After my freshman year of college, though, when I started reengaging as a dancer myself, then I started going to those weekly summer international folk dance sessions and really enjoyed it.

It was a lot of fun, and the model was to share the teaching. Whoever was there, whoever wanted to, would offer to lead a dance, go over a dance. Nobody got paid, it was that kind of thing. And so as I started getting more comfortable with the dances, I started jumping in to help a little bit. And I realized that after a lifetime of listening to Rocky and his friends teaching dances and prompting them a little bit, I had internalized a lot of the language and the cadence that they had used for Israeli and international folk dance, so it didn't feel like a stretch. And then after my junior year of college, I led my first dance series by myself, another summer series for children's folk dancing. And that was fun. I felt comfortable. It felt right. And as I moved through grad school, I continued learning and teaching international folk dance and helping my father with his community gigs.

## **Contra connections**

And it was around this time I really started becoming aware of contra dancing. Here's where my track starts shifting from contra adjacent to closer to the contra track. I have an uncle in Vermont. And around this time, he was getting into contra dancing. He eventually met his wife at a dance in Bristol in Vermont.

**Mary Wesley** Which is where I went to high school, by the way.

**Jeremy Korr** Naturally, because all roads lead to New England and to contra dancing. He actually invited me to a dance right around the time that I was...just before I started feeling comfortable to go dancing again. And so we went. It was outside Burlington and I forget where, and I cowered in the corner the whole time, but that was the last time that I was at a contra dance where I cowered in the corner. So as I became more aware of what it was, I stuck a toe into it. And in Maryland started going to occasional contra dances as I was in grad school, always getting there for the beginner lesson so I could learn what to do. But every time I stalled out because I'd go to the dance, the beginner lesson would teach the same handful of beginning figures and principles, and that would make me feel comfortable for the first 45 minutes to 60 minutes of the dance. And then the other stuff would appear and I wouldn't feel comfortable. I felt embarrassed that I didn't know the other things that weren't the basics. I understood that the tradition was 'learn as you go,' but that wasn't the approach that I had grown up with with Israeli folk dance. Everybody learned how to do a Mayim step, and how to do a Cherkessiya step, and how to do a Yemenite step, and then you put them all together.

But in contra, it was clear to me there was also a finite number of figures. There weren't many, but most of them were left out over and over and over again. It was like contra dance 101 and then 101 and then 101 and then 101. And there was never 102. And if I could just get 102, I would feel comfortable enough to then dance and not go berserk when a rollaway or a hey was called. I just needed to understand how that worked. So I kept slinking away from programs after the first dances of the evening, and that lasted for a couple of years, which has helped shape how I feel about not only the importance of beginner sessions, but also the importance of having opportunities somewhere to have the equivalent of a contra dance 102. It doesn't have to be frequent, but just somewhere.

What changed everything for me and finally switched me on to the track and got me over that hump is the Ralph Page Dance Legacy Weekend and NEFFA, the New England Folk Festival Association. And so this is my shout out to particularly everyone who has helped lead and make decisions about how those two events have worked over time. And I'll try to call out a few ways that they made such a difference for me around this time. After I had been dabbling for a couple of years in contra dance, a couple of my friends from Woods Hole who had danced with me at international folk dance in Woods Hole and knew I was dabbling, invited me to visit them during January. And they were going to go to the Ralph Page weekend, which I had never heard of, but they thought I would enjoy it and they said I could stay with them. They live about an hour away. This was Nell Wright and Victor Troll. I had known them, as had my family, for many years in Woods Hole. They have both been active in New England dancing and music and dance organizing for a long time. Some listeners may know their daughter Emily Troll, fantastic musician and many other skills as well. When Emily was ten, she was a student in a summer marine biology class I had taught in Woods Hole, and Emily's Aunt Mo had been one of my supervisors for a summer job. So I knew the family well and I really appreciated their offer.

I was nervous, but I thought, "What the heck?" And so I went. And it was magical. It was just magical. It was a particularly special Ralph Page weekend. I can say they're all special, but having been many times after that, Tony Parkes and Lisa Greenleaf were the staff callers. I think they might have been your year too, in 2010 Mary.

**Mary Wesley** That sounds familiar.

**Jeremy Korr** Tony and Lisa were the staff callers. Swallowtail was one of the bands. A Bob McQuillen band was the other band. It was the year that David Millstone debuted Paid to Eat Ice Cream, the wonderful documentary he had made about Bob McQuillen. There was a special viewing of that with special guests from Mac's family, and Amelia of "Amelia's Waltz" was there to see it, and it just had this special feeling all around. And I thought, "Wow. I want to keep being a part of this." I did every single dance that weekend because it was so fun and so welcoming. Improper contras, chestnuts, singing squares, quadruples, triplets, just everything. I met David Millstone. I met Marianne Taylor. I met Chrissy Fowler. I met so many other people who just were vibrant and

made things happen. And because since I was a kid I just recorded everything everywhere I went, I had brought a little tape recorder with me. In retrospect, I think it was for the music. I wasn't really a contra dancer officially at that point. I recorded about four hours of the weekend and I was hooked. I came away thinking, "Now I can do anything, and I want to do anything."

So I went back home to Maryland. I finally had the confidence to attend the local weekly dance for real, the whole three hours of it—that was Glen Echo. And within two weeks of starting to go to that dance, I met my future wife on the dance floor. Not while I was there, but I'll take it. So thanks to Ralph Page for giving me the confidence to make that possible. And for the next few years, I danced 2 or 3 dances a weekend. I was a frenetic dancer, and very quickly as I started to do that, my attention went to the callers, because I was still calling international folk dance. I had been calling that and community dancing for a decade by that point just about. And contra calling and dancing felt to me like a streamlined version of that. Not an easier version necessarily, but a streamlined version because most of the dances are AABB, they're 32-bars long. And I was used to having to set up every single dance I taught from the international repertoire with—all right the last dance was in 4/4 time, everyone get ready for 7/8 time. Here's the rhythm: slow-quick-quick, slow-quick-quick, slow-quick-quick. And we'd get through that dance and then we go to 6/8. And then we'd go to 9/16 and then go just all over. And the international dances, too, some of them would have two parts, like A and B. Some would have six parts. Some would go ABC, ABAB, C, D. Just no rhyme or reason to it. And here all these contra dances, just about all of them fit the same pattern. So I thought, "Okay. I can probably get my head around that."

## **Beginning to call**

So I started to think, if I'm going to continue this dancing, I'd like to try my hand at that calling. But I knew from my prior experience with the other genres that going all in as a caller in a new genre, it would take me time and I still have a graduate degree to complete. I didn't feel like I could do both of those at the same time. So for the next two years, I collected calling materials, which at that time was largely books and pamphlets. There was a little bit that was online, but this was the early 2000s and it was just before the age of social media and really robust resources online. I listened over and over to those four hours that I had recorded at the Ralph Page Weekend. Although I had recorded it just to have some nice music, what it really was was a master class by Tony Parkes and Lisa Greenleaf in calling and pacing and word choice and programming. And so I listened till I almost wore out those cassettes.

I attended my first callers workshop at the 2002 Dance Flurry. It was Ralph Sweet leading a workshop. Of which you can imagine how sweet that was. I hadn't even called...this was a year, almost a year before I even called my first contra dance. But I listened intently. I remember Lynn Ackerson was part of that session, Lynn Akerson from Northern California. And Ralph Sweet treated everyone like a queen or king—of

course, that's what he did. And he handed out—I'm showing you on video—a photocopied 49-page handmade "Callers Notes" workbook that he had put together and tied together with...he had bound together with yarn himself and brought a pile of these at his own expense. And I thought, "Wow, how kind is that?" And so this was Ralph Sweet's book before, before Nils Fredland worked with Ralph on a more formal book, which is also terrific.

**Mary Wesley** Incredible.

**Jeremy Korr** So I came away thinking, not only is this a wonderful community that I knew before, but the kindness and generosity of people like Ralph Sweet to help grow the callers. I was very appreciative. And so as I was preparing and practicing to be a caller at this time, I started feeling enormously appreciative to NEFFA as well, and here is why. Nowadays, everybody records everything. Smartphones, you record bits, you record pieces, you record a lot. Everyone does it. It's the outlier situation where people are told they should not. But back at this time—and the tradition had long been that you stand out if you are recording and you really need to ask permission—but at NEFFA it had been a written policy that the default was anyone could record any NEFFA session unless the leader of that session said not to. So during this time I had started attending NEFFA. I volunteered to help the board to be able to do that. I attended as a volunteer and was dancing there and I brought my tape recorder and a tiny microphone because that was the policy. I didn't see many other people doing this. I'm not sure how many people took advantage of it. It didn't seem to be a well-known policy and a NEFFA volunteer even called me on it one year and said, "You know, you need to stop that recording because recording is not allowed." And I said, "Actually, this festival's policy is." And they said, "Are you sure?" And I pointed to it.

So everyone responsible for that policy: thank you. In the past, I don't know if it's still stands, but what it allowed me to do was record the sessions that I was dancing to there, which at the time were often led by that cohort of long time New England callers, Boston area callers who were the lead area callers at the time: Tony Parkes, Lisa Greenleaf, Dan Pearl, Linda Leslie, Sue Rosen, Chris Ricciotti, a handful of others. And I listened to those cassettes over and over again to hear their words and their cadence, all their strategies. And I can't think of any other way I could have gotten that type of resource. In 2002, I finished grad school, I got married, I moved to California, where my wife had gotten a position as a professor. And there I started dancing and joined the Los Angeles area contra dance community. Talked pretty quickly with the local callers, sharing with them where I was, and I had been practicing and gathering resources and would love the opportunity to try to call sometime soon.

The caller who gave me my first shot was Chris Miller. She at the time was a professor at Pomona College and within a few years moved out to Buffalo. In January 2003 Chris offered me two slots at a local dance. I called Citronella Morning by Bill Olsen and Summer Sunshine by Paul Balliet. And they went, okay although I was working with a local band called The Screaming Earwigs, which was an old time band. The lead musician was Tom Saber, who has been prominent in the old time music scene for

many years and has been a really supportive presence. Since then, we worked together at a dance weekend just before the pandemic, and I really appreciate his guidance. And that guidance started right then because I was so proud of myself that I seem to have used acceptable words and everyone got through. There was no train wreck. And I finished the very first dance, finished Citronella Morning and told everyone to switch partners and line up for the next dance. And Tom beckoned me over and I said, "Yeah?" And Tom said, "I think they usually don't end the dances with a couple out at the top." I said, "All right. Thank you, Tom. That's not something that had come to my attention before." And I realized at that point that there were mechanisms and dynamics of set management. That even though I may have thought I was well-prepared with programming and with prompting and with calling, there were other parts of being a caller too, that I was going to need to pay attention to. So that was my very first calling experience.

The week after that, I attended Ralph Page for the second time on a callers scholarship. And during the open mic session, I got to call one dance with Air Dance and Rodney Miller. And that went really nicely. I have since called with Rodney a number of times too and I really appreciate that. Back to that very first time when I was all of eight days into my calling experience, Rodney and the other musicians around him were as supportive as if I had been calling for 20 years. But at that Ralph Page weekend, when I called that slot, I had a fundamental misunderstanding, which ended up shaping the rest of my calling—in a positive way, fortunately. And I wonder if you probably had this experience too, where during that open mic, when you called the slot in 2010, did you have one of the two staff callers assigned to you as a mentor to sit down with you and debrief after your slot?

**Mary Wesley** Yes, I did, yeah. So helpful. I think it was David Smuckler.

**Jeremy Korr** Great. So I had that too. And I was told that when I get up to call my one slot, one of the staff callers will be assigned as my mentor and then they'll talk with me afterward. I thought, great. Well, I misunderstood that sentence when they said one of the staff callers will be assigned as my mentor. I didn't realize that meant they will be my mentor for the next 20 minutes. I just thought, Wow, this is really generous. They're assigning someone to be my mentor, period. Forever. So Linda Leslie was assigned to be my mentor, really for that 20 minutes. She sat down with me after I called The Tecumseh Reel by Dillon Bustin, and it was really helpful. We had a good conversation. She pointed out some constructive criticism and some positives, and I asked her a couple other questions about calling in general. And that was that. But then I went back to her. I contacted her after that weekend to ask her some other questions because I thought she was my assigned mentor. Period. Forever. And she didn't seem to have anything wrong with that. So from then on, until she passed, we were in touch frequently. And I am so grateful for all the guidance that she gave to me during the 20 minutes that she was expected to and then for 15 years after that as well.

So I returned to California and then had what I really wish every caller would have the opportunity for every budding caller, if they want to do it. And that is what I felt like was



an ideal apprenticeship. Chris Miller, who had given me my first slot, was a professor at Pomona College and at Pomona. Although she was an English professor, she also taught, I think it was a P.E. class, as some callers do, at different places, at different universities around the country. She taught a contra dance class for credit that semester in spring 2003. She happened to be teaching that contra dance class, and she invited me to be her unofficial teaching assistant. I couldn't have asked for a better setting to practice being a caller because every week there is a two hour focused session with a limited number of students who were a captive audience so we could spend a full two hour session just teaching the hey and learning it really well. And a full two hour session just on contra corners and its complexities. And so I took so much away from...if we only had the time, when teaching a hey or programing any figure, what would we do? And then how can we distill that from two hours down to two minutes or 20 seconds. So that was just great. There was no pressure, people weren't paying to come to a dance. So that was a full semester. And it didn't hurt that there was a ringer in that class. Micha Smuckler, David Smuckler's son, happened to be a student at that time, and by this time he had already grown up dancing. He had already composed a number of dances, including Goody Two Shoes, so clearly a ringer. And that helped to ease any challenges I had as a budding caller teaching or calling in that class.

**Mary Wesley** How great that he took that class.

**Jeremy Korr** I know, right? And after that apprenticeship, I felt much more ready. And I started calling full contra programs around Southern California.

[ [Jeremy calling the dance 16 for Gregg by Luke Donforth with music by The Syncopaths \(Ryan McKasson, Ashley Hoyer, Christa Burch, and Jeff Spero\) at the 2025 Fiddling Frog Dance Weekend in Pasadena, CA.](#) ]

You may not have heard this, Mary, but traffic is terrible in Southern California. Really, really bad. I moved from the Washington, D.C. area, which was notorious for often having the second worst traffic in the country. I moved to the top of the list. But the plus side of that was that endless commuting and less time sitting in traffic was a lot of time for contra calling practice. So I would listen to my cassettes and sing along with them and practice myself. And that worked well, except for when I practiced singing squares. When my son was in preschool, I was on a trip to drive to pick him up and I was listening to a Tony Parkes...I can't remember what. It was a sing-song type of square, not officially a singing square, but it was a New England Quadrille. And I sang along with it and practiced it several times and that was fine.

And then I pulled out that CD and put in Bob Dalsemer and started singing along with Forward Six and Back, which was a little more lively. And I was singing: "Forward six and back, and the two gents do-si-di with a right hand over left hand under on to the next and you go like thunder, forward six and back, two gents feet go whickety whack..." And I didn't realize that my foot had hit the gas pedal at the same speed that I was singing. And then I heard the siren behind me and I pulled over and I decided not to even bother trying to explain to the police officer why I was speeding. But I did explain in

the future, I had the opportunity to share the story with Tony Parkes and Bob Dalsemer, and they got a good laugh out of that. But it was years before I then could get past the mental block of actually calling Forward Six and Back at a real dance, having gotten that speeding ticket over it.

**Mary Wesley** My gosh. I mean, Jeremy, I feel like I've told this story on this podcast, so I don't know if I'll leave it in, but I'll tell you, you maybe should have mentioned why you were speeding, because I have also been pulled over due to speeding, because of singing along to Ralph Sweet and his All Stars. Singing "Shindig in the Barn" on that album. A Vermont cop pulled me over, but when I rolled my window down, I was laughing, which is not sort of the usual response. And I said, "I'm really sorry, officer, but I'm just laughing at myself because I have to tell you, I got carried away with this singing square dance recording." And I think he was so confused that he just let me off with the warning. So, you know, you could have avoided that ticket.

## Expanding the field

**Jeremy Korr** I could have. If it ever happens again, I'll keep that in mind. I hope you keep that in this, because we can never give too many warnings. So I started calling around California in the summers. I was continuing to spend summers in Woods Hole, and so I started calling contra at the monthly Woods Hole contra and other series around Cape Cod. And then around Boston, I found that I really enjoyed cross-pollinating between the Southern California dance community and the Boston dance community, calling the West Coast compositions that don't always make their way out east and then vice versa, bringing material from the Northeast back to California. And eventually I got the opportunity to call in more distant communities and dance weekends, and my communities got bigger and broader.

I was also calling more and more community dance, especially as I became more grounded in the California community. So I was calling at schools and one night events, and I had become aware of an annual workshop called Pourparler. I knew that it was a place where community dance leaders and school music teachers gathered to share techniques and repertoire. I think Peter Amidon and Mary Alice Amidon and the New England Dancing Masters had mentioned it in one or more of their more recent materials, and it sounded pretty cool to me. But I didn't have the resources to even consider going. It seemed to move around the country. It was usually someplace far away. And then in 2008, I saw it was going to be in the Bay Area in Northern California, where I had a cousin who I didn't really know well, but I thought maybe I can kill two birds with one stone. So I took the short flight up from Southern California. I stayed with my cousin and it was my opportunity to get to know her better. That was lovely. And then I spent the day and evening going to Portparler, and that was an incredible experience.

I had grown up with a community dance leader as a parent. I had experienced that for years. Then I myself started calling community dances, but this was the first time I was

really surrounded by other people who were community dance leaders. I had been around international folk dance leaders. I had been around contra leaders. But this felt different. And more than that, this event, it was a combination of Anglo genres. It was barn dance material and easy contra style and English style dancing, but just as much easy international folk dance as well, and also singing games and play party games. But that bridging of the Anglo world and the international folk dance world, I thought that had died out with Ted Sannella. I know he used to have those programs back in Boston, but there aren't many events and programs that mix that nowadays and that bridged my worlds since I had grown up with international and then moved over to contra. So that really spoke to me.

I returned to Pourparler two years later when it was in West Virginia and two years after that in Utah and two years after that in Wisconsin. And then I was invited to join the steering committee to plan the program or plan each year's event and program for it, and since that time have been a part of running Pourparler in Oregon, Maryland, Texas, Minnesota, Vermont, Wisconsin, Utah. At this time, we're planning for the October 2025 event, which will be near Frederick, Maryland, outside Baltimore and Washington, D.C.. I know at least five previous guests on this podcast are Pourparler alumni, maybe more. And I'm sure that some future guests on the program are part of that family. But I also want to take this opportunity to thank the sponsor, the common sponsor of this podcast and Pourparler. Although Pourparler is a function of the National Folk Organization, which is heavily international folk dance, but also Anglo and other genres, Pourparler also has support from CDSS, and that has been much appreciated in helping keep that Pourparler going.

So being a part of all these various dance communities that I've talked about, different genres, different locations, has enriched my life tremendously. And it makes me think how one of our local dance and music organizations here in Orange County, California, is called the Living Tradition, which I just love that name because aren't all of us fortunate to be part of this living tradition?

**Mary Wesley** Absolutely. My gosh. What a journey. You know, and you never know when you start something out in your youth and especially, you know, being a parent's helper, you know, that can go a lot of different ways. Sometimes you need to branch out on your own, which you did a little bit. But it sounds like too, that really fed into your pathway in so many important ways.

**Jeremy Korr** It did.

## **Ralph Page Dance Legacy Weekend**

**Mary Wesley** Yeah. And you have woven together so many different strands of your influences and interests. And I, too, love the idea of a "living tradition." And I feel like, you know, we are similar, I think, in terms of what called us into this world. And I'm

always curious to talk about people who were so influenced by the Ralph Page Dance Legacy weekend. Especially, you know, folks who only interacted with Ralph's legacy, you know, rather than Ralph himself. And that's true of...anyone participating in a living tradition is interacting with the forebears in various ways. But it's just interesting that that event, you know, gives us a very intentional, structured way to interact with that legacy. And also the opportunity it gives, again, for people who didn't necessarily dance in Ralph Page's era, but to dance with people who did and receive just some of the joy that they have. Dancing, you know, different figures, different formations and different dance style, but they just convey so much by it. Like they're just having such a great time and it's infectious.

**Jeremy Korr** It is. But it spoiled me right off the bat because after that first weekend, they got me over the hump. I went back to my home dance at Glencoe and it was fun. But I thought right away, "How come it's all improper dance? Where are the squares? Where's the singing squares? Where are the triplets? Where's all the other fun stuff? Well, maybe this caller tonight isn't doing that." And then the next week, same thing. And I realized. Okay.

**Mary Wesley** Yeah. Yeah. It's an unusual space. And how have you worked out from that experience of finding something that you loved so much and then realizing, this doesn't necessarily represent maybe the larger percentage of, of kind of current day contra dance experience?

**Jeremy Korr** To some extent, I've had to make my peace with that. That's just how it is. I learned the hard way, probably like many callers have, that if I try to simply impose my will and what I love most, probably that's not going to match exactly what the dancers are really there for. And so I've learned that a little goes a long way and that whether I'm at a modern urban dance that is expecting almost entirely improper modern contras, or even at a dance weekend, peppering in a little bit of variation, can go over very positively and meet everyone's needs, even though they didn't know it. Without overdoing it. But I did have some friction my first years as I tried to program the way I had appreciated dancing to programs that Ralph Page and some others in New England.

I particularly remember a dance in Santa Barbara, where the VanNorstrands had come out to play in an early version of Great Bear Trio. And it happened to be during Money Musk Week, back at the time that that was happening. And I told them we were going to do Money Musk! And even though they were from out of town, they knew that community a little better than I did at that time. And it's not that there weren't dancers who would appreciate it, but the setting and the program and the set of dancers that I was at at the time, it was probably not the wisest of choices. So when I told them that we were going to do that, they paused and said, "Are you sure?" And I said, "Yeah! It's Money Musk week!" They said, "Okay, we'll do it." And we did it. And it could have gone better. But I learned something from that.

**Mary Wesley** Yeah. Yeah. That's a good band, you know, to have that conversation, but back up your choices. And good that you could learn from it and, you know, you have to do Money Musk week. Come on!

**Jeremy Korr** I didn't want to miss the opportunity. That and various other experiences over the years formed for me what I think of as the "rumble strip" imagery. You know, when you're traveling on a freeway, sometimes there's those rumble strip bumps on both sides so that if you start veering off on the side of the road that your vehicle will start going "bump chuck bump" and that's your signal that, you're okay, you're not in danger, but if you don't move back on to the middle of the road soon, then it's going to be problematic. And if you keep going in that direction and go outside the lines all together, then you're really in danger. Yeah. That got me thinking metaphorically for my calling and then for other dimensions of my life to where I find when I'm calling in my programming in particular, I can sometimes veer toward that rumble strip on either side. If my programming for an event starts being a little too complex or complicated for the group that's there, you can sense it in the hall. You hear them murmuring, that isn't the positive kind of murmuring. You feel the energy change.

And sometimes now I can program intentionally, a more complicated dance that I feel may push on to the rumble strip, knowing that we're going to move back into the regular road. Sometimes it's the other side where the programming is really a little too simple. I was at an event recently where dancers told me afterward they appreciated the level of complexity, that they thought I had hit the mark pretty well. Because a recent caller had called simpler material all evening than everyone was really hoping for. And so I find myself trying to stay within those two rumble strips in my programming. And not going too far outside the lines at my own peril.

## **Balancing styles and preferences**

**Mary Wesley** I love it. Yeah. And how does it feel to balance the pieces of this that you really love and that feeds you? And then, you know, sometimes needing to make those choices of, you know, what, I'm going to keep us all kind of on the right track here. I'm going to set aside one of my favorite things and sort of make the better choice for the crowd. I mean, that's something callers have to do in a lot of ways. And yet it seems you are willing and able to do this. So, you know, what keeps you wanting to work out that equation and keep leading dancers?

**Jeremy Korr** There are so many opportunities, in being a dance caller, to facilitate enjoyment and achievement. Programming dances that I love is one piece. But there are so many other pieces. When I find myself in a scenario where I did come to the dance hoping to call a couple of different dances that I learned recently, or I really love them, they're exciting. I can't wait to see how it goes. But naturally, that's the night that it's a totally different group of people. And no matter how much I want to do it, I have to admit to myself that that would not be in everyone's benefit to do that. Then I try to

redirect my attention to the other enjoyment that's going to happen for me, and for everyone.

Working with the band, the tunes they're playing, giving the band every opportunity to do what's exciting to them, switching the dances that excited me to dances that might have that little hook that really excite the dancers who are there, and just shift tracks in that way. Take the dance cards, which I do use, take the cards that I was going to call, that I was hoping to call, and just with a smile, put them back in the queue at the back of my box to pull out again when the setting is right. But boy, I have too many stories to even think of a single one where I made decisions on the spot that was really for the good, either of me or for the good of an individual dancer who...Hey that person's here. I want to call the dance that they love. Or for the sake of a theme, because it was the Halloween dance. And so by gum I was going to call dances X, Y, and Z that all have a Halloween theme, even if the flow is awful and the dancers are totally confused.

Too many of those to count. Where the takeaway for me has been, no matter how awkward it makes me feel based on my prior hopes going in, the caller's obligation has got to be to make decisions for the good of the whole dance as much as possible and not for any one person or one theme. I bet you have your own stories about that, Mary.

**Mary Wesley** Yes. Yes. And I mean the interplay between the individual and the collective. It's just such an interesting dynamic across the board for dancers, for callers, for the band. I feel like I've heard musicians make similar reflections of like, well, we really wanted to do this cool new tune. And then, you know, it had repercussions, you know, and these are all life lessons that could probably be expanded to a lot of different contexts. But you know, the music and dance community is a nice one because there's often a lot of forgiveness and understanding available to us as we, you know, make these choices and learn from them.

**Jeremy Korr** Definitely. One thing I have found to my surprise over time, is that depending on what group of people show up at a dance on any given night some of the rules for callers and programming that I had spent so much time preparing for in those years that as I was getting started calling, some of those rules may be counterproductive. I'll give you an example. Many callers, sometimes including myself, work really hard to formally or informally use a programming matrix so as not to repeat the same figure too many times or too many times back to back. Not to use the same signature figure more than once or twice in an evening. Working with experienced hobby dancers, those of us who are in it as a hobby and can do the dances in our sleep, that rule or that principle has bearing. When I'm dancing it does feel a little boring to do five dances in a row that have right hand chains or three dances in a row with a Petronella figure. Sure. But with any other group of dancers, if there's a group that has a significant number of beginners in it or first timers, then repeating figures is actually a good thing.

**Mary Wesley** Right?

**Jeremy Korr** It's actively productive. It gives the less experienced dancers and the newcomers confidence. It gives them the practice they need to do it. I will see on their faces their relief or at least comfort when I call a third dance in a row with a figure where I can call out, "Here's a figure, you know how to do this next thing. We practiced it in the last two dances." And they're happy. It's not a negative. I'm still working through these. I don't remember seeing guidance that said: all these important principles, take them with a grain of salt because they're not going to apply every time.

## Changes over time

**Mary Wesley** Right, right. This kind of: 'learn the rules first and then break them,' pearl of wisdom, I guess. Okay. Good reminder, always. Well, what kind of changes have you seen? I mean you've witnessed different dance communities and different places at different stages. What's been your experience with witnessing changes over time, and where is the "living tradition" at this moment for you?

**Jeremy Korr** There's a number of ways to address that, and I've appreciated what other guests on the podcast have said too. I've noticed one thing is a change in the formations that appeared during a standard evening of contra dancing in the communities that I've called in. Even though when I moved to California it was a very different dance community than what I had been used to from New England and the mid-Atlantic. I still peppered into my programs in the early 2000s as I started calling a square usually in each program and a triplet and a mix or maybe something else. And so did a good number of other callers. Not as much as I did, but it was there and generally people didn't ask questions. I did the same even when calling around Cape Cod and Boston in the 2000s, and by the mid 20-tens, there was no longer as much comfort with squares. Not as much comfort with triplets except if there needed to be a triplet because there are only a few people left. The default really shifted more and more toward the modern urban contra model of mostly duple improper formation and a very little bit else.

I'm seeing a little bit of turnaround now in my community here in Southern California with some attempt to bring squares back in, which I am going to try to contribute to also. So formation change is one thing. Terminology is the obvious one. Changes in terminology—but in the long scheme of things, there's always been changes in terminology because it's a living tradition. So here, in as much as there has been change in the 20-some years since I started calling, it's just been what those specific changes in terminology are. The change is not that there is an evolution in terminology.

**Mary Wesley** That's a great point to make. Yeah, and it's funny how this idea of tradition can sometimes be confused for this idea of sort of preservation, or like finding some kind of stasis. But when it's actually, really, the opposite. And again, it's such a nice thing offered by this community structures. That these changes come from people, you know, they come from the dance floor. They come from conversation and human

interaction and relationships. It's so interesting. And that's a great point to make that, yeah, that change is part of it. It means we're on track and we're still a living thing.

**Jeremy Korr** The tradition is evolving. It's not just an antique. And finally, I would say we are still living through a generational shift from the dancers of the contra dance revival of the 1970s and 80s who shifted things so drastically from how contra dancing had been before, and in doing so maintained some unspoken principles from before, but also created and then maintained many of their own that in the last, let's say, 15 years or so have really started to shift as that generation of dancers has started to cycle out and younger generations have come in. And I'm thinking here about the unspoken principles. Like 'when you are asked to dance, you cannot say no.' If you do say no, you're obligated to sit out. A variety of things like that date back to a different time and place and are out of line with the cultural expectations of dancers who have joined the tradition more recently.

**Mary Wesley** Yeah, and I mean along those lines of, of generational shift, and just to touch back on the Ralph Page Weekend...and because we have it in common and I should just say that it's sadly, it's been quite a while since I've made it to the weekend. I haven't been since it's returned after the pandemic, although I very much intend to, hopefully soon. Do you have any thoughts on the future of that event and kind of, that mandate of both making sure there is a remembrance and recognition of some of the major contributors to that tradition, but then also that throughline of connecting past to present and recognizing, you know, current day innovations. Do you think that that is going to continue to be able to move forward and be relevant as the generation continues to turn?

**Jeremy Korr** It's critical. I think it's enormously important that that continue. The committee who has in the past and is currently organizing that event, I hope they get the appreciation that they deserve. I certainly will give it right now. I think this is a critical event to maintain on into the future. There doesn't have to be more than one Ralph Page Weekend, but it is so important when there are hundreds of modern events out there. It's so important to have one that represents the furnace or the fireplace or however you want to look at it, for, "this is how it was." This is the heart of where the current tradition came from and through. There was earlier tradition before Ralph Page's version of dance, but so much of the modern tradition comes straight from there. And having that opportunity to carry on that repertoire, that style of dancing, there needs to be a way for newer dancers to learn what is the origin of the tradition, of the modern tradition.

I've thought about this personally because one of my mentors who started both of the Woods Hole Dance series that I mentioned before the International series from 1961 and the contra and squares series from 1973, he considered himself a contemporary of Ralph Page. And when Jim Mavor from Woods Hole started up the Woods Hole series, for decades he considered himself to be carrying on the Ralph Page tradition. So much so that when I started calling at that dance in the 2000, Jim and the band would ask me if I wanted to call this or that, as if it were a Ralph Page dance with chestnut dances and



squares that Ralph would have called. And that's not what anyone was calling at it any longer, but it was still there. And I realized I must be one of the last callers in the chain to have one of my mentors be a Ralph Page contemporary. Someone with the Ralph Page tradition. The other callers out there, present and future, can read the syllabi from Ralph Page, thank you David Smuckler and David Bateman for all your work in putting those together as an incredible resource. Other callers, they can call a chestnut themselves. But I haven't found anything that matches having a full weekend that is just immersed in that tradition and repertoire to give a feeling of, here's where that important link earlier on the chain is.

**Mary Wesley** Yeah. Beautifully, beautifully said. And I very similarly appreciate the folks who make that event happen and hope we get to keep going to it. And, you know, I'm also heartened by other kinds of events that are just setting out with a specific mandate beyond, 'let's have a great dance weekend,' but really kind of trying to make space for conversations and lineage and also, you know, lifting up opportunities for people to learn and come in to leadership roles in the community. I'm, of course, thinking of things like Youth Dance Weekend, which, as you know, I was part of at various times and I'm super happy to have gotten to see it pass on to the latest iteration of leadership. And I think that event has inspired other similar movements. And it's a special space and it's also, you know, interesting to see how newer generations are sort of bringing their generational consciousness to this question and this work.

**Jeremy Korr** Kudos to your work. Yay, dance nerds! Kudos to you for your work with that event, Mary. I think not only are these different, very specifically intended events really important each for their own cause, but I also think it's counterproductive to everyone in the dance community to have—when there are so many events out there, when you look at the country as a whole—why have them all, or mostly be carbon copies of each other?

**Mary Wesley** Right.

**Jeremy Korr** It's a lost opportunity not to have a Youth Dance Weekend and a Ralph Page weekend and a Pourparler focusing on community dance and this and that. There's good reason to have many events that are relatively similar, but there's space to have these specifically targeted events, too.

[ [Jeremy calling a square dance with music from the band Big Fun \(Marty Somberg, Rob Nuhn, Myron Grant, and Lance Wagner\) at the 2012 Ann Arbor Dawn Dance.](#) ]

**Mary Wesley** Let's see, we've covered a lot of good ground. This might be the moment where I pause and say, you know...it's always hard because we could talk for hours, but...

**Jeremy Korr** We could nerd out forever.

**Mary Wesley** We can.

## “A five story building”

**Jeremy Korr** I'll mention something that I think about whenever a caller has that awkward moment where, oops, the band needs a little extra time to get ready and then the caller is brought up short and sometimes says, "I'm not really a good joke teller. Let's have another hand for the sound person." And then they struggle with how to fill that 30s or 90s or what to do. Whenever I experience that, and I have done that sometimes myself, but whenever I experience that as a dancer, I think: lost opportunity here, missed opportunity. Because every dance comes with multiple stories to it if the caller wants to take them into account. I think of it as a...every time you or I call a dance, even if it's a ten minute slot, each slot we call is like a five story building. It's got multiple stories to it. The first story is the story behind the title and history of the dance itself. "Beneficial Tradition," by Dan Pearl. Why is it called Beneficial Tradition? There's a story there. How did Dan come to write it? There's a story there too. If the caller researches in advance, you can't always find out, but sometimes you can. And normally a caller isn't going to spend that extra time to explain the story behind a dance title or composition. But if they know it, then they can call on that knowledge if they want to.

The second story is, as a caller, my own history with that dance. How did I come to know Beneficial Tradition? Did I learn it at a festival? Did I learn it directly from Dan? Who wrote it? Why do I think it's important and special and fun enough to call during this dance? I could speak to my own story with that. The third story is each tune that the band is about to play. It'll often be a two tune or a three tune medley. Well those tunes have histories. There's a title, it was composed by someone. If it's a chestnut tune, maybe it was composed by Anonymous, but that's a story of itself that this tune has endured 250 years since it was first published. What's the title and what's the history? And the musicians might not know, but they might. And the caller can know if they choose. So there's a story to be told there.

The fourth story is how did the band come to know each of those tunes? There's an infinite number of tunes out there. How did these 2 or 3 tunes make the band's cut to get into not only their repertoire, but then on to this evening's program and then to this specific dance? Why do they love this tune? How did one of those musicians come to know this tune and then introduce it to the others? There's a possible story there, too. The fifth story I can't tell because it hasn't been written yet, but that's each dancer's story themselves. Some of them will have danced Beneficial Tradition in the past. And when I start, when we start dancing it together, it will bring back that muscle memory and maybe the memory of that wonderful time at a packed hall at the Flurry that they did that dance on a snowy evening. All those kinds of memories that can go with the dance. I'm sure there are more stories there beneath the surface, but they're all there. And any time a caller outright says, "I don't know the title of the dance," or "I don't know who wrote this dance," or just moves on, I think you're entitled to that. But there are stories there if you would only take the time to dig for them.

**Mary Wesley** That is just the most gorgeous analogy. And yet again, I don't know why you and I have so many perspectives and points in common. And it's just so fun. And this just reminds me of—for me, I think of a layer cake— but it's a very similar, similar sentiment. And I've often thought of it specifically in relation to chestnuts. Just because, you know, they have that added layer of, you're going to likely hear, you know, the same tune with the same dance, which, you know, of course you have that a lot in English dancing and other traditions where dances and tunes are sort of more specifically linked. But in the context of contemporary contras where often it is going to be a band medley and you could get any tune, but when you have a chestnut, oh you're going to dance Money Musk to [the tune] Money Musk, you're going to dance Chorus Jig to Chorus Jig. And then, yeah, kind of the way that that can evoke all those different layers that you just mentioned of different experiences. And then, you know, you and the band and the dancers being poised to sort of add another layer there that evening as you're getting ready to do that dance, you've got to add to your layer cake.

But I love you tying it to that moment of extra time at the mic. Also, just a nice thing to call to attention with any dance. It doesn't have to be a chestnut. I just called at a weekend down in Florida and I was looking, you know, sometimes if I'm at a dance weekend, it's a great time to try a new dance. You have the whole weekend, you know, you can kind of let them know that you're trying something new. It's a great opportunity. And so I was looking for new dances and I came across one on Rick Mohr's website that he had just written called "A Roll in the Clover." And I looked at, he had a little video posted of an example of the dance, and there was the exact dance hall that I was calling in, was his example video! So he had called it in the same dance community a couple of months earlier. And so I thought, this is great because I'm going to call this for the first time, but the dancers I know, some of them have already done it. So I had this great collaboration, you know, with some of the dancers being like, "Yeah, we know how this goes!" And so they helped me learn how to teach that dance better. And yeah, there's a nice layer to add or a nice story to add to the building. It's just great.

**Jeremy Korr** I love that example and I love that tasty metaphor of the cake. I'll start thinking of that now.

## Closing

**Mary Wesley** Yeah, some cakes can get really, really big. You can have a lot of layers. My Money Musk layer cake is getting unwieldy, but wonderful. Well, that also kind of sets us up to maybe move to some closing questions. And the first one I always ask about is about dance notation. You know, you've already kind of referenced so many things about having an interest in tracking the history and stories attached to dances. Sort of having this attention to documenting and recording dances, you know, quite literally. I mean, I loved your stories about tape recording and the potential of NEFFA as a place to gather material. So this is clearly something that, you know, this is a tendency

that you already have. And it's something that I think a lot of us callers do have, we want to pay attention to tracking these stories and histories and writing them down. Not only the choreography, but, you know, the way they fit into the lineage. So would you talk a little bit more about your dance notation styles? Sounds like you're on cards?

**Jeremy Korr** My contra and square collection remains on 3x5 cards. When Linda Leslie was assigned as my mentor many years ago one of the things I asked her was about notation and how she organizes the cards or her collection. And she showed me. I modeled my organization after that with a big filing box for my 3x5 index cards, filing them mostly by signature figure, but also with some other categories as well. And I continued to do that. I find, though, that for my community dance repertoire, barn dance type of repertoire, and especially international folk dances, doesn't fit as smoothly on 3x5 index cards and the notations for a contra I use the standard wording, simplified wording many callers do.

But for international folk dance, things get wonky. So I just have a bunch of folders of photocopies both online and both virtual and analog for that rather than try to make order out of chaos. For international, I've kept with the analog approach for my collection, even though I appreciate and could use the online tools for the iPad or other tools online. Because I found that as I was experimenting with it, my mindset is so built in with what I learned as a kid from watching Rocky program, putting out all those cassettes and shifting them around. I can do it in my head by seeing a list of dances on the screen and toggling between dances in the database. But I have those neuron pathways programmed in my head where if I put 18 dances out in front of me in cards, shifting them around follows that pathway that I've been following for so much of my life.

**Mary Wesley** And then I have to ask, since you've mentioned so many instances of making recordings at, you know, like really, really significant sites to our tradition of contra dancing. Where are those recordings? Are they archived? Are they preserved? I need to know, Jeremy.

**Jeremy Korr** They are in two places. The ones prior to around 2013 are in a large shelf of cassettes in my house here, and the ones 2013 and after I finally bought digital recorders are on my harddrive and backup hard drives. So that's just about it. They are not anywhere else yet. However, we're recording this in 2024 and earlier this year Dan Pearl left us. I was able to send Sheila Elman Pearl, Dan's wife, several recordings that I had from my collection of Dan. And it wasn't really until then that I realized, not everyone was making recordings of NEFFA sessions and Ralph Page sessions all along. I hadn't really stopped to think about that. I hope that there are some others out there who have made, who have kept their own archives. But mine are ready for sharing whenever there is a place for them.

**Mary Wesley** Wonderful. Well, we'll follow up on that. I have definitely asked other people on this podcast about it and, I mean, we all have this question with, you know, family photographs, things that we have around and particularly those older media formats. It's a challenge. But I think if we collectively think about it, maybe we can start

making some resources because that just sounds like a treasure trove that you're sitting on.

**Jeremy Korr** It's important for archival purposes that way. But I also can't emphasize enough how valuable those sessions are as masterclasses in teaching. Calling a like a 50 minute session at NEFFA or an equivalent festival requires such careful attention to pacing, word choice, fitting in. So many times when I've called in that time slot, I go in certain that I will get four contra dances in, plus a good sized waltz. No problem. And the time, every second counts. Before you know it 48 minutes and 30s have gone by and we're still not at the waltz. So being able to hear what a variety of really skilled and experienced callers do to hit their marks with timing, to preempt any possibility that a sizable number of dancers will get confused because having to correct anything will eat up another minute or two, which is huge. Just, master classed.

**Mary Wesley** Yes. And kudos to you for recording them. And learning from them. Okay. Pre or post gig rituals. Anything that you do to step on and off the stage?

**Jeremy Korr** That has been affected by living in Southern California where traffic is awful and that's traffic all the time. It has surprised me how awful traffic can be when I leave home at 5 p.m. on a Saturday to drive to a dance. And so my pre gig routine has ended up heavily being doing mindfulness exercises while driving to a dance to keep my cool in terrible traffic for a long period of time just to get to the dance.

And then once getting there, which is what you were focusing more on at any dance, I have built up a small kit over the years. And I would love to know what other callers have in their kit of what they bring to a dance. It includes my cards and a holder for cards. I bring a wireless mic with me, but especially when I'm driving to a dance, I will often bring other things as well. I bring a digital clock to put up on stage for the band and me to have a clock, just in case the hall doesn't have an obvious clock right there. I bring snacks or a drink. I usually bring some post-it notes so I can stick notes in real time on my cards as thoughts come to mind. Or to remind myself, I must acknowledge the band and the sound person, which I constantly forget. But if there's a Post-it note sitting right there, I can't even see the figures for the dance before I do that. Just a variety of things like that. And I like to get there in time to set up that kit, have everything ready to go, chat with the band. Thanks to Tony Parkes, his recommendations, I try to leave about five minutes to do some basic voice exercises. Once I started to do that, I found myself not going so horse. And then just giving myself a couple of minutes by myself before everything starts.

After the dance. Mostly my routine is relief. But not just that the dance is over. It's a relief that usually traffic is way better. It's just a relief that I don't have to spend the mental energy after giving everything I had at that program. I don't have to spend that mental energy as I go home. I also try not to fixate on those couple of things that happened where I know I could have done it differently and it would have been a better experience for the dancers or for the band, and instead try to focus on all the choices

that I made that did go in a more productive direction and then dwell on the overall picture later when I'm not zonked.

**Mary Wesley** Yeah. Yeah. Ooh. Southern California traffic. But, you know. I feel like mindfulness exercises to get you through traffic probably also benefit your calling.

**Jeremy Korr** I hope so too. If you asked me my pre and post routine for a full dance weekend, I would say the same thing. But on steroids.

**Mary Wesley** Yeah.

**Jeremy Korr** Particularly afterward. After my brain has given everything, well, it's really a full body thing. So after you have given everything you have through a dance weekend, then for me, I try to give myself enough time to really come down from that—from all the emotions and the mental effort that goes into it—before I start thinking more clinically about what just happened.

**Mary Wesley** That is very wise. And yeah, maybe something I'm still working on.

**Jeremy Korr** I think we all are.

**Mary Wesley** Yes. Okay. And then the last question. Introvert? Extrovert? Somewhere in between? How do you relate to working with groups of people?

**Jeremy Korr** I am an "ambivert." I am both. My wife would, if she's listening to this podcast, she will jump in and say, "No, you really are an extrovert!" And to that I would say I am strong on both ends of that spectrum, rather than being somewhere in the middle. The extrovert part of me speaks to my passion in dancing and singing and calling and just interacting in a community way with other people. It's so important to me and I get energy. It feeds me to be part of that active community experience. Dancing or calling and working with the musicians, there's no question that I need that as part of my life. And then after that, I need some solo time to be just by myself, to recenter and have that time to be with my own thoughts, get my own life and thoughts back in order. I found over time that I have quantified that too. I'm really good for 2 or 3 days on either end of that scale. And then I really need a break and swing back to the other side. So a dance weekend is just long enough. It's a terrific experience. And after that, I really need some time to myself. Or if I have been by myself for work purposes or some other reason for a couple of days without interaction, sometimes I need to just go to the store and interact with the cashiers. So it's both. But there's a big, big extrovert component.

**Mary Wesley** Yeah. And how do you do if you do a week-long event?

**Jeremy Korr** Yeah. I learned this from Lisa Greenleaf. Thank you, Lisa. Take time for oneself. That it's not only okay, it's really a necessity for the caller to make themselves the highest priority need. The dancers and musicians can come second. But if the caller isn't taking care of themselves, then it's going to be hard for them to take care of everyone

else. I asked Lisa once about this because I noticed that at weekends either that we called together or that I was dancing where she was calling. There would be times where I just didn't see her. And I had been...as I was getting started as a traveling caller I just took it for granted that part of my responsibility was to be on duty 100%. Either be calling, dancing, talking, be actively participating. And Lisa said, "You got to take care of yourself. If you need to take a nap in the middle of the day. If you need to go take a walk, go do that, then come back and engage with everybody." So I have followed that advice.

**Mary Wesley** Again. Lisa, Saint Lisa has so many answers for us all and for dance weeks too. I always think of her...I think she's the first person I ever heard talk about the "Wednesday" effect at dance camp, which applies probably not only to callers but everyone at camp. Your routine has been turned upside down. You're surrounded by people, you've probably been, you know, moving your body more than you usually do. You might need a little break on Wednesdays.

**Jeremy Korr** Yes. So true.

**Mary Wesley** Yes, I have that even just during a regular week. I think sometimes I think: it's just like dance camp, I'm having a Wednesday. Well, Jeremy, it's so, so great to catch up. Thank you for sharing so beautifully about your lifelong connection with calling and leading dancers. And I look forward to when we cross paths again.!

**Jeremy Korr** Mary, thanks for the opportunity and thank you again for this whole podcast series. I've learned so much from the other speakers so far and I hope you keep this going as long as you can, as long as CDSS keeps it going, so I and everyone else can learn more. It was great to have a chance to talk with you, and I hope to see you on one coast or the other.

**Mary Wesley** Yes. Thank you so much.

Thanks so much to Jeremy for talking with me! You can check out the show notes for today's episode at [cdss.org/podcasts](http://cdss.org/podcasts).

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Happy dancing!

**Ben Williams** The views expressed in this podcast are of the individuals and do not necessarily reflect those of CDSS

