

# Notes from the Office

## Vibrant Dance Communities—Themes and Practical Ideas (Part 1) by Max Newman, Youth Projects Intern



After talking with many folks about what works in their community over the past few months—and showcasing some of their ideas on my Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/cdss.max](http://www.facebook.com/cdss.max))—I'm beginning to highlight in the

newsletter some of the practical ideas I've encountered and themes I've drawn from them.

I've attempted to feature some that are especially unusual or representative of useful approaches. Most of the ideas are road-tested; a few are more theoretical but interesting enough that I hope you'll forgive their inclusion. Many apply to involving the younger generation and fostering intergenerational communities; most relate to sustaining vibrant communities of all sorts.

Our first topic deals with fostering volunteers.

### Providing opportunities to deepen investment

Unless you are getting involved in organizing for fame and glory (ha!), your goal is to foster a community. While organizing can be, and often is, done single-handedly, there are three reasons to bring regular members in as volunteers and co-organizers.

First, it helps avoid burnout. Many hands make light work and, after some initial investment establishing a system and training individuals, you should have less work to do. Second, it opens up new possibilities. You will have more energy to pursue your other ideas and you can profit from the creative thinking of others. Third, and most important, it strengthens your community. As an organizer, sharing the weight with others deepens the sense that your event is put on by the community and for the community. It deepens the individuals' investment in that community while giving them a sense about what goes on behind the scenes, a valuable asset for the longevity of your community. They may also feel extra motivated to bring their friends if they feel more strongly that it is "their" event too.

Adopting this attitude is not without its

challenges. It takes time and thought to figure out the best ways to bring people in and patience to allow them to make mistakes. More difficult still is adapting your vision for others to accommodate ideas and approaches that may differ from your own. It is always fair to draw the line at an idea you consider impractical or detrimental, but keep an open mind and be encouraging: If someone wants to pursue an idea, is willing to do the grunt work, and the downsides are small, then let him or her run with it. Even if the idea is unsuccessful, their investment is an asset you have gained.

### What kinds of ideas might you consider?

Open board meetings. Especially with food and especially before an event, these are excellent for showing what the board talks about and for inviting ideas and community involvement.

The responsibility need not be as great as a board position. Give one of your local young folks the responsibility of maintaining your Facebook events or designing a flyer for the campus. Perhaps one of your more experienced volunteers could be put in charge of organizing other volunteers. Ask that group of homeschool kids if they'd like to take care of snacks and beverages. Find the artist who wants to draw up a fun schedule.

Make "the ask." Have a sign by the door ("We want YOU!") and include the ask during announcements. Look in new places. Try asking the most removed members of your group, rather than most inside and involved. This will bring them in and they are the most likely to have friends who've never tried your activity.

Recognize your volunteers. In addition to your private or public thanks during announcements, maybe this means a special badge or annual recognition in your newsletter. Or a free or discounted dance, now and/or next time (very compelling for students). At least one group has an annual dance when that year's volunteers get in free.

Thanks! Tune in next issue for more.



*More notes ►*

**Group Corner—Tax Time**  
by Jeff Martell, Group Services Manager



From what I hear, there are only two things in life that one cannot avoid, and we are going to discuss one of them today. Yes, that's right, taxes. Specifically, taxes for nonprofit groups.

The first thing we should probably do is clarify what exactly a 501(c)3 nonprofit group is. According to the IRS's website (irs.gov), it must be a charitable organization, and not operated for the benefit of private interests; these organizations may accept tax deductible contributions. CDSS offers 501(c)3 status under our group umbrella to our group affiliates as an additional service at an additional charge. A group does not become tax exempt just by virtue of meeting the IRS criteria, nor does CDSS membership automatically confer 501(c)3 status. A group must apply for 501(c)3 status either from the IRS or from an umbrella organization. (See our website for more information, [www.cdss.org/nonproffitax-exemption.html](http://www.cdss.org/nonproffitax-exemption.html).)

Another point of confusion in the nonprofit world is who must file taxes. The simple answer is everyone! There was a time when groups that made under a certain amount in gross receipts didn't have to file. That law changed in 2006. Now **all** 501(c)3 organizations must file some sort of tax form, either a 990, 990ez, or if gross receipts are under \$25,000,\* then a 990n or e-postcard.

*The IRS will cancel the tax exempt status of any group that does not file for three consecutive years. Fiscal 2009 marks the third year.* It turns out that many groups were caught unaware of this change in the laws, so the IRS has been being very understanding about not cutting groups off or fining them so far. **HOWEVER**, this will not continue for long. If your group has not filed taxes for your most recent fiscal year, you will want to do so before October 15, 2010.

\* Next year this will change to \$50,000 for Fiscal Year 2010.



**Editor's Desk—Newsletter Going Online**  
by Caroline Batson, Editor



When the trees start budding out here again in a few months, we expect to bud out too in a new way—the *CDSS News* will go online in 2011, probably with the Spring issue. The paper copy, except for a four-page preview mailed to those members without Internet access, will no longer be printed.

The online newsletter will be for everyone who's interested, CDSS members and nonmembers alike (something we can't afford to do with paper). As of now, we expect to keep the quarterly publication schedule although some deadlines, especially for ads, may change. We regret the loss of the paper edition, but are excited by the idea of expanding our technical horizons, widening our readership, and being a stronger support for our traditional dance and music community. With the CDSS centennial only five years away (see page 4), we're taking another step toward our future.

We're in the planning stages now for the online newsletter, so if there's something you've always wanted to see in it, send your ideas to [caroline@cdss.org](mailto:caroline@cdss.org). Also—very important—if you haven't given us your email address yet, go to the Member Sign-In section on our website, [www.cdss.org](http://www.cdss.org), so you'll get our first cyber-issue. If you don't have email or internet access, check out your local library; they may offer free online access or loaner computers for in-library use.



**Members List Now Online**

By the time you read this, we expect the CDSS Members List to be available online as we migrate another of our printed periodicals to the online world. It will be more up to date (hard to do when we printed it annually) and easily searchable by name, town or state. Just as with the old paper version, our first priority is protecting your privacy: 1) the information listed will be for CDSS members only (you will have to log in as a current member to access it), 2) you must opt IN to be included, and 3) you'll be able to change what info is available about yourself. If you haven't already opted in, please contact [ccompton@cdss.org](mailto:ccompton@cdss.org).

## Camp Notes

by Steve Howe, Assistant Director of Programs



### A New Song and Dance Week

CDSS is pleased to announce a new week at Pinewoods Camp next summer, July 23-30, 2011. **The Harmony of Song and Dance** will be a week for singers who like to dance and dancers who like to sing. The tentative program includes traditional and contemporary songs, harmony singing by ear, choral singing from written music, instrumental music, contra and square dancing for all, a morris dance intensive, and a music teachers intensive.

Peter and Mary Alice Amidon will be program directors.

More information will be on our website, [www.cdss.org/camp](http://www.cdss.org/camp), as it becomes available, and registration will begin in January. Join us for this week of singing, dancing and music-making!

### CDSS Summer Camps in 2011

Here are the dates and program chairs for our main weeks; special courses and intensives will be announced later. Preliminary info is at [www.cdss.org/camp](http://www.cdss.org/camp); an informational poster will be mailed around March 1.

OGONTZ, Lyman, NH

Family Week, July 30-August 6, Andy and Robin Davis

PINEWOODS, Plymouth, MA

Family Week, July 16-23, Becky Tracy and Keith Murphy

Harmony of Song and Dance, July 23-30, Peter and Mary Alice Amidon

American Dance and Music Week, July 30-August 6, Lisa Greenleaf

English Dance Week, August 6-13, Sharon Green

Early Music Week, August 13-20, Sheila Beardslee

Campers' Week, August 20-27, Sarah Henry and Michael Gorin

English & American Dance Week, August 27-September 3, Carol Ormand

TIMBER RIDGE, High View, WV

Adult & Family Week, August 14-21, Gaye Fifer

## Camp Jobs Available

Each year we need help running our summer dance and music camps. If one of the following appeals to you, write to Steve Howe, CDSS Office, PO Box 338, Haydenville, MA 01039, or [camp@cdss.org](mailto:camp@cdss.org).

Sound system operators are needed at all weeks, with compensation ranging from full scholarship to paid staff, depending on the session.

Office positions are available at Pinewoods, from July 16-September 3, at Timber Ridge from August 13-21, and at Ogontz from July 30-August 6.

In exchange for full scholarships, we need lifeguards with CPR/First Aid certificates for all sessions, dining hall managers for all sessions, and a doctor or nurse for Family and Campers' weeks. Some full scholarships are also available at Ogontz for kitchen and/or grounds work and some evening monitoring of sleeping children. In exchange for partial scholarships, we need assistant lifeguards and evening monitors for all Family and Campers' weeks.

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**Camp registration for 2011  
will begin in January.**



Morris class at Pinewoods; photo by David Green.

# Maple Morris Explosion

by Justin Morrison and Stefan Read

Maple Morris has had an exciting year and three-quarters since our last report in these pages! [January/February 2009] A network of younger dancers dedicated to developing new leaders in the North American morris dance community, we've grown significantly in size, the number and scope of our events, and our interaction with the larger morris dance community. In short, we've grown up a little!

The most evident development has been a dramatic expansion of Maple events, projects and activities, all driven by different Maple members. From our original August weekend in Canada, some of our members in Boston have launched an annual spring weekend in Boston, and a January weekend hosted by our Mapleteers in Washington, DC began in 2010. Our numbers have steadily grown at each event, and our email discussion list continues to connect almost a hundred young dancers from southern Ontario and the northeastern US (plus a few participants from western Canada and the UK).

To support our activities, we've launched an improved website (<http://maplemorris.com>), produced a short documentary film about our last Canadian event, and published an online newsletter dealing with a range of topics of interest to morris dancers. This spring, we attended the Marlboro Ale as an official team, for the first time showcasing in a significant way what it is we've been collaborating on for five years.

Last summer, we started planning our most exciting adventure yet—a series of “cultural exchanges” with England's renowned dance innovators, Morris Offspring. By the time this article is published, we will have seen the first chapter of the exchange: a visit by Offspring's irrepressible founder, Laurel Swift, to participate in our spring Maple weekend and dance with us at Marlboro.

Next summer will see a more ambitious installment of the exchange, taking Maple across the ocean for the first time for a two-week tour

with Offspring. The first week will be crammed full of workshops and rehearsals, culminating in a stage performance combining the repertoires of the two teams with the music of two seminal English folk bands (soon to be confirmed!) and a few new surprises. The second week will be a bit more relaxed, touring around and enjoying England's folk scene. A return trip in 2012 will see Offspring come to North America to collaborate with Maple on a second show featuring some exciting Canadian bands, hopefully including a tour to several Canadian and US locations.

An exciting aspect about this project is the opportunity to learn each other's original dances and participate in bringing them to an theatre audience. Both Maple and Offspring have a reputation for original choreography, but in quite different ways; Offspring bring a very theatrical sensibility to their performances, staging long pieces with fluctuating interactions of music and movement. Maple's composition process tends to be a little rowdy (in a good way!), mainly taking place in workshop-style collaborations that leverage the participation and imagination of the group to invent new dances intended for street performance which, while certainly employing departures from traditional dances, hew more closely to the morris forms we grew up with. It will be an exciting and instructive process for Maple and Offspring to work in each others' spheres.

As we started thinking about all of these new events, growing participation, and more ambitious projects, it became clear we needed to revisit some of the original goals we set for Maple in its original incarnation as a weekend event for younger dancers.

The idea for Maple was sparked at the Marlboro Ale in 2005 (part of the reason we were excited to bring it back there five years later!), when we looked around at all the second-generation morris dancers that had come with great teams such as Ring o' Bells, Rock Creek, Great Meadows, and our own Toronto Morris Men. Some of them we knew, some we



Maple Morris at By Chadsey's Cairns, Ontario, 2009; photo by M. Richard Johnson.

didn't, and at that early stage we just thought it would be great to have a weekend for this geographically diverse generation to dance with their peers, as our parents had done before us.

We soon realized, as we began talking to people about the idea, that we had an opportunity to build a network of younger dancers by creating a channel through which they could meet each other, dance, and play music together. In this regard, Maple was somewhat self-fulfilling; merely talking about the event became an easy way to introduce dancers to each other. Morris, by the nature of its being a team activity rather than a social dance, can sometimes be insular, and as we set about inviting everyone we met who we thought would be interested, we found it to be a natural way to break that ice. The festive nature of the Maple weekends themselves quickly created and strengthened bonds of friendship and community. Our membership continues to grow merely by Maplers being excited by what it is we do and telling others about it, and we're always thrilled when someone approaches us to find out more.

The completely participant-driven nature of Maple events themselves naturally gave rise to two additional goals—to share morris knowledge and experience among the dancers who attend Maple, and to provide an opportunity for each participant to take a leadership role. In the first few years, these leadership roles generally meant that everyone who came could bring dances or tunes to teach to the group. In doing so, they'd have the opportunity to think more deeply about the details of the dance and gain experience teaching in front of a group. The potential for this grew more as we began workshopping original dances, providing a space for everyone to contribute to shaping new choreography.

As we're realizing now, however, the growth of both Maple's numbers and our participants' experience allows for increased opportunities for participants to take on more longterm leadership positions, having both a voice in the direction Maple takes and the opportunity to take charge of the parts of Maple that they feel they'd like to contribute to, and to take experience and confidence from that to morris in their hometowns. For instance, we've had Maple members, both new and veteran, take the lead on new event organization and the facilitation of group discussions. More experienced dancers, who used to teach dances, have now moved on to teaching newer dancers how to teach dances. Knowing that many of our members will need financial support to participate in the UK trip, Maplers Erika Roderick and Hannah Lindner-Finlay took it upon themselves to head up a fundraising drive, including researching grants and systems for accepting donations. One of the suggestions they received was that donors might like a regular email

newsletter for news on what we're doing and how their donations are being used, so Natty Smith took charge of compiling and editing one (which you can subscribe to by visiting the website previously mentioned). We quickly realized this would be another opportunity for active participation, by providing a platform for our Mapleteers to share morris-relevant experiences with the broader morris community. Anyone is free to pursue the initiatives they're interested in—the good ideas stick, and the not-so-good ones often teach us some valuable lessons. In the years to come, we hope this somewhat anarchic, entrepreneurial attitude will continue to stoke our members' passion for morris dancing, while simultaneously providing Maple with access to a constant stream of new, exciting ideas.

We've come to see the point of Maple, beyond our simple mantra to "have fun and be awesome," as helping to foster a new generation of empowered, capable, experienced leaders in the morris community. Many Maplers have grown into these roles in the five years since we first set up camp outside Montreal in 2005: Maple members now participate actively on the Marlboro Ale committee and teach morris workshops at Pinewoods, and many more have leadership roles on their home teams. Maple events, while still riproaring weekends of song, dance and silliness, now also serve as a venue for the sharing of ideas and experiences, contributing to an increasing range of morris knowledge and proficiency.

Our biggest challenge to come will be accommodating the continual increase in attendance without changing the fundamental nature of what Maple has always been about—being an open, supportive, and fun environment for younger dancers to dance, play and discuss morris. We truly believe that an emphasis on inclusiveness and community-building is the only way to accomplish this. As always, if you know a young dancer who may be interested in what we're doing, please encourage them to get in touch with us at [maplemorris@maplemorris.com](mailto:maplemorris@maplemorris.com).

We're proud of what we've accomplished in our short five years, but we couldn't have done it without the support and encouragement from the dance community in general, and from CDSS in particular. No matter what, we're determined to take the same goodwill and love of dance that we inherited and ensure that those in the future get to grow up the same way.

*Justin Morrison and Stefan Read both live in Toronto where they dance with the famous Toronto Morris Men. They are second-generation dancers and have been active in music and dance since childhood. They, with Adam Brown and Stephanie Phillips, founded Maple Morris in 2005.*

# Yoga for Dancers—In Which We Revisit The Hamstrings

by Anna Rain

As I wrote in the Winter 2010 newsletter, keeping the hamstrings long and stretched not only keeps your legs healthier, but long hamstrings are also more likely to keep the pelvis correctly in line, which in turn assists in the ease and lengthening of the low back. Now I'll present some work you can do to stretch the hamstrings in a focused manner (this is most definitely in the "Use it or Lose it" category).

Before you do this sequence of poses, review in the Winter 2010 issue: how to engage the quadriceps (the muscles on the front of the thigh). Our bodies follow the laws of physics. If a muscle is to release, another muscle must engage to provide the necessary space. Before you can begin to address the length of the hamstrings, you must first be able to suck your quadriceps into the thigh bone and firm the front thighs completely. Remember, this is not the same as "locking" your knees.

When you work with these poses, do pay careful attention to your body, and see that you work at the level that addresses your specific condition. Correct action in a preliminary phase of a pose is infinitely better (physically and emotionally) than incorrect action in a more advanced phase. Note: none of these poses should be practiced during the menstrual cycle. Having the legs up puts pressure on the abdomen, hindering the flow.

## Legs up the wall

When we spend the day sitting or standing (and that would be almost everyone, I'm thinking), gravity causes blood to collect in the legs. This simple inversion passively drains blood from the legs; it's an excellent pose to do at the end of your working day to restore equilibrium to your circulatory system.

L i e on your right side, with your buttock bones touching a wall and your spine perpendicular to the wall (see photo near right). ( This is conceptually



challenging for many of my students. Look at the picture, try it a few times, and you'll get more facile with the movement.) Swing your legs up the wall, roll onto your back, and have your feet about eight inches apart. With your hands, lift your head and see if you're symmetrical: Does your body come straight out from the wall? Or is your torso skewed to one side or the other? Straighten yourself out so that each side of your body—left and right—is as even as possible.

Now look at your legs. Can you straighten your legs and still keep your buttock bones on the wall? Most people who do not have a regular hamstring lengthening practice can't. If not, scoot away from the wall until you can engage your quadriceps and straighten your legs (see photo below right). NB: If your legs are more than about thirty degrees from upright, you'll do better work for yourself if you move to the next pose: Leg up the wall.

Stretch out through the inner heels and fully engage the feet. This action is like flexing the feet, but you'll see in the photo that the ball of the foot—the base of the big toe—also stretches away from the leg (see left hand photo on next page). Remember, for the hamstrings to be able to lengthen fully, the quadriceps must be engaged. You can get a (less desirable) passive hamstring stretch in this pose, however, if the quadriceps are released.

Check your head. Is your neck long and your jaw relaxed? If you notice your chin pointing toward the ceiling, put a blanket under your head to keep the neck soft and long. This is important: release your chin toward your throat and soften the jaw completely. The arms can be in any of these positions: hands resting on the abdomen; arms at side, palms



up; arms overhead with elbows softly bent.

Last check: have you softened everything but the quadriceps and the inner heels? See particularly that the abdomen is not engaged in any way. Part of the work we do in a yoga practice is to isolate certain muscles. In a pose conscientiously practiced, those muscles engage (correctly!) and everything else is soft and passive. If you are gripping other places in your body (abdomen, jaw, eyes), you are hindering the intent and benefit of the pose.

Stay here for five to ten minutes. Longer is great. Not only is this pose good for your legs (it can ease and prevent varicose veins, among other things), but it also helps your heart in that the heart is relieved of pumping blood—against gravity—from your legs. In “legs up the wall,” the back benefits too: your back is supported, aligned, and not bearing weight. (Aside: For the superlative back care pose, lie on the floor with your calves on a chair. When your back “goes out,” lie this way to calm the spasms, for hours, if need be.) When you travel, use “legs up the wall” to lessen the effects of jet lag on both ends of your journey.

When you are ready to take them in, here are some more refined actions to consider. As you engage the quadriceps, notice the sensation in your hamstrings. Do you feel a lot of pull either at the buttock bone or behind the knee? See if you can direct the sensation to the middle of the back of the thigh: lengthen from the middle of the thigh toward the buttock bone; and from the middle of the thigh toward the back of the knee. Keep the groins (at the very top of the thigh, in this pose, the part of the inner thigh closest to the floor) soft and separate from each other, right groin releasing to the right and to the wall, and left groin releasing to the left. As you are able, broaden the backs of the thighs and spread the muscles horizontally as well as vertically.

A variation for the end of your time in the

pose: bend the knees, and take the soles of the feet together, letting the knees fall to the side. This is a passive hip opener that hits one set of muscles that govern the flexibility of our hip rotation.

### Leg up the Wall

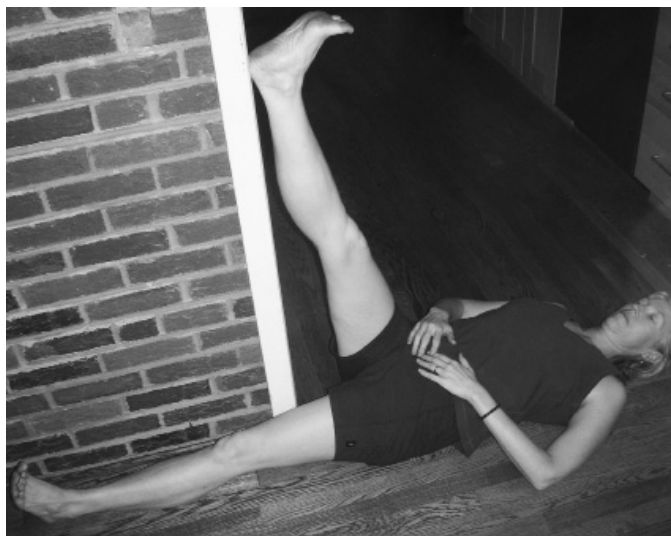
We progress to a focused stretch of the hamstrings for those who are particularly stiff. You'll work one leg at a time for several minutes, allowing the muscles to release gradually.

Find a door where you can take one leg up the frame of the door and have one leg straight on the floor (see photo below right)]. Take some time to see you are adjusted and square to the angles of the floor and wall: torso in line? hips square? (The hip of the up leg tends to move toward the waist. Resist that, and move the hip away from the waist, toward the wall.) This poses works only when both legs are straight! If you are so tight in the hamstrings that straightening the legs feels impossible, then get as close to straight as you can and work in thirty second intervals of engaging the quadriceps, moving toward straight.

Spend at least five minutes on each side, seeing that all in your body is relaxed except the quadriceps and the inner heels. As best you can (see more refined actions in “Legs up the wall”), make the backs of the thighs broad and long.

After diligent practice of these hamstring lengthening poses, we can move on to a more challenging pose which brings correct alignment and action of the abdomen. That's a hint! Next issue's pose will only be possible and/or make sense if you work these first!

*Anna Rain is a certified Iyengar yoga instructor. Her latest earworm is “Rebecka Ridinghooe,” as interpreted by her band, Hot Toddy.*



*Photos courtesy the author.*

# Baltimore's Burn-Off-the-Calories Thanksgiving Dance

by Mike Franch



What do dancers and musicians do on Thanksgiving night? In the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area, many come to the Baltimore Folk Music Society's Burn-Off-the-Calories Thanksgiving dance. BFMS has held this multi-

hyphen (open-band, open-mic, family- and-newcomer friendly) evening for eight years. It gives families and groups of friends something to do after eating and provides a social evening for people who might otherwise have spent the evening by themselves.

Other communities could replicate this dance. It pays its minimal costs, is fun, and builds community. It just needs a coordinator and a few volunteers (generally easy to recruit on the spot) for set-up and cleanup. The dancers contribute leftover desserts for refreshments. It only happens once a year, only lasts a few hours, and only requires booking one musician. Key elements are:

## 1. A coordinator.

This is not a complicated event but someone must be in charge and feel responsible for its success. The coordinator publicizes the dance, reserves the hall (which we regularly use), and sees that cash is on hand (and that there is a cashbox). We announce the dance in the BFMS and Folklore Society of Greater Washington newsletters, make announcements at dances, and distribute a distinctive dance flyer. A real committee would be helpful, but one person can organize this evening.

**2. Callers.** The dance is open mic for callers, who give us a mix of contra, English, and the occasional square. The contra-English proportion varies from year to year, depending on who offers to call. As coordinator, I adopt a first-come, first served policy for callers, although alternating contra and English and making sure that we do easier, family-friendly dances early in the evening. There has been a high serendipity level over the years. An occasional, contra-only dancer will be unhappy with

being exposed to English country dance, but we also have contra dancers who are delighted to discover English dance. Depending on how many callers show up, a caller might call one, two, or three dances. It is important to set limits; I tell callers that if the band leader or I think a dance has gone on too long, one of us will signal the band to bring it to a close.

**3. Open band.** The band is an open band, with a hired leader. BFMS hires pianist Liz Donaldson, whom we can rely on to herd the cats, draw musicians who like playing with her, and carry the evening if few musicians show up. The last seems increasingly unlikely, as for the last several years musicians have filled the stage. Liz suggests selecting tunes, in two-tune medleys, that most of the band knows, adding "It is perfectly okay to play easy tunes all evening." The

English dances generally come from the standard repertoire. The musicians seem to have a very good time, even if the evening calls for sometimes playing a less-preferred genre. (I promised an old-timey musician that I would never tell anyone that he played an English country dance!)

**4. Keep it simple.** We amplify only the caller, using a small, easy-to-use Fender Passport sound system. Our space allows us to use the honor system for the gate, which works well in our setting; another group might want to

recruit gate volunteers. We have a maximum rate for families. Callers pay (they dance more than they call); musicians don't pay (they typically play the whole time). The basic design of our dance flyer, prominently featuring a turkey at the microphone, stays the same from year to year, making it easily recognizable.

Attendance and the mix of attendees has varied from year to year, but the dance seems reliably established as a "must do" Thanksgiving night activity. Facebook buzzed with photos and favorable comments after the 2009 dance (see [www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=123710&id=624238756&ref=pb](http://www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=123710&id=624238756&ref=pb)). The coordinator will be anxious before the 2010 dance, but he isn't doubtful that it will be a successful event.



Photo by Mike Franch.



# Lifetime Contributor—John Ramsay

by Susan Todt, with John Ramsay



2008, Dr. John and friend doing Pattycake Polka, Dance Discovery performance; photo by Jeff Sadler.

**“Dance of a Lifetime,”** a free event honoring Dr. John Ramsay will be held at the Jewish Community Center, 2 Millstone Campus Drive, in Creve Coeur, Missouri, on Saturday, October 16. Pre-dance potluck and socializing will begin at 5 pm, with the dance from 7 pm till midnight. RSVP: [dancewithus@att.net](mailto:dancewithus@att.net).

The gymnasium is huge, but the dancers fill the space; there must be two hundred people on the floor. Ages are varied, as are the costumes: many girls in flowing Regency-era gowns (most homemade), a few boys with ruffled shirts and one with a wooden sword at his side. Fathers dance with daughters, mothers partner sons; size doesn't matter, nor does level of experience. But the dancers are impressive in the style and timing they exhibit; they know the dances and the figures and are obviously dancing with the music, as well as with one another. Best of all, they're having fun! It's reflected in their smiling faces, their exuberant movements.

This scene reflects the effort and vision of one man. John Ramsay has been participating in and teaching country dance for most of his life. In his eighth decade he began offering dance lessons to various homeschool groups in the St. Louis area: a series of sessions culminating in a ball such as the one described above. Over the past few years he has introduced some twenty-five hundred young people and their parents to the joys of English country dance. This at an age where many retire and are content to slow down and look back over a life well lived: Dr. John, as he is known by many, continues to be active and involved in his community. In his own words, “I seek to explore the wonderful mystery of life, especially as revealed through folk culture; to help others appreciate life's variety, to expose the relationship between prejudice and ignorance.” Roots of his social conscience came from his parents who jointly spent their lives working for economic justice and a common humanity.

Born in 1930, John was the first of three brothers to graduate from Berea College in Kentucky. While at Berea, he joined the Berea College Country Dancers, a troupe of college students who perform Anglo-American folk dances. Upon graduation in 1952 (he majored in Agriculture), he went to Warren Wilson Junior College outside Asheville, North Carolina, where he served as Dairy Manager and Instructor of Agriculture. There he assisted Clothilde and Julio Guisasola with the College's country dance program. He moved with his family to Celo Community, a landholding cooperative in western North Carolina, in 1955, where he operated a small dairy farm and taught public school for several years. He organized from among his seventh graders a dance troupe called the Easter Leggs (the girls wore pastel-colored skirts, and the group performed at several venues in the area). In 1966, he completed his PhD. in Animal Breeding at Iowa State University while also taking over the leadership of the international dance

club on the campus. For the next seven years he was associate director, then director, of the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, North Carolina. In 1974 he returned to Berea College as the director of Recreation Extension, where he was “responsible for keeping the folk arts (dance, music, storytelling, crafts) alive by using them.” Under his direction the Berea College Country Dancers gained worldwide recognition: they gave a special performance for Queen Margarethe of Denmark at the National Festival in Svendborg in 1994; they represented the United States at the International Year of Youth Gala at the Royal Albert Hall in 1985 and were introduced to Princess Anne; they danced in Japan, Seoul, San Salvador, Rome, the British Isles, Luxembourg, Mexico and Guatemala. John also founded the Berea College Alumni Country Dancers, and organized tours for this group to Korea in 1984, Czechoslovakia in 1987, Shanghai in 1990, and to Sweden in 1993.

Since moving to St. Louis in 1995, John has branched out into many different areas. He works as an ESL teacher for the University City School Board, and a substitute teacher for the Clayton public schools. He is active in his local AARP chapter, and was Volunteer of the Year in 2006. In 2002 he was a founding member of Dance Discovery, the dance troupe that was formed to participate in the events surrounding the Bicentennial Celebration of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Dance Discovery continues to perform several times a year at various historical venues; John is responsible for researching and documenting much of the troupe's repertoire of historical dances.

Truly a Renaissance man, interested in

everything, and involved in the world around him, he gardens, plays the violin with the Silver Strings, serves as MC for Virginia’s Silver Steppers (a tap dance troupe to which his wife, “B”, belongs), and continues to promote folk dance whenever he can. One of his most recent ventures was the creation of a workshop for young leaders, to train them to bring dance back to their communities. CDSS awarded a leadership grant to the workshop, and during the weekend of September 26-27, 2008, over fifty young adults were given experience in leading dances, calling for a group, and working with musicians.

John Ramsay has been “Uncle John” to me for my entire life (my mother is his older sister). I don’t remember serving as the flower girl at his wedding (I was only three) but have the pictures to document it! For the past thirty years, he has been my mentor, providing me with music, dances and suggestions for programs, but most of all serving as a model of what a dancing master should be. When I asked him what he felt had been his most significant contributions to the world of traditional folk arts, he had this to say:

“There are four particular areas where I have had some impact on CDSS. Other people also contributed and I’ll try to recognize the most important ones. Nothing ever happens unless others respond. The responders deserve the most credit.

1. Family Camp. My sons Martin and Loren were of school age while I was Director of the John C. Campbell Folk School so it was natural that

I organized a weeklong family course utilizing the dance, music, and song traditions of the School. CDSS music director Philip Merrill, who spent his summers



Top: 1951, l-r: Mildred Cornett, Frank Smith, Hazel Watson, John Ramsay, Helen Kaiser, Swedish Schottische, Dodge Gym, Berea College; photo courtesy Berea College. Bottom: 2007, l-r: John Ramsay, Bob Green, Marty Aubuchon, Lyndon Blaylock, Lancers Quadrille, Dance Discovery performance, St. Charles Community College; photo by Jeff Sadler.

with us, was one of the master teachers. The Family Course quickly became our most popular course. CDSS took note and followed suit within a few years.

2. Buck Dance/Clogging. Although a strong cultural element in Appalachia, clogging was frowned upon by some of our leaders partly because it became caught up in competitive programs. I saw it as exciting, requiring skill, and a medium for artistry as well as being an important part of our heritage. I made use of local talent to teach it at our courses at the Folk School. Ethel Capps, who directed the Berea College Christmas Country Dance School, told me that the interest in clogging generated at the Folk School forced her to include Appalachian clogging in her programs. Jim Morrison, a Dartmouth intern at the Folk School, was soon being used to teach clogging in Berea and subsequently, when he became CDSS director, in other situations.

3. Shape Note Singing. Bicky McLain first called my attention to the tradition of community singing from songbooks using shapenotes. I invited several local groups to have a singing convention at the Folk School. We had eighty plus singers, a dozen leaders, and three pianos. They sight read parts from the Stamps-Baxter songbooks with amazing speed and gusto. Soon after the convention, Pam Kelly heard about an old time singing school teacher, Richard Moss, who lived up Shooting Creek. A group of us went up to his house to sing from his father-in-law's old *Christian Harmony*. The rest is history. Moss, a fine singer and charming man, later taught the tradition at Christmas School, at Pinewoods, and then at the Smithsonian.

4. My wife, B, and I were asked to teach country dances to some homeschoolers in St. Louis in 1997. The six-week course caught on and we were holding similar classes for homeschool families four nights a week all over the county within a couple of years. I wrote an article for the *CDSS News* (May/June 2007), following the conclusion of one such course, encouraging other leaders to contact their homeschool communities. The country dance movement in the homeschool communities has grown wonderfully. Susan Todt has put her efforts into Arkansas, Glen and Judi Morningstar are having great success in Michigan, and we hear of other similar developments throughout the country.

Throughout my life, I have found country dance and community singing to be a great way to bring people of all ages and persuasions together in a cooperative activity with amity, joy and civility. I may have given my life to country dancing, but—of more significance—country dancing has given me a great life.”

*Brad Foster, Executive and Artistic Director, will present the CDSS Lifetime Contribution Award to Dr. John Ramsay, at “Dance of a Lifetime,” on Saturday, October 16, in Creve Coeur, Missouri. Pre-dance potluck and socializing will begin at 5 pm, with the dance from 7 pm till midnight.*

*RSVPs: [dancewithus@att.net](mailto:dancewithus@att.net).*



Above right: 1948, Berea College Country Dancers. Above: 2009, St. Charles Homeschool country dance series dressed for the concluding ball. John Ramsay is on far left and his wife B Meyer is on far right; photo courtesy John Ramsay.

# Becoming a Great Dancer in Five Easy Steps

by Ridge Kennedy

## 1. Listen to the Music

You heard some wonderful music at the dance. Now, listen to more at home or in the car or on your iPod, too. Traditional dance and music can't be separated. It's essential for dancers to hear the musical phrases that provide the foundation for the dances. The more you listen to dance music, the sooner you'll reach the time where your body "learns" the dance and your brain can just rest and relax and enjoy the experience.

## 2. Practice

Go to dances. Learning to do this kind of dancing is just like learning any other physical skill. It takes practice. You're probably exercising some new social skills, too, as you enter this world of traditional dance. That takes some practice, too. So at your next dance, remember: keep moving, smile and look around.

Did a friend who encouraged you to come to the dance? Did you come with a friend who is also a newcomer? Talk about the experience. How did you feel? What are your concerns? What was the most fun? When is the next dance?

On both the physical and the social sides, it takes a few repetitions to get familiar with the basics. Then, after a few more dances, you'll discover that you've become proficient. You know the ropes, what to expect and how to do things. And then—every time after that—it gets easier and more wonderful. You will be amazed!

## 3. Dance with Experienced Dancers

The best dancers will help you get where you need to be without your even realizing that they've done so. Other dancers will offer just the slightest visible hints—perhaps a small hand gesture or a nod of the head to indicate a direction. Dancers who are not quite as skilled may try to help you with a slight tug on your hand or a gentle hand in the middle of your back, steering you in the correct direction. Stay alert and be open to all these offers of help. When you meet someone who makes it easy for you to succeed, be sure to seek her or him out to be a partner.

It's likely that you will be asked to dance by experienced dancers. Many of the best dancers come with the intention of helping out newcomers, especially early in the evening. When someone asks you to dance, your first reaction might be to protest,

"I'm new at this, I really don't know what I'm doing." You don't have to say that—they already know it. That's why they asked you to dance. After all, that's how we all learned to do this kind of dancing, through the kindness of strangers.

## 4. Think Smooth

No, actually, you want to think smoooooooooth. If you dance with a lot of up and down motion it becomes more difficult to be in sync with other dancers. "Bouncy" dancing uses more energy and may make you tire more quickly. Most of the time in traditional dancing, the goal is to be relaxed and feel like you are gliding.

But...there are exceptions. Some dances call for skipping. Some steps and balances are done with a hop or a bounce. When the dance calls for a sashay or a gallop, that's a time when "smooth" flies out the window. Leaps of exuberance and all kinds of improvisation are enjoyable aspects of our dancing, but always safely under control and timed to fit into the cooperative whole of the dance.

And most of the time...you will want to keep your dancing smoooooooooth.

## 5. Don't Panic

Remember the advice in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, even when it seems like the world is coming to an end, don't panic. It's only a dance. Don't worry about going wrong. Everybody goes wrong at some time or other, usually a couple of times every night. Relax. Have fun! And if someone really needs the answer, just remind them that it's Footnote 42. \*

\* reference to "Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy."

*Ridge Kennedy is a dancer and dance caller who lives in New Jersey. He started dancing after spending ten years standing on the side, watching folks dance and feeling too shy to participate. This article, written for beginners, and other articles are posted on [www.danceambassadors.googlepages.com](http://www.danceambassadors.googlepages.com); it is reprinted with permission.*

# Tell Me More—Barn Elms

by Graham Christian

“Barn Elms” was first published by the Playford firm in 1710, and was among the first dances reconstructed by Bernard Bentley, appearing in the first *Fallibroome* collection of 1962. It features one of those distinctive, liquid “English hornpipes”—“Kill Him With Kindness,” “The Salutation,” and “News from Tripoly” are more splendid examples of the type—that one wishes were by Henry Purcell, but are not; another anonymous musical masterpiece-in-miniature of the period, it moves effortlessly, in a pleasing rhythm, from G minor to the related B-flat major and back. It is not hard to guess, in 1710, the point of reference. When the dance was new, everyone would have recognized Barn Elms as the site of the home of Jacob Tonson, the great publisher of John Dryden and John Milton, and the genial host of the Kit-Cat Club. The Club, named for the excellent mutton pies made by the London cook Christopher (“Kit”) Cat, numbered among its members dramatist William Congreve, architect Sir John Vanbrugh, and John Churchill, soon to be the first Duke of Marlborough, and exerted immense influence on contemporary politics, moving the Whig party closer and closer to positions of power. By 1703, however, the Club had outgrown its favorite watering hole, the Fountain Tavern, and Tonson built a special room for it at Barn Elms. Barn Elms had some other claims on the attention of London’s dancing public, however; since at least the 1660s, the spot had been popular for picnics, impromptu dancing, music-making, and even duels. The most noted and popular poet of the later seventeenth-century, Abraham Cowley, retreated to Barn Elms, where the young poet Katherine Phillips, known as “Orinda,” visited him, and wrote a poem about the carving of her initials into one of the local trees, whether by Cowley or some other well-meaning gallant, she did not say. She professed dismay at the violence done, even in her name, but drew this lesson: “Trees are more generous than Men;/Who, by a Nobleness so pure,/Can first oblige, and then endure.” And, for us, the fine dance and elegant tune of Barn Elms have outlasted Orinda, Cowley, Tonson, and the elms themselves.

## Barn Elms (The Dancing Master, volume 2, 1st edition 1710)

Formation: Duple minor longways

- |    |     |   |
|----|-----|---|
| A1 | 1-4 | 1st and 2nd Couples hands four L halfway round and 1st Couple cast up;                        |
| A2 | 1-4 | Repeat A1;  |
| B1 | 1-4 | 1st and 2nd Men figure eight through the two Women,   |
|    | 5-8 | Hey four changes, neighbours facing to start;   |
| B2 | 1-4 | 1st and 2nd Women figure eight through the two Men,   |
|    | 5-8 | All lead neighbors out to walls (3) and back (3), then 1st Couple cast as 2nd Couple move up. |

Play AABB ad lib.

Dance and tune notation from *The Fallibroome Collection*, edited by Bernard Bentley (2010 edition edited by Nicolas M. Broadbridge, published by the English Dance and Song Society; used with permission); book available from the CDSS Store or from EFDSS.

“Tell Me More,” a look at English country dance titles, is a regular feature of the News; for earlier columns, see [www.cdss.org/newsletter-archives.html](http://www.cdss.org/newsletter-archives.html).

# Uncle Toby's Picnic

by Northwest Passage Camp Contra Choreographers (2008)

Formation: Duple improper

Music: Jigs or marches at a moderate tempo.

- A1 Neighbor gypsy and swing.
- A2 Half hey for four (men pass left shoulders to start).  
"Mad Robin" (move on the path of a do-si-do with your neighbor, but face your partner all the time).
- B1 Men allemande left once while women orbit clockwise to the other side of the set (about 4 counts). Swing partner.
- B2 Circle left three-quarters (8 counts).  
Balance the ring. California Twirl with partner to face new neighbors.

© 2009 by Sue Rosen; used by permission

Author's notes:

A2 The women come into the Mad Robin a moment later than the men.

Lisa Greenleaf offers this alternate, for a smoother feel in the B2:

Circle left three-quarters (8 counts). Square thru three hands (pull by neighbor by the right, partner by the left, and neighbor by the right; end facing next neighbor).

Editor's notes:

The contributors to this dance are Marni Rachmiel, Joe Grote, Mark Lewis, John Lawson and the session leader, Sue Rosen. The choreography session must have emphasized smooth, natural transitions between figures, as this dance is one of the smoothest I have ever seen. It is not exactly beginner material, but for a mixed or advanced crowd, it should be a hit.

~ Dan Pearl

# Banish Misfortune

(Irish traditional)

The musical score for "Banish Misfortune" is presented in four staves. The key signature is D major (one sharp) and the time signature is 6/8. The melody is written in treble clef. Chord annotations are placed above the notes. The first staff contains the first line of music with chords: D, Am, D, A, D, Am, D, C. The second staff contains the second line, including a repeat sign, with chords: D, C, A, D, D, D, C, C. The third staff contains the third line, including a repeat sign, with chords: D, C, D, C, A, D, D, C, D, C. The fourth staff contains the final line of music with chords: D, C, D, C, D, C, A, D.

*Tune typeset by Peter Barnes.*

# Banish Misfortune

by Jenna Simpson

Formation: Three couple circle

- A1 1-6 Men weave the ring, starting by going behind their partner  
7-8 All right hand turn partner once round (4 counts); sending the women into...
- A2 1-6 Women weave the ring, starting by going behind partner  
7-8 All left hand turn partner once round.
- B1 1-4 Women right hand star once round  
5-8 Men left hand star once round, flowing into . . .
- B2 1-8 Side with partner (Sharp siding); set and turn single (end facing your partner)
- C1 1-8 Heys along the circle: pass partner by right shoulder (2 counts), pass next by left shoulder (2), pass third person by the right shoulder and loop to face back in the direction you came from (4); pass this third person again by the right (2), second by the left (2), and partner by right (4) to end home, facing into the circle.
- C2 1-4 Taking hands, all advance to the center and fall back out to place  
5-8 Set to partner and pass by right shoulder to meet new partner.

Repeat twice more

Author's notes:

- The turn at the end of A2 is tight; men need to assist the women a bit to help them flow into B1.
- Another way to think of the figure in C1 is that you pass your partner, pass the second you meet, and do a right-shoulder gypsy with the third, then pass the second by the left and your partner by the right again to end back home.
- The pass by in the last part of C2 should flow right into weaving the ring for the men.

Editor's notes:

Jenna Simpson regularly dances in Williamsburg, Virginia. She presented this dance in the choreography workshop during English Dance Week at Pinewoods this summer, and it was chosen as the demo dance for the show-and-tell. Afterwards many people asked for the instructions and several suggested that she submit it for publication in the *CDSS News*, so here it is.



# Event Planning Worksheet

by Annie Laskey

Think you'd like to throw a party for your local group? Or a fundraiser for CDSS's centennial? Or scholarships for your favorite dance and music camp? Wondering how to get started? Check all that apply and see what you end up with; then create an event that fits your profile.

## Find something to celebrate

- Out of town caller/musician/CDSS board member is visiting
- The latest Bare Necessities CD (Volume 35) has just been released
- Friends just got back from camp and want to share their experience
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Decide who the event is for

- Close friends
- Entire Community
- Newcomers
- Left-handed people with red hair who morris dance
- CDSS members
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Event size

- Small and intimate
- The bigger, the better
- As many people as will fit in my backyard
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Type of Activities

- Socializing
- Music and dancing
- A formal presentation of some sort
- Party games
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Style

- Very formal, with crystal and roses
- Totally informal, with lots of kids and noise
- Pretty low key
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Gauge your time

- Time is no object
- Spare time, are you kidding???
- I've got some time now, but won't have next month
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Gauge your strengths

- I'll plan all you want, but don't ask me to shop for anything
- I'll shop all you want, but don't ask me to plan anything
- I do "big picture," don't bother me with details
- Details are my life
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Gauge your resources

- Lots of willing hands, no ready money
- Lots of ready money, no willing hands
- A few worker bees and some money to spend
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Gauge possible assistance

- Have lots of friends who'll beg to help
- Might be able to prevail on one or two people to listen to ideas
- Am new in town and don't know anyone yet
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

