COUNTRY DANCE AND SONG SOCIETY
Continuing the traditions. Linking those who love them.
CONTINUING THE TRADITIONS. LINKING THOSE WHO LOVE THEM.

Founded in 1915, CDSS continues to celebrate and preserve traditional English and Anglo-American dance, music and song, promoting their new expression, connecting people who enjoy them, and supporting communities where they can thrive. Membership is open to all and includes the online members list, ten percent discount from the store/mail order, and first crack at registering for our summer programs. CDSS is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization; membership dues and donations are tax deductible.

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EMAIL from you to us:—Now that we have occasional online and quarterly news updates going out to friends and members, we want to be sure they’re getting to you. Please “white list” us (news@cdss.org, office@cdss.org, store@cdss.org). If you’ve received an obituary yet, let us know—we may have an old address.

visit our website
www.cdss.org

ADS & SUBMISSIONS—news@cdss.org
Articles, letters, poems and photographs about country and traditional square dance, English country dance, contra and social dance, dance tunes, folk songs, and the dance and music community are welcome. Newly-composed dance tunes and texts also are welcomed; let us know about other historical dance tunes and times. Please contact the editor for guidelines or send submissions to news@cdss.org. We may edit for length and clarity.

DISPLAY AD SIZES & RATES
Full page, 7-1/8” wide x 9-2/3” high, $400
Half page vert. 7-1/8” wide x 4-2/3” high, $220
Half page horiz. 3-3/8” wide x 9-2/3” high, $220
Quarter page, 3-3/8” wide x 4-2/3” high, $150
Eighth page, 3-3/8” wide x 1-7/8” high, $80

CDSS members may take a 50% discount from these rates. Anyone placing the same ad in three consecutive issues may take a 10% discount. Please include a note saying which issue(s) your ad is for.

SENDING ADS
For now, ads in black and white or grayscale only. Send electronically (PDF, JPG or TIFF, with 300-400 dpi, font and images embedded), with check or VISA/ Mastercard info pasted to the same day.

DEADLINES
Winter—November 1st (issue mailed early January)
Spring—February 1st (issue mailed early April)
Summer—May 1st (issue mailed early July)
Fall—August 1st (issue mailed early October)

Cover: Contradancing à Montréal, see article starting on page 11; photo by John Moread.
Letters and Announcements

SongTravelin’—So Do You Dance?

It was almost our first “date” together, and the band was playing their hearts out. Some friends who had known Patty and her family for a long time leaned over and asked me, “So do you dance?” I answered, “That’s why I learned to play music, so I wouldn’t have to dance.” “Well, if you’re going to date her, that’ll change.”

I wasn’t so sure about that, but here I am a few years later, a married woman carrying contra dances. To be honest, Patty didn’t make me take up the activity. But it didn’t take me long to realize that dancing (especially contra dancing) wasn’t just something Patty did; it also revealed something about who she was.

A contra dance isn’t like the dances I went to as a young man. At a good contra dance, people ranging in age from young teens to geriatric maturity gather together in an inviting and well-lit dance hall. Each night of dancing involves a specific number of dances. A buzz of excitement builds as an energetic band prepares and a dance caller positions him or herself behind a microphone. For their parts, as if receiving invisible and inaudible signals, dancers form amorphous double lines on the dance floor, awaiting instructions from the caller.

“Take hands four from the top,” the caller gently commands. Immediately the lines shape up, with little dance cells forming up and down the length of the dance hall. The caller goes on to describe the dance to come, movement by movement, using specialized dance terminology such as allemandes, mad rhines, hey, courtesy turns, and the ever-popular gypsy followed by swings.

After these preliminaries, the caller turns to the band, nods a head, and the entire dance hall explodes into rhythmic and coordinated movement. The band streams out interesting and sometimes beautiful melodies. Each piece is often punctuated by thumping bass and the pounding of dancers’ feet. Early in each dance, the caller cancels, or sometimes sings, instructions over the microphone. As the dance continues, the calls become less frequent, ceasing entirely until a final musical cadence from the band signals the end of that particular dance.

All the while, dances dance. Men spin the ladies. Women turn, spin, and smile as their dresses flow in a kaleidoscope of color around them. Men and women form intricate and dynamic patterns as they progress through sequences of each dance. Before long, each woman wears a slight glow of perspiration; many men bear an obvious layer of sweat even on a cool evening. But each dance ends with applause, laughing, hugs, and general celebration.

And now, I too join in this activity and I get it. For several hours on a dance night, I join with my wife in a social activity that involves music, coordination, quick thinking, and teamwork. I spend time with happy, happy, supportive, and friendly people who have chosen to take a break from all the other demands of the world and to spend time together dancing.

Yep, I learned to play music, and I dance. And now I’m glad I do both.

Bob Tatum, Cape Canaveral, FL

Hi, dancers. My husband, Bob, wrote a blog posting (excerpted above) in response to his experiences at the Snowball in Gulfport, Florida. Although I am admittedly biased, I think it’s a thoughtful and sweet reflection about something that we all love dearly. We encourage you to go to our band’s website, www.soundtravelerband.com, and post a comment to add your voice to the ongoing dialogue. And while you’re there, please feel free to listen to our music. Also, if you have any suggestions for possible venues, by all means shoot them our way. We are based in Cape Canaveral most of the year and in Avery County, North Carolina, in the summer; as the Sound Traveler name implies, we have the music and we’re willing to travel. Thanks for reading. See you on the dance floor!

– Patty Kunze Tatum

Quote of the Month

“The outbreak into beauty which Nature makes at the end of April and beginning of May excites so joyful and admiring a feeling in the human breast, that there is no wonder the event should have at all times been celebrated in some way. The first emotion is a desire to seize some part of that profusion of flower and blossom which spreads around us, to set it up in decorative fashion, pay it a sort of homage, and let the pleasure it excites find expression in dance and song. A mad happiness goes abroad over the earth, that Nature, long dead and cold, likes and smiles again. Doubtless there is mingled with this, too, in bosoms of any reflection, a grateful sense of the Divine goodness, which makes the promise of seasons so stable and so sure.”

From The Book of Days: A Miscellany of Popular Antiquities (1869), by Robert Chambers. Thanks to CDSS member and ritual dancer Curtis Hoberman for sending this.

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Catch Up on Your Reading


Corrections

The last issue was incorrectly labeled Winter 2010 on its cover (it was the Winter 2011 issue). On page 6, the italicized section in the first column, Helen Storrow’s life dates should have read 1864-1844 (not 1864-1844); thanks to George Fogg for spotting the error.

Photo Identification

From the CDSS Archives, 1973. Who are they? Hoping the collective memory of CDSS will ID them. Was it a team? Some hints that it may be Illinois or Missouri, but not sure. Please contact rhettkrause@comcast.net.

Bhett Krause, Amherst, MA

Crossover Contra Timeline

Alex Krogh-Grabbe has been researching the recent dynamic history of electronic and alternative music for contra dancing. This timeline traces some of what’s been going on; his full article is available at blog.cdss.org

Max Neuman

CDSS Youth Projects Intern

- June 2006—First “Alternative Music” contra dance from Lisa Greenleaf and Clark Baker, a fundraiser at the Concord Scout House (Massachusetts)
- September 2006—Mainers Ed Howe and John Cote form the band Perpetual e-Motion; they begin employing electronic instruments and live looping
- June 2008—Whippersmompers Weekend in South Carolina concludes with impromptu techno contra dancing to an iPod
- September 2008—“Dirtycool” techno contra video staged and produced by Forrest Oliphant at the first Youth Dance Weekend (Vermont)
- March 2009—First “alternative contra” at Bates College (Maine), organized by Blaise Thompson and Sarah Dice-Goldberg
- June 2009—First techno contra in Asheville, North Carolina, organized by Jordy Williams
- January 2010—Techno contra in Charlotte, North Carolina, organized by Aimée Cresica and Peter Clark, called by Eileen Thorsos
- April 2010—Techno contra in Boulder, Colorado, organized by Zoe Ladner
- November 2010—University of Florida integrates one dance to techno music into their first on-campus dance, organized by Chelsea Moehlenbrock
- December 2010—Double Apex premiers live fiddler techno (live loops plus prerecorded samples),...at the Concord Scout House
Notes from the Office

Blog Notes

Where can you read about overcoming the “body-mind disconnect” through dancing, a morris dance game show, and Bugs Bunny’s pottery call? “The CDSS Blog at blog.cdss.org.” We’ve been enjoying the chance to share some of the topics that come across our desks. We hope you have, too. We’re welcoming submissions and suggestions. If you have anything you’d like to blog about, let us know.

Outreach

Announcing an upcoming leadership event cosponsored by CDSS. Puttin’ on the Dance: A Conference for Northeast Dance Organizers will happen on November 11-13, 2011 in White River Junction, Vermont. If you organize a English or American dance series (contra, square, English country, community, family, etc.) in the northeastern United States or Canada, join us for this rare and exciting opportunity. Meet with peers, share ideas, learn new skills, dance, have fun, be organizer geeks, and more! For more information: NEDanceOrgs@gmail.com.

If you need support for a music and/or dance event or project, CDSS can help. See Outreach Funds, www.cdss.org/outreach-funds.html, to apply for a grant. The next deadline is July 1. Contact Linda Henry, linda@cdss.org or 413-265-7240 x 105, for logistical support and advice.

Publications

Cecil Sharp’s Appalachian Diaries now online, transcribed and annotated.

The Vaughan Williams Memorial Library of the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS) has in its collection the only surviving copy of Cecil Sharp’s personal diaries from his trips to North America, 1915-1918. We are proud to announce that CDSS has sponsored the transcription and annotation of the diaries, with funding from the Langstaff family, the Ishak Foundation, and William Ritchie. The transcription project is dedicated to the memory and works of John (Jack) Langstaff, and is viewable at libraryefdss.org/cgi-bin/sharperdiaries.cgi.

To encourage North America, Sharp met with dance enthusiasts in New York (founding CDSS), and Boston (founding CDSS-Boston Centre), including Helen Storrow (owner of what became Pinewoods Camp), and made historic contact with Olive Daniel Campbell, who had collected songs in the Appalachian region. Sharp decided that he had to make a thorough study of these songs and would make his way to the Southern mountains himself. With eventual funding from Mrs. Storrow, Sharp travelled into the Appalachian mountains in July 1916 to collect songs for the first time.

(For context, look at Dear Companion: Appalachian Traditional Songs and Singers from the Cecil Sharp Collection, EFDFSS, 2004, at your local library or sold in the CDSS Store, www.cdss.org/ folksong.html, for a wonderful essay on Sharp’s and Karpeles’s adventures.)

Staff Changes

A Note from CAROL COMPTON, former Operations Manager—“After ten years of working with a remarkable group of people and the remarkable organization I’ve left the CDSS office for new adventures. When I arrived in January of 2001, I found a welcoming and dedicated community. A great deal has changed in those years: the office went from two computers to a network, from a single email address to email for all, from a purely informational website to an online store, from publishing books to posting resources online, from looking for financial support for ourselves to offering support to the wider community. As I move on professionally, I look forward to continuing my association with the CDSS community, just from a different place in the set.

ADINA GORDON is our Interim Operations Manager. She is an experienced contra and square caller, enjoying her first steps into calling English, and is delighted to have the opportunity to give back to CDSS, from which she’s received so much. Since December, LYDIA IVINS, our new webmaster, has been busy tacking a variety of projects involving our online presence. Several sections of the website have been spruced up and rendered more accessible; it is now much easier to register for camp, become a member, find advice about starting a dance, and more. Stay tuned for further improvements, including some much-needed upgrades to our and a stronger connection between the website and the blog.

And JACK HANEY, our former “super-temp” and their ever-faithful clock, is now Office Manager. Best wishes, Carol; welcome, Adina; and congratulations, Jack!”

CDSS to Cease Operations!

Aha! Caught your attention, did we? No, this organization is moving ahead with all manner of projects, but this one just happened by chance. The staff works under the overall direction set by the CDSS Governing Board, a large group of hardworking volunteers who look at the big picture and have a collective vision of where we’re heading and what we want to be doing. Board members come from all parts of the United States and Canada, and represent varied interests in music, dance and song.

Bruce Hamilton’s last year as president begins with the Board’s annual meeting in May; several other at large positions also will need to be filled. The CDSS Bylaws specify that the Nominating Committee each year submits a slate of qualified individuals. However, our committee of five needs your help finding candidates for the board who possess the appropriate mix of skills, experience, energy, time, and teamwork style. Look around your own community of individuals involved with traditional music, dance, and song. Think about folks you have met at weekends, conferences, and camps. Who are the shining lights? Who is looking to the future? Who has suggested innovative ideas and then worked with others to turn vision into reality? Who are the folks who are well organized, thoughtful, creative, responsible? Send them our way.

Board members must be members of CDSS. Especially welcome are people with professional experience in management, finance, human resources, fundraising, and publicity. Experience with small nonprofit organizations is certainly a plus. Of course, we want to know about active, creative people of all types, and we are especially interested in increasing the number of younger Board members.

If you have candidates to suggest (and this includes self-nominations), send a short paragraph or two with the following information:

- why you think they are a good board candidate
- what work/activities they do that are useful
- what they do in the world of music, dance, and song
- how to contact them by email, phone, and snailmail

Most of the work of the Nominating Committee takes place during the summer months, which means we need your consideration by June 1. Please send your suggestions to the CDSS Nominating Committee, via email, millstone@valley.net, or by mail at 176 Farnum Hill Road, Lebanon, NH 03766.

David Millstone, Chairman
CDSS Nominating Committee

Thank You

We are grateful to all our friends and members for the many ways in which they support our work, and we’re especially grateful to those who have given gifts through the fund appeal, to special funds and scholarships, matching gifts, etc. It’s our habit to recognize all these good people, and the list of 2010 donors is now online, www.cdss.org/our-donors.html.

Remembering Mary Kay Friday

This spring marks the ten year anniversary of the death of Mary Kay Friday, and we have been reflecting on how pleased we know she would have been to see how much we have done since her passing. Mary Kay was a dancer, organizer, CDSS Board member, and emerging caller in the greater Washington, DC area. You can read more about her and about the CDSS Leadership Fund, www.cdss.org/mary-kay-friday-leadership-fund.html, named for her. It was a gift in her memory from her brothers that lit the spark for what became the New Leaders, Good Leaders campaign. Since its launch, CDSS has awarded dozens of grants to support workshops, regional conferences, new dance series, and mentorships; hired two youth interns; and published a website and resources to support leadership development. Mary Kay, we wish you could be here to see it all, and to know that dance, music, and song are flourishing far and wide!
Confessions of a Contra Dancer
by Emily Adams

It's remarkable how the smallest details can end up changing your life. I first started contra dancing on a whim, almost by accident, when a friend requested I go along with her to a dance so she'd have "someone to hang out with." Little did I know then what an impact the contra community would have on me.

A lifelong lover of music and dance, I have been training for the past decade or so as a classical musician, both a pianist and a singer. By [last] May, I had just completed my master's degree in voice, and after six years of higher education in music, felt burned out, unmotivated, and discouraged, wondering what on earth I could do with the skills that I had slaved over for years but was not enjoying anymore. I'm very lucky that contra dancing found me when it did; otherwise, I may have simply drifted into musical obscurity, not really caring what became of my future as a musician. In the contra community, I found a group of people and ideas that provided me with the "missing ingredient" I had been searching for in the world of classical music.

If nothing else, the contra dance community has gotten one thing right that so many other more formal artistic communities have missed: that dance, music, or really any art form, should originate from a deep sense of inner joy. In the classical music realm, I often struggled with my true reason for making music: was it for self-expression? To please my teachers? To gain the acceptance or admiration of my peers? In the contra world, this anxiety over the relationship of self and others (peers, teachers, critics, etc.) is eliminated through its emphasis on the deeply meaningful expression that comes when an entire community takes part in an art form, allowing for both individual and corporate expression, all of which is driven by an infectious sense of joy.

By "joy," I don't necessarily mean happiness—clearly, not all art is motivated by happiness; indeed, some of the greatest examples of artistic achievement have come from intense expressions of grief or sadness. Instead, I mean a deep sense of well-being and belonging, which often, but not always, leads to an outward expression of "happiness." This is the joy that leads to the most effective music-making.

The classical music world, sadly, focuses so much on criticism and effort that it creates a profound feeling of inferiority and alienation. I would like to suggest that the contra community is the perfect antidote to this effect. By the time I finished graduate school, I struggled with severe tension issues and a crippling lack of confidence in my abilities as a musician. I sensed that there was a truly talented artist playing in front of me, but that it was buried under so many layers of anxiety and fear that I might never find it. When I began dancing at contra events, however, I felt an immediate sense of freedom that I hadn't experienced in any musical setting. I was allowed to simply take part. Instead of being criticized for "doing it wrong," I was strongly encouraged to keep trying. Through dancing, my relationship with music changed from one of debilitating fear over being wrong to one of unencumbered self-expression. I was finally freed from the prison of my musical anxieties.

The first breakthrough came for me when I began playing piano for contra dances. Of course, I am even newer at that than I am at dancing, but it has already transformed my life as a pianist. For the first time, I feel a real connection between my musical ideas and the keyboard. In classical music, there is a profound barrier between the musician and the music: the fact that someone, the "composer," has already dictated every note the performer is supposed to play. This makes self-expression extremely difficult, since the performer is essentially following a meticulous set of directions; the music begins as a fixed entity, which must be ingrained into the performer. In the folk music tradition, however, one makes music from the inside out; the (relatively) simple tunes quickly become a part of the musician's "musical DNA," and the resulting music is a pure expression of the musician's own ideas and creativity.

When I began making music this way, I discovered that I could directly translate my own musical ideas to the keyboard. It was a profound experience that has substantially changed my approach to classical music. I should note here, of course, that I don't mean to diminish the importance or brilliance of classical music in any way. The classical tradition has provided Western culture with some of the most beautiful, sophisticated, and poignant artistic gems the world has ever known. Rather, my intent is to point out the flaws that have become inherent in the pedagogy of classical music, and that contra dance can provide an alternative path to music-making. As I am applying the feeling of spontaneity and freedom that I gained from contra in my classical playing, I was transformed from a meek, apologetic pianist to a competent, confident and, surprisingly, a pianist that I knew must be somewhere has finally started to come out.

Snow on the Ground — A Suite of Winter Musical Traditions and Lore
by Gabriel Popkin

Anna Roberts-Gevurt and Elizabeth LaPrelle's new creation "Snow is on the Ground" is a dazzling old-timey variety show that mixes choose-your-own, puppetry, poetry, ballads, laments, clogging, collage, woodcuts, and plenty of fiddle tunes, all woven together with a narrative based on stories from winters long ago. The duo's debut shows us what can happen when two talented young artists combine exuberant imaginative muscle and a command of a wide array of media with a deep knowledge of traditional music. Through singing, playing, and telling, Anna and Elizabeth transport us to a time when song and story not only entertained, but were essential in surviving the chill of a mountain winter.

The two women themselves represent a vibrant mixture of backgrounds and influences. Anna grew up in Vermont playing classical violin, but fell in love with fiddle music during a summer she spent in Whitesburg, Kentucky. She wrote her college thesis on the Johnson family of fiddlers, and then made her way to Giles County, Virginia to immerse herself further in her adopted musical tradition. Elizabeth grew up in the charmingly named Rural Retreat, Virginia, absorbing ballads from her mother and other local singers; more recently she took up the clawhammer banjo. Both became involved in theater during college, and apparently picked up a trove of other skills along the way, as evident from the masterful puppet-making, sewing, and collaging on display in the show.

The duo conceived the idea for a themed show shortly after returning from a concert in Blue Ridge, Virginia. They wanted something that, in Elizabeth's words, "had a direction to it, a center, something to point your energies towards. Anna, being a very proactive person, said 'Let's do it Together!'" And soon they were stitching together a set of poems, stories, and songs gathered from books, recordings, friends, neighbors, and their own memories.

I was excited about making it seasonal," says Elizabeth. "Lots of folks are into local and seasonal eating, and the transformative effect that has on how you spend the time and your life is cyclical, profound. Lots of the music arises from specific times—not times that are gone and past but times that come and go year to year: Cold Frosty Morning, 'Breaking Up Camp.'" They are two of the three Fine Fiddle tunes featured in the show—the first a simple and exquisite melody from West Virginia fiddle player Melvin Wine; the second a popular dance tune from southern Virginia, traditionally played at the end of a raucous two-week Christmas celebration that seemingly bears little resemblance to our modern day rituals of consumerism.

The most stunning element of the show is without a doubt the pair of "crankies"—think Torah scroll, but smaller, framed, and with colored scenes in place of letters.* Anna recalls seeing her first crankie in elementary school, and being inspired by the well known Vermont puppet troupe Bread and Puppet. The first crankie in this show makes its appearance to "Lost Gander," a wispy banjo tune that comes to us from Dee Hicks of Tennessee, via Mike Seeger. While Anna plays delicate harmonics on the banjo, Elizabeth navigates the hanging gander through mesmerizing landscapes of changing seasons, 'til it comes to rest silhouetted by a full winter moon, with backlighting provided by a candle.

The theme of winter is also evoked by songs people might have sung to transport themselves away from the cold. The second crankie is a series of bawdy, not so intimate scenes from the "Ballad of Lord Bateman," a tale of an English adventurer who makes his way to Turkey, where he is imprisoned and then saved by his jailer's amorous daughter. As Elizabeth points out, such distant lands were probably as wondrous to mountain people as the sight of a migrating bird was familiar. "I like to think that we're not only showing people a vision of what happens in our imaginations when we play music, but we're showing them how it would have sparked the imaginations of folks long ago. We think about someone a hundred years ago singing Lord Bateman, where people travel to Turkey, and what an almost mythical land that might have been to someone living in the mountains their whole life.

Snow is on the Ground warms, but it also chills, especially during Elizabeth's haunting solo rendition of Texas Gladden's ghost ballad "Three Little Babes." As she sings of a lady setting out bread and wine for her dead children who cannot eat or drink, Elizabeth slowly sets out plates, cutlery, and cups in front of us. During the song "Orphan Girl," a puppet girl is sprinkled in confetti snow while sleeping, after being turned out of her barn by an old miser. But never does the ice and snow of an Appalachian winter feel so close as during "The Evangelist's Song," a lament based on a letter from the preacher Roger
Williams instructing his New England betrothed not to follow him to the Cumberland mountains. “In winter-time, the wolves will howl; around my door, the red men prove,” Anna and Elizabeth sing, with pitch-perfect harmony and spot-on timing. (The letter never reaches its destination, and the poor girl sets off to meet her beloved, who meanwhile has died of unknown causes.)

Of course, accompanying music with moving images is a practice with its own long history. We’re all familiar with music and their concurrence, the “illuminated song,” has been around for over a century. And surely people in the pre-electronic age had ways of illustrating their music as well, perhaps even with crankies. The effect of the visual elements of the show, aside from their beauty and intricacy, is to provide another way for the audience to engage both sensorily and emotionally with the music. For Anna and Elizabeth, this meant using crankies, puppets, and other props to bring life to the stories that their music tells. As Anna puts it, “Sometimes the story is nestled in, deep in the tune, and it’s a challenge to draw the audience—who might be hearing this music for the first time—into that richness, and into the imaginative world that we get lost in, as we learn, play, and dwell on these old songs.”

As the show reaches its finale it returns us to warmth, and it ends with Anna flat-footing to a lively dance tune. I saw the show in a packed house in northwest Washington, DC, where the appreciative audience clapped for, and received a rousing encore. The attendees were mostly young professionals who had no particular ties to Appalachia and little familiarity with its music, but their enthusiastic response was testament to the enduring power, and relevance, of this music and the lore that surrounds it. Indeed, in this technological age, our need to connect with the rhythms of nature and the traditions of our ancestors takes on a special urgency. Anna Roberts-Gevalt and Elizabeth LePrelle have created a living thing of beauty and depth, a performance that bears us to times past and places far, and yet sustains and fortifies us for our lives here and now.

Anna and Elizabeth are currently taking their show around the southern Virginia area. For more information and to follow their adventures, go to www.facebook.com/annaelizabeth.

Gabriel Popham is an old-time fiddler, caller, and concert organizer in the Washington, DC area. He’d like to thank Anna and Elizabeth for their generosity with their music and their contributions to this article, Kaitlin Bisno-Stark for editorial suggestions and for graciously hosting the concert, and Julia Friend for conceiving the idea of this article in the first place.

(Contradancing à Montréal) (continued from page 10)

increase in happiness as doubling your income. If you can’t immediately double your income, why not come out to our dance? We contradancers are superb social creatures. We seek not to be admired, like Fred or Ginger, for our individual grace, but for our collective grace. We move together, sharing space with other, living joy to each other, tracing on the dance floor a metaphor for the common accord that is the essence of civility. Ours is a fraught and perilous world. We need to live collectively, and contradancing builds community and happiness.

Every society except ours, at just about every stage in history, has danced. Social dancing is a wonderful cultural invention; it harnesses the power of Eros, allowing people license to pleasurably converse through the medium of each other’s bodies, to flirt and gaze and touch, just shy of a critical point, so that all benefit and none get hurt. Many of us, however, have learned to fear dancing. Caught up in a cycle of self-consciousness, we are clumsy or paralyzed because, foolishly, we think others are watching and mocking us.

It’s fun to help people overcome this, to help them entertain themselves in the good old ways, to share in those moments of union when all of us, dancers and musicians, know that we’re all feeling the same thing at the same moment, to stand against the growing tide of mindless consumerism, virtuality, virtuousness, heartless individualism, monopoly capital… and entropy.

Or as Fred sang, to Irving’s words:

"Before they ask us to pay the bill, and while we still have the chance
Let’s face the music and dance."

"Domino, tout le monde a chaud!"

1 Translator’s note: With untranslatable vigor and grace the author explains that, hoping to attract some of the hundreds who attend the local Québécois dance series, he engaged, as caller and musicians, Québeccois celebrated in the world of traditional music and dance.

2...superb Québeccois ensembles such as Genticorum and Domino.

3 In breathtakingly masterful prose, the author describes how, hoping to avoid losing money, he copied the local Québeccois dance by trying to sell beer.

4 Domin, everyone’s hot!

5 More snow falls on Montreal than on any other large city in the world. By the end of Sunday evening, December 16, 2007, more than a foot had fallen, more than on any other day during the past forty years, and the flakes were still drifting down. The city was beautifully transformed, its edges softened, its streets hushed and empty. Unfortunately, that was the very night that I and my wife, Sally, had chosen to relaunch a contradance series in Montreal.

I had sent out notices to the few dozen aging dancers who had managed to keep the former dance series going until it lost its hall and died. I hoped to attract new dancers, especially among McGill University students. Some were contra enthusiasts from New England, and 1 had played for occasional dances they organized on campus. Hoping to appeal to hipsters, I had booked, for that night, the Sals Rossa, a cool venue popular withindy bands and located in the heart of Montreal’s hippest neighborhood.


A great caller and a hot band, and they made it, through the snowdrifts, to the hall, along with a few dozen dancers (two of whom came on cross-country skis, and one on snow shoes). Rachel and Sabin’s kid played air guitar on stage while his parents and André unraveled their driving tunes. We danced. We had a great night. And we went home $600 poorer.

Despite this hit, I went ahead with the monthly dance series; we’re in our fourth season now, and planning our fifth.

Following up on a suggestion made by Nicholas Williams of Crowfoot, we coordinate bookings with Ottawa. In conjunction with Roger Williams (Nicholas’ father), one of the organizers of the Ottawa contradance series, we try to book the same band and caller for a mini-tour on the first weekend of each month, so that the same people can play on Saturday night in Ottawa and on the following Sunday night here in Montreal.

We’ve had some of the very best bands on the Northeast contra circuit play for us, including Crowfoot, whose three members, when not touring, happen to be based not far from Montreal, et des superbes ensembles québécois comme Genticorum et Domino. 5

Montreal doesn’t have any local contra callers (as yet). Wonderful and skilled callers, including Bev Bernbaum, Nils Fredland, Adina Gordon, Will Mentor, David Smukler, and Nancy Turner, have come from other cities to make our dances possible. I’ve been flabbergasted by their generosity.

What appeals to the callers and musicians about Montreal, they say, is the spirit of the dancers. We get, on average, twenty dancers a night. Most, especially at first, were young and inexperienced, galumphing and bouncing up and down. I now
ask Mike, the janitor who opens up the Ukrainian community hall where we now dance, to turn off the heat. He’s reluctant to do so, but when we leave, he is astonished at how much our exertions have heated the place, and at the amount of steam condensation on the windows. The dancers enjoy themselves, and both their average age and skill level have been going up. They have no obvious dance prejudices; when David Smirnoff called an English country dance (no swings!) during a recent evening, all took to the floor. They are spirited but noncompetitive, open and welcoming to beginners, and they go on the call about right, but sometimes, try relatively ambitious dances, they manage to avoid train wrecks. And when the band punches out one of those distinctive moments, when they change key or, after a few suspenseful beats of silence, swing back into the groove, only louder, we whoop.

No wonder the callers and the bands say they appreciate the milk-white control spirit. We still can’t quip even, though.

I’ja saus de combler le déficit appréhendé en vendant de la bière, comme on fait au Veilhons du Plateau. J’ai obtenu un permis, acheté quelques eaux, et mis des tables et chaises autour de la porte de danse pour qu’on puisse causer, boire, et observer les danseurs.

The scheme backfired. Hardly any beer was sold, but a good deal was consumed. I had one; the caller’s new girlfriend, who doesn’t dance, had several; and the volunteer caretaker (a helpful family member, who saw the dancers as a bunch of losers, geeks, nerds, aged hippies, and homeschoolers freaks), had quite a few.

The main problem in organizing a dance in Montreal is getting a hall. The Sala Rossa, where we started the series, with almost every respect, would be a former Jewish union hall above a great tapas restaurant, it’s got a good wooden floor (no pillars!) just big enough for a hundred or so dancers, a sound system magnificent. I know how I got my favorite blue Patagonia fleece jacket. (After one dance, on checking the lobby at the entrance to the hall, I was puzzled to discover a lady’s underwear.)

I admire the company of musicians and callers. I admire them, and learn from them. I have learned from Will Morten, for instance, about the mental process of almost everyone respect, a former Jewish union hall above a great tapas restaurant, it’s got a good wooden floor (no pillars!) just big enough for a hundred or so dancers, a sound system magnificent. I know how I got my favorite blue Patagonia fleece jacket. (After one dance, on checking the lobby at the entrance to the hall, I was puzzled to discover a lady’s underwear.)

I think that dancing to live music is one of the most efficient ways to make us, individually and collectively, better people.

Convincing research attests to the physical benefits of dancing for the individual. Dancing keeps you fit and delays senility. It could, and should, be a strikingly cost-effective measure of preventive public health.

There is good evidence, too, about the benefits of socializing. It has been shown that joining a group that meets just once a month produces the same (continued on page 10)

The Intersection of Country Dance and Long-Haired Music

by Henry Chapin

The conductor of the orchestra is a longtime friend and partner in various types of musical/educational crime in New York City, Maestro Gary Fagin. We had reconvened at a dance I called at his daughter’s school. We met the following week, decided we should do something together, hence this Bucks County project. Gary had programmed an early December Family Holiday Concert of American music; a little Scott Joplin, a little Charles Ives, so how about a little Aaron Copland as well? I ended up choreographing a square dance to a “doctored-down” version of the “Hoedown” movement from the “Rodeo” suite. The “doctored-down” I mean Gary and I took a red pencil to the score and kind of squared it up (pardon the pun) making each iteration of the traditional—tunes Copland stole—“Bonaparte’s Retreat” and “Hop High Ladies”—thirty-two measures long, with a clear A and B part. We left Copland’s coda, for traffic control purposes, to help the dancers get into place for the second dance, a mash-up of two reels, the Yarmouth Reel and Alaska Reel. For the reels, Gary blew out orchestrations from a book of arrangements of Scottish tunes for string quartet.

I think, of course, was inviting the audience onstage to dance the Galopede, called by yours truly, with another Scottish orchestrator medley as the music. Both the apron of the stage and the aisles were jam-packed with family members, and we ran through a couple of passes at the Galopede. A splendid time was had by all.

I have to say this Bucks County Orchestra experience turned out great all around. I am sure everybody of you would agree that it’s nice to be recognized once in a while for doing good things with communities of folks dancing together. The schools—principals, teachers, students and families—and about, occasionally walking down the hall at spontaneous moments with fiddle under my chin. Apparently, a feather in everyone’s cap was the presence, at the concert, of the local school superintendent, who gave a short, glowing, prompted welcome speech extolling the virtues of arts in the schools. Moreover, the orchestra did well, selling a bunch of tickets to the families of the eighty-eight student dancers. (Let’s see...eighty-eight dancers times two parents, some siblings and grandparents thrown into the mix... full house. Personnel wise, it was a victory against a proud part of our heritage as dance leaders, when choreographer Agnes deMille, well known to
Country Dance Society leaders in the 1940s, took our traditional material and incorporated it into the high art scene by choreographing Copland's "Rodeo" and the popular art world by collaborating with Rodgers and Hammerstein on the groundbreaking musical, "Oklahoma."

What a Neighborhood!

It happens to live in a New York City neighborhood that is rich in musical—and here I mean basically that same classical music—history and heritage. I remember from Columbia University, where Mozart's librettist DaPonte was once on the faculty, where George Gershwin lived, and where the Columbia-Princeton Music Lab invented the electronic music synthesizer. I live in the "Uptown Music" neighborhood—intellectual, often theoretical, yet strictly and difficultly music is welcome. This is in contrast to the "Downtown Music" scene—hippy, trendy, accessible, where the names Sire, Amiron, Nico Muhly, Monk, Threadgill, Glass, and Reich, et al.

Three years ago Orfeo Duo brother and sister Ishmael and Vita Wallace moved into the "hood, from their homeschooling family. Ishmael, pianist, graduated from Philadelphia's Curtis Institute, and Eosa, modern art sculptor, graduated from New York's Mannes College of Music. They have concertized since childhood. They love making music together, and they love inviting others to collaborate with them, either by commissioning new works, or by participating in larger chamber ensemble combinations. They love their new home so much that they decided to find an ongoing celebratory and very local concert series. What a Neighborhood! They believe in local—and practice what they preach. They produce themed concerts, presenting them at local church halls, institutions, and even in a former factory hall in a brownstone on Riverside Drive devoted to the Himalayan paintings of the Russian émigré Nicholas Roerich, that happens to have a nice Steinway grand in it to use. In the summer they make music with neighborhood kids, on instruments made from recycled stuff, in a Columbia-owned parking lot on our street. They create puppet operas with residents at a local homeless shelter. They apply for, and receive, modest grants from New York City arts funders. They have a website: www.orfeoදquo.com/home.

I have prepared with the Orfeo a couple of times. Last season they asked me if I would role-play Beethoven, reading his Heiligenstadt Testament during a concert of violin sonatas. We share love and appreciation for the music, and I prepare, and I prepared the British singer-songwriter Johnny Copping's 1980s "Forest, Vale, and High Blue Hill," folk-like songs based on poems from Cotswold poets, circa 1915. Then, we took a leap and reimagined Sting's 1990s concept album "The Soul Cages," a marvelously deep meditation on one man's journey of self-fulfillment and redemption for his father's death as a work of chamber music. We were thrilled to find an appropriate orchestral synth drum print and verve rever to a chamber ensemble of piano, violin, voice, and occasional Fender Stratocaster. Vita and Ishmael started concocting a concert based around dance while visiting Bucks County. They had heard about my dance calling at different times, especially when I came to rehearsals for my studies with the Stston Ensemble. Many of you—of us—would say that "square dancing"—as it is often lumped together by the general public—is an antiquated and old-fashioned recreation. I am currently engaged and fascinated observing the dances spread through our small-yet-big community. There can be many entrance points, and here is one coming from a slightly different angle. Thanks.

PRESTIME POSTSCRIPT—The What a Neighborhood! Family Dance happened yesterday (March 27), on a brilliant, cold early Spring Sunday afternoon on the Upper West Side. There were a hundred or so, 1100. It was held at the auditorium of the Iglesia de Lordes, Ascension of Manhattan, our local Catholic school. The program consisted of an opening set of dances, an interlude of tango and zarzuela performed by musician friends of Vita and Ishmael's from Columbia and Cuba, and a final dance set.

The "Fairies" of Centro Cultural, the church's after school program, performed first, in their pink tutus, and a modern tango dance choreographed by Maria Esperons, to the music of their dance teacher, to Vita and Ishmael's "Leather Britches." Vita has been studying tango, as my suggestion, under the expert tutelage of yet another member of our neighborhood, fiddler extraordinaria Bill Christophersen. The "Fairies" were lovely, and their performance only warmed them up for the dancing delights to follow.

Another neighbor, a Mexican doctor Joachim, stood next to me, translating my calls into Spanish. I quickly found out how complicated it is to call in two languages on the same call. Thankfully, I made my calls and extra four beats ahead of when I usually call, leaving room for Joachim, but to no avail. Inevitably I ended up giving the call right on the phrase, I had made an extra special effort to choose only the simplest of simple dances, with plenty of mercy for dancers falling behind the phrase. At the end of the day, Joachim told us how much fun they had, and how amazed they were at how everyone could dance together so easily. I bit my tongue, and smiled back, thanking them for the compliment.

James's new dance piece works out splendidly! James Blachly's tunes, completed within the week of the dance, reflected his new status in life as an engaged man. His new joy and outgoing of love at the public acknowledgment and compliments of his new "five tunes! They are funny, happy, witty, and spirited, just like the young man himself—but I must avoid nepotism! Among the pieces are "Amalgamandum," a smash-up of the "Yarmouth Reel" and Stravinsky's "Sacre du Printemps. "A Brand New Tune" is nothing of the sort. It is blatant theft of themes from Beethoven Symphony #6, first movement, a score James has recently been studying. Hannah Lawn's lovely Playford-influenced tune, in four sections, with variations for solo violin, solo piano, etc., was, the perfect music for Peter Amidon's inspired "Kings and Queens" dance. The dancers' movements transformed easily into flowing, graceful steps.

As a final dance, I wrote a new circle mixer, pulling together all the threads in the afternoon. I titled it the "Love-Tango-Circle-Waltz-End-Beginning." The music was by James, "Comprometido, a tango-contra." That big word is Spanish for "engaged." I'm sure someone has come up with a similar dance mixer, if not the very same one. At one point in the piece there is a dramatic diminished seventh passage, which demanded that to be the moment you encounter your soon-to-be new partner in the mixer. Young and old alike danced a community dance with tango flair!

H.C.
Yoga for Dancers ~ Tackling the Calves

by Anna Rain

Each of us who teaches encounters the bewilderment moment when we have explained perfectly what we want our students to understand, only to be met with a student’s undoubting self-knowledge: “I have no idea what you are saying.” Or more succinctly: “Hamstrings? Heck, it’s my calves that hurt!”

In previous columns, I’ve noted ways to stretch the hamstrings—which is how I keep my legs and lower back from aching—and have hardly addressed the calves, which many of my students find a much more formidable challenge to leg comfort.

Calves are engaged virtually all the time. Obviously walking involves the calves; standing and lifting also require calf participation. If the calves don’t get a break, if they don’t get an opportunity to soften and relax, they are much more prone to muscle pulls. (Actual quote from my former physician: “I’ve seen athletes pull the calf muscle, but who knew you could do it dancing?”)

Here is a marvelous calf-stretching pose (photo right): roll a yoga mat tightly (a firm rolled blanket also works, but less well) and kneel on a blanket or carpeted floor. Put your head on the floor so you have both hands to tuck the roll as far into the knee pits as possible. (NB: If you have knee pain in the final pose, make the roll bigger so the knees are not flexed as much. If you’re using a mat, roll a small towel into it.) Sit back on the roll and lift your spine tall (right). The roll should press quite intensely into your calves. If your calves are typical, they will resist. To soften them, firmly squeeze them—engaging them fully—then release and let the roll press into the muscle. Most people find this...excruciating. Engage; relax; repeat. See if you can find more and more release; bring your seat in the pose lower and lower. As you work the calves, keep your face and jaw soft; when we seek to work the tension out of one place, we want to make sure it doesn’t migrate elsewhere!

The first few times you do this, your feet may tingle and/or fall asleep. The ankles may feel changed. If needed, tuck a rolled washcloth or two between the ankles and floor, but work toward having less and less space between your ankles and the floor.

(See Yoga column, CDSS News, Summer 2009)

This pose shows your calves’ boss, and the experience of finding a way for them to soften gives you a kinetic path to getting to that point of release in more active poses.

Another calf-lengthening pose (below): make a tight roll of a yoga mat (a two to three inch stack of firm, folded blanket can substitute) and step the widest part of the foot onto the highest curve of the mat. Hold onto a wall or chair for support if needed, and keep the heels on the floor. Press the base of the big toes down, lift and spread the toes, and lift the kneecaps. (Many people advocate standing on the edge of a step and hanging the heels down. I was warned against this years ago with the explanation that having the heels supported guards against Achilles’ tendon rupture.)

If your calves are only mildly challenged, deepen the pose thus: lift the knees and firm the quadriceps. Bend at the hips (not the waist!), and keep the back straight (top left, next page). Bring your hands to a chair or stool (back straight!) (See Yoga column, CDSS News, Winter 2011) and press base of the big toes into the mat and the heels into the floor.

If you’ve got some sensation in your calves, then the pressures are lengthening. Calf muscles that get stretched regularly are less likely to get pulled. This from my chiropractor: Hooray if you warm up and stretch before you move, but don’t neglect to stretch after activity! After you dance, take some time to loosen up your body, so they don’t spend the hours of your sleep in their tight, shortened position.

Here’s a more advanced calf (and hamstring) stretch for those who have the “back straight!” portion of the pose. Put your left heel on the wall with the toes pointing slightly out (to 11 o’clock, if the toes straight ahead were noon, lower left). Step the right foot forward about three feet, and line up the inner edges of the heels. Make your hips square—draw the right hip back so that both frontal hip bones are in line with the wall behind you. Firm both legs. Ground the inner heels and stretch up to the inner thighs; ground the outer heels and stretch up to the outer hips. Draw both sides of the waist up and broaden and lift the chest. Keep the back heel in the floor, and if it isn’t on the floor, pretend it is and keep the action of the inner and outer back heel moving toward the floor. If you’re getting a calf stretch in the back leg, this is as far as you go.

If, however, you’re saying, “Bring it on!” here’s the next step (far right): Bend forward at the hips—back straight!—and bring your hands to a chair (start with the back of the chair, and if you can go deeper, take your hands to the seat of the chair). As long as you can press your heels to the floor, keep your hips square, your legs firm, and your back straight (no curving forward of the upper spine!), push the chair away from you and lengthen the torso. You’ll likely get a strong sensation in the back calf and a glorious hamstring stretch in the front leg. Your body loves this! Keep your face and throat soft, keep your breath steady and smooth, breathing through the nostrils. To come out of the pose, firm the legs, roll the shoulders back, and bring your hands to your hip sockets. As you inhale, keep the back straight and bring the torso upright. This is important: turn both feet to the left so they are parallel, then step your feet together. This protects your knees and hips. Repeat all on the second side: begin with your right heel at the wall (toes pointed to 1 o’clock) and end by turning your feet to the right before you step your feet together.

These poses might be understood as mere exercises—physical stretches that perform a clearly anatomical purpose. The physical aspect of yoga is undeniable: a body that regularly gets all the kinks out is a healthier, more comfortable body. But the focus gained from paying attention to the precision of the body’s action is the more profound and lasting gift of yoga. To the extent that you are able to adjust the sensations from the outer body deeper into the inner layers, you bring awareness to your inner self that becomes more and more finely tuned.

In the same way we dance a familiar dance with assurance and nuance, the way we play a piece of music with attentive focus that resonates in us and in our audience, too does our practice of yoga bring a more mature understanding of how our bodies move in space.

Anna Rain is a certified Iyengar yoga teacher. She celebrates all aspects of attentive dancing and music-making. She especially appreciates musicians and organizers, without whom community dancing can not happen.

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CDSS NEWS 17 SPRING 2011
CDSS Grant Recipients for 2010

We are pleased to announce the names of events and projects which received a CDSS grant in 2010. Funds for the grants are directly linked to the generosity of our members and friends and your commitment to CDSS and to the greater dance, music, and song community—thank you! For information on how to donate, see www.cdss.org/leadership-funds.html. To apply for a grant, see www.cdss.org/grants-support.html. Recipients below are listed by quarterly deadlines, and show the date(s) of the event or project, its title, and location.

January 1 deadline
1/19-1/19
Ricky Hatton Mentors
Hill Street Dance Project
Keene, NH

2/1-2/1
David Milazzo Mentors
Henriett, NY

3/1-3/1
Jam and Swing Thing
Muncie Community Centre Dance Series
Williamsburg, MA

4/1-4/1
Youth Scholarships for Set for Spring Weekend
Toronto Women's Sword Team to NYC Alle
Burlington, VT

5/1-5/1
Young Traditions Youth Assembly
Travel to Helen Strother's Legacy
Stanford, CA

6/1-6/1
Scholarship to Historical Dance Weekend
Adelobaden, Switzerland

7/1-7/1
DEFT Reper Competition

8/1-8/1
Brown University Folk Festival

9/1-9/1
2nd Annual Open Band Contra Dances

10/1-10/1
Providence Community Dances

11/1-11/1
30th Annual Midwest Morris Ale

12/1-12/1
Great Bear Gravoe (dance weekend)

1/1-1/1
Wallford Centra Dance Center

2/1-2/1
Iolan Strings Program

April 1 deadline

1/4-1/4
Derby, England

2/4-2/4
Presbyterian, SC

3/4-3/4
Kingston, RI

4/4-4/4
Providence, RI

5/4-5/4
Boulder, CO

6/4-6/4
Owego, NY

7/4-7/4
Golden, CO

8/4-8/4
Nelson, NH

CDSS Scholarship Recipients for 2010

We are pleased to announce recipients for Named, Matching, and Youth scholarships for our 2010 camp programs. Your generous donations make these scholarships possible each year. Last summer we gave out a total of $45,100 in scholarship aid; this includes Work Scholarships ($9,000) and CDSS Scholarships ($6,400).

Recipients are listed by name, home state, and the week they attended. Week abbreviations are: AD; American; CAM, Camperv; EAP, English & American; ED, English; EDL, English Dance Leaders; EMD, English Dance Musicians; EM, Early Music; FM, Folk Music; FO, Family Ongoats; FW, Family Pinewoods; MI, Morris; SDL, Square Dance Leaders; TR, Adult and Family at Timber Ridge; TO, Teachers Training at Onogta; VI, Viol. The matching scholarships also include the group who helped with the match. More information about giving to, or applying to, a fund is on our website, www.cdss.org.

July 1 deadline
7/1-7/1
BACD8 Family Week (scholarship)

8/1-8/1
Pierci Hall 4th Thursday Contra Dance Series (last dance)

9/1-9/1
Augusta Dance Week (scholarship)

10/1-10/1
Seattle Rainbow Contra Dance Series

11/1-11/1
Maplo Reza

12/1-12/1
Jean Rhythee Trifon

1/1-1/1
Amberlit Downtown Contra Dance Series (1st dance)

2/1-2/1
Bear Hug Mountain Music and Dance Festival

3/1-3/1
College Contra Dance at Minid"Fiddle and Dances Project

4/1-4/1
Traditional Dance Can Change the World

5/1-5/1
Dancing American Reper Rountain (DART)

6/1-6/1
Fort Emma Wellness Program

7/1-7/1
English Accents

8/1-8/1
EDC Musicians' Workshop

9/1-9/1
Heard for the Hills Dance Weekend

10/1-10/1
Mostly Waltz RJ Series

October 1 deadline

1/1-1/1
EDC Musicians Workshop with Jacqueline Schwab

2/1-2/1
Contra Dances at University of Florida, late 18 early 21

3/1-3/1
Music Workshops Practice Sessions

4/1-4/1
Central Florida Contra Caller and Musician Workshops

5/1-5/1
Brets Community Folk Festival

6/1-6/1
Book of Songs for English Country Dances

November 1 deadline
11/1-11/1
Baton, IL

12/1-12/1
Gansevoort, NY

1/1-1/1
McLean, VA

2/1-2/1
Mt. Pleasant, IA

3/1-3/1
Orlando/Cocon Beach FL

4/1-4/1
Lawter, WI

5/1-5/1
Berkeley, CA

CDSS Matching Camp Scholarships ($1,100)

Janis Knott WW EAP

Steve Goldman OR EAP

Jaye Smith KY EAP

Denise Dillion CA EAP

Susan Leary RI EAM

Nico Yarber NC EAP

Cathie Irwin CA EAP

Next Generation Scholarships ($8,700)

Laura DeGraaf MA AD

Mary Holmquist MA AD

Kate Wehner MD AD

Elisabeth Beshutzki IL AD

Kathrine Kriester TX EAP

Bexa Moody TD EAM

Jenna Simpson VA EAP

Connie Green TX EAM

Bridget Whitcomb OH EAM

Colin de Boer BC EAM

Benjamin Sturrock CA EAM

Youth Scholarships ($6,200)

Jannine Bakay VT AD

Emily Trull CT AD

David Way MD AD

Miranda Weinberg MD AD

Robb Lundy Iowa NY EAP

Jamie Henderson DC EAP

Kara Latashe CT EAP

Olivia Morris VA EAP

Amanda Petrich PA EAP

Hannah Peterson NH EAP

Elizabeth Stemple MD EAP

Stacye Woods PA EAP

Mike Lenox Indiana MD EAM

Richard Shesmenk MO EdM

Reagan Van Roy MN EAM

Hamish Neuman ON SDL

Mary Wolfe VT SDL

John Appleton MD TR

Olivia DeNiem VA EAP

Stephanie Fries TL TW

Sarah Anne Ross VT EAP

Hannah Apelkina VA EAM

Patrick Romme NY VI
The Exec in Ann Arbor, November 2010

by Lynn Ackerson

Wow, do those Ann Arbor dancers know the meaning of the word "acceptability"? The Executive Committee of the CDSS Governing Board had its fall meeting in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Our weekend began with a wonderful welcome dinner at the Concours Hall, a building owned and operated by AACTMAD (Ann Arbor Council for Traditional Music and Dance, a CDSS group affiliate). AACTMAD is a nonprofit organization whose goal is to support traditional music, dance, and song. The building has a lively dance space that is also used for concerts.

After dinner on Friday night, the board members who call England home joined with the local callers and musicians (Steve Schneider, Susie Lorand, and Martha Stokely) to lead a dance floor full of dancers for the evening. Because of the long day of traveling to Ann Arbor, I left early to get a good night's sleep. It was the great pleasure of staying at the home of Gretchen Preston and Greg Meiner. It's a marvelous old house that they remodeled and filled with cozy antique pieces, and I was able to look in that house, there are fascinating things to catch your eye and interest.

The bed I was in was the most comfortable bed I've ever slept in. I never wanted to get up, but the Executive Committee had meetings scheduled all day, and it seemed prudent to attend, especially since I'd flown this far and this was my first meeting as a new member of the Exec.

So what do we do at those meetings? Well, at least you need an overview of the entire Governing Board, we decided to delegate more of the day-to-day decisions to the Executive Committee so that when we all gather for the annual meeting, we can focus on more "big picture" topics. So, at this meeting, we discussed such things as finances, nomination of new board members, personnel openings and changes at the CDSS office, and the new CDSS week at Pinewoods, Harmony of Song and Dance.

During the day, we had to take a break so we could eat some more delicious homecooking, this time homemade soup, salad, and sandwiches. Oh my, didn't we just finish breakfast? At the end of the day, they fed us more delectable treats at Gretchen and Greg's house. With a roaring fire and friendly conversation, we had such a lovely meal. But then it was time for more dancing. This time it was a contra dance run by Don Theykon at the Pittsfield Grange. Don invited those of us board members who call contras and squares to do a guest spot that evening. With high energy music by the Sharon Hollow Stringband (Paul Winder, Garth Gerber, Myron Grant, Brad Ratley), and very welcoming Ann Arbor dancers, we had a terrific time.

Sleep quickly. There's more food to be eaten. Sunday morning was a huge brunch spread with everything you could possibly want to eat. Oh my! Please save me from myself.

As you travel around the country to various dance communities and camps, it becomes clear what a small world it is. Between bites at the meals, I was able to catch up with a little with several people I'd met on my travels. There was Susie Lorand; we co-organized a few pieces. A friend of mine, Gordy at Buffalo Gap one year, the year when twenty-four callers wanted to be on the program. And the Coreys, Phil and Jan, who I met at the Ralph Page Dance Legacy Weekend [in New Hampshire].

There was even someone I was on the Bay Area Country Dance Society board about ten years ago, Nillo Neverthesto.

Brunch was followed by a community meeting led by Brad Foster, the Executive and Artistic Director of CDSS. More than forty people—Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, and possibly some of the other neighboring states, came to share successes in their dance communities. We heard of dances with homestackers, Morris alons, "the last dance" in the streets (they had a contra line with eight hundred dancers stretching three blocks long). There was also time for the participants to ask questions of CDSS, and what CDSS can do to support these communities. How to teach style? How to recruit people to our dances

who aren't just like us (politically, racially, etc.)? How to effectively run an organization? The meeting ended with a song led by Tom Sisco (a former CDSS board member) and his wife Anne, who had driven down from London, Ontario.

I want to send another heartfelt thanks to the Ann Arbor community who took such good care of us. You are an amazing group of people!

The Exec in Houston, February 2011

by David Means

From all corners of the United States, CDSS Exec members converged on Houston, Texas for this meeting, one of two each year that CDSS arranges so that Governing Board members of the Executive Committee can meet face-to-face with one another to take care of business and with a hosting community for dancing and conversations.

We were both at the airports by our host drivers, and ferried from there to Ford Hall, the gathering site for the evening's activities. Oxford Hall is a large building behind a beautiful large house in a neighborhood in Houston (remember that everything is large in Texas). The hosta for the weekend were Alice Bohls and Mike Head, a delightful couple who provided food, space and good cheer for dances and meetings all weekend long.

As we talked and ate on the back porch, more people kept arriving, so that the circle of conversations kept widening until it was time to move across the backyard into the dance hall. English country dance was the entertainment for the evening, attended by a fine collection of local dancers and the CDSS Exec folk. A great young dancer at Knitting Hill gave us fine renditions of English tunes, and we all danced until late.

Saturday morning we all gathered for breakfast and then our business meeting, then lunch, and more business. Did I mention the food? Alice, it turns out, is a professional caterer, and an entertaining and gracious hostess as well. We all were extremely well fed throughout the weekend.

Saturday night was devoted to a fine contra dance at the local hall. The same young players proved that we've only had command of the English country music, but also could get down and give us great contra music. Again we danced so long that we were nearly worn out, but could not stop as long as the music kept going.

Sunday morning we gathered again at Oxford Hall for yet another meal and then a community discussion. Brad Foster led a great session focusing on what succeeds the Houston dance community was proud of and what CDSS could contribute to their future successes. The discussion was spirited; I was sure it was a success when the local community began talking to one another about how things worked and how they could be improved, as the Exec members just listened.

Eventually, it came time for us all to return to our normal lives, and goodbyes took quite a while. We all came away with a keen appreciation of a wonderful dance community that knows how to have a good time, and the warm and gracious hospitality to their guests. If you ever find your way to Houston, drop in on an event here; you'll love it.

Lynn Ackerson is from El Cerrito, CA; David Means is from Seattle, Washington; they are at large members of the CDSS Governing Board and sit on the Executive Committee.

The next two Exec meetings will be in Winnipeg, Manitoba (November 12-13, 2011) and in New Mexico (February 2012).

Sing and dance your brains out!

(Congress continued from page 8)

The reason I've gone to such great lengths to describe my own experience as a classical musician over against the contra dance is that I believe that this tradition could have a huge impact on the pedagogy of classical musicians. I know I'm not the only classical musician who's felt discouraged or beaten down by my training. Just think—if the infectious joy of contra were to take hold in classical music, we would have a generation of classical musicians who play with vitality, spontaneity, and self-acceptance. I want to set out on a journey to explore what contra could give to the classical music world—what would this look like? How might it be practically implemented? What problems or difficulties might such an endeavor face? Contra literally gave music back to me, and I would love to see it do the same for others!

Emily Adams is a professional singer, pianist, and organist who recently earned her Masters of Music at Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New-Jersey. She went to her first contra dance in May 2010, and has been dancing faithfully ever since.
Ten Things about BIDA
by Martha Friedman and Chris Weiler of the BIDA board

The Boston Intergenerational Dance Advocates (BIDA) is an exciting and relatively new dance group. Since the beginning of 2009, their monthly dances and other events in Boston have been an effective tool for providing upcoming musicians and callers with a venue, while simultaneously encouraging intergenerational attitudes on the dance floor. Here, they share some of their essential vision and allude to a few strategies. You can see more at their website, www.bidadance.org. — Max Neuman, Youth Projects Intern

• BIDA strives to be intergenerational——BIDA promotes an intergenerational community that openly welcomes people of all ages and encourages them to dance and learn from each other. We communicate our vision to our dancers through our callers and the posters around the hall with dance tips.

• BIDA dances are accessible——We try to make our dances accessible through the location of our hall. We are across the street from a subway station and along several bus lines, which makes it easier for people without cars to attend. Similarly, our dances are financially accessible through a self-determined sliding scale of $5-$10. We also run promotions for bringing newcomers and friends.

• BIDA welcomes new dancers——We strive to be beginner friendly. We hold newcomer workshops before all dances and provide a promotion encouraging people to bring new dancers to our events.

• BIDA has its own ambiance——We have fostered a culture in which people dance with everyone and in all parts of the hall. Board members model this behavior and callers reinforce it from the microphone. We also promote our unique environment through the use of Christmas lights, a disco ball, and dimming the overhead lights in our beautiful hall to create ambiance.

• The BIDA board is accessible——We increase the board’s visibility at our events by wearing name tags, taking turns making announcements at events, and making ourselves available through the BIDA Facebook page.

• BIDA helps people learn——We provide a space for emerging performers (callers, bands, sound operators) and organizers to gain experience. Working with experienced performers, we create custom mentoring experiences to match the needs of the people being mentored. Mentoring can range from sitting in with musicians or calling dances at a jam party to being booked to perform at our dance series.

• BIDA promotes community——We foster a sense of community off the dance floor through potlucks and parties that allow people to talk and get to know each other informally. We also hold a dessert potluck during the break at our dances to allow for mingling.

• BIDA is a part of the dance community——BIDA has been supported by community leaders through their participation in our dance series and vocal support of our goals. We have also been supported by other organizations through grants from CDSS and CBS Boston Centre.

• BIDA respects other dance organizers——BIDA has tried to respect the existing community by careful scheduling of events to avoid conflicts with other dances in the Boston area. This has been difficult in an area rich with dance events, but has succeeded most of the time.

• BIDA continues to evolve——We are excited about partnering with another organization to hold a crossover contra-English country dance and we have other new types of events in the planning stages. We keep looking for better ways to mentor and include people in our community. We are focused on our goals and continue to experiment to find the best ways to achieve them.

A Quartet of Poems

Untitled
by Ellen Tepper (2010)
Those bare trees swaying in the wind
Seem to dance to tunes I cannot hear.
Although I was looking at the maples and elms
around me I was dreaming of the pine trees you know where.

In the Small Hours
by Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)
I lay in my bed and fiddled
With a dreamland viol and bow,
And the tunes flew back to my fingers
I had melodied years ago.
It was two or three in the morning
When I fancy-fiddled so
Long reels and country-dances,
And hurriques swift and slow.
And anon came crossing
The chamber in the gray
Figures of jigging fieldfolk—
Saviours of corn and hay—
To the air of "Haste to the Wedding."
As after a wedding-day,
Yea, up and down the middle
In windless whirls went thy.
There danced the bride and bridgroom,
And couples in a train,
Gay partners time and travail
Had longwhiles still amain!
It seemed a thing for weeping
To find, at slumber's wane,
And morning's sly increeeping.
That Now, not Then, held reign.
Winter Oranges
by Daron Douglas

Formation: Three couple longways
Music: "Winter Oranges," by Daron Douglas

A1 1-8 Ones cross and cast down below the threes, lead up to second place, and turn out to face nearest second person (Woman 1 face up to Man 2, Man 1 face down to Woman 2; twos do not step up).

A2 1-4 Taking two hands, Man 1 push Woman 2 out and down on a right diagonal, then draw her back to third place, while Woman 1 push Man 2 out and up and draw him back to first place, while threes wait two bars and lead up to second place.

5-8 All set and turn single.

B1 1-8 All circle six hands round left and right.

B2 1-4 Woman 1, followed by Woman 3 and Woman 2, cast off to invert the line.

5-8 All right shoulder gypsy with partner.

Author's Notes: This is a delightfully simple dance that perfectly fits Daron’s lighthearted jig. There are many opportunities for frivolous flirtation, especially when the women leave the men in B2 1-4 and then rejoin their partners for the gypsy.

The first eight bars may seem like a long time for the required path. The technique to fit the movement to the music is for the first couple to take extra time when turning back to back to face their second person. They can assist each other and turn up and away, release nearer hand and turn opposite ways, or turn down and away. There is great opportunity for flirtation and invention.

C.D.

Dance Editor's Notes: I've found the most satisfying movement for the end of A1 is for the ones to face each other briefly, then both turn single right (away from each other) to end facing the twos. That's my preference; do go ahead and play with it as Carl suggests.

We haven't specified walking or slipping for the circle—Carl leaves that as a choice as well, but he and I have both encountered dancers spontaneously slipping, and it's hard to argue with what comes naturally!

Robin Hayden

Tune typeset by Peter Barnes

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Balance and Sing

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