

CDSS NEWS

SPRING 2014



COUNTRY DANCE AND SONG SOCIETY
Continuing the traditions. Linking those who love them.

Balance and Sing Store Update ~ Spring 2014

Spring is on the way, and we have your morris supplies.



Mr. Pins (center), reading his *Bacon* after counting bells all day. What a guy. Photos by Jeff Martell; Mr. Pins' costume by Jacqueline Haney.

- ◆ We have thousands of the “traditional English” morris bells in stock. They have a brassed finish, come in three sizes, sound GREAT and are imported from England.
 - 1 inch, \$.80 each
 - 1-1/8 inch, \$1.10 each
 - 1-3/4 inch, \$1.50 each
- ◆ We also have copies of Lionel Bacon’s *A Handbook of Morris Dances*. Considered the “Morris Bible,” first published in 1951, this book includes common dances and music, as well as many previously unpublished dances from Sharp and other collectors. We have the only copies on the continent! \$60
- ◆ We have copies of Tony Barrand’s *Six Fools and a Dancer* (1991) too! A history of morris—origins in England and development in America, basic techniques of individual and team dancing, and dance notations for many traditions. \$20
- ◆ We have a special stock of *The Magic of Morris* (with just about everyone who had anything to do with the Morris On series on this 2005 CD), that we found this year. 2 CD set, \$30
- ◆ And should you want to drop someone a note this spring, we have Mostly Morris notecards! Five designs by Sarah Gowan. 10 card set, \$12

Bring in the spring! Support your local morris team!

413•203•5467 x 3

store@cdss.org

www.cdss.org/store

CDSS NEWS

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Editor—Caroline Batson
Tune Editor—Peter Barnes
Dance Editors—Lynn Ackerson, Mary Devlin, Robin Hayden, Dan Pearl, Jonathan Sivier
Song Editors—Lorraine Hammond, Jesse P. Karlsberg, Natty Smith

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CDSS OFFICE

116 Pleasant Street #345, Easthampton, MA 01027-2759
413-203-5467, fax 413-203-7471, office@cdss.org, www.cdss.org
Monday-Friday, 9 am-5 pm

STAFF

Executive Director, Rima Dael, x 100, rima@cdss.org
Bookkeeper, Anna Mach, x 113, anna@cdss.org
Business Manager, Bob Blondin, x 111, bob@cdss.org
Communications Director, Caroline Batson, x 101, caroline@cdss.org
Database/Membership, Christine Dadmun, x 104, christine@cdss.org
Development Director, Robin Hayden, x 107, robin@cdss.org
Education Associate, Mary Wesley, mary@cdss.org
Education Dept Director, Pat MacPherson, x 106, pat@cdss.org
Education Specialist & Tour Manager, Nils Fredland, nils@cdss.org
Outreach Manager, Linda Henry, x 105, linda@cdss.org
Program Director, Steve Howe, x 102, camp@cdss.org
Store & Group Services Manager, Jeff Martell, x 103, store@cdss.org
Webmaster, Lynn Nichols, webmaster@cdss.org

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Want to contact the Board? Write to them at office@cdss.org; we'll be happy to forward your message. Biographies and photos of Board members are at <http://www.cdss.org/governing-board.html>.

We occasionally email store and office updates.

Be sure your inbox will accept mail from news@cdss.org, office@cdss.org, and store@cdss.org to receive them.



The Country Dance and Song Society is a national leader in promoting participatory dance, music and song that have roots in North American and English culture. We believe in the joy that participatory dance, music and song bring to individuals and communities. Within the US and Canada, we educate, support and connect participants in these living traditions and we advocate for their vitality and sustainability into the future. Membership is open to all; benefits include the newsletter, online members list, 10% discount from the store, early registration for our summer programs, and associate membership in Fractured Atlas. CDSS is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization; membership dues and donations are tax deductible. For more information: CDSS, 116 Pleasant Street #345, Easthampton, MA 01027-2759; 413-203-5467, office@cdss.org, <http://www.cdss.org>.

front cover: Dancers at CDSS's Adult & Family Week at Timber Ridge 2013, High View, WV; photo by Nicholas Smith
back cover: Madison, Wisconsin Tuesday Night Dance; photo by John Peterson (see article on page 10)

Letters and Announcements

SUBMITTING ADS AND ARTICLES

Articles, letters, poems and photographs about contra and traditional square dance, English country dance, morris and sword dance, dance tunes, folksongs, and the dance and music community are welcome. Newly-composed dances and tunes also are welcome, as are new looks at historical dances and tunes. Please contact the Editor for guidelines or send submissions to news@cdss.org (maximum size for most articles: 1,500 words, 750 words for essays and event reviews). We may edit for length and clarity.

Go to <http://www.cdss.org/upcoming-events.html> to see UPCOMING EVENTS. To include an event, send date, name of event, town/state, sponsoring group, website or phone/email to events@cdss.org.

PERSONAL ADS (75 words maximum) are free for CDSS members and \$5 for nonmembers.

AD SIZES & RATES

full page, 7-1/8" wide x 9-1/4" high, \$440
half page horizontal, 7-1/8" wide x 4-3/8" high, \$250
half page vertical, 3-3/8" wide x 9-1/4" high, \$250
quarter page, 3-3/8" wide x 4-3/8" high, \$175

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

SENDING ADS

Ads must be black and white or grayscale. Please send electronically to news@cdss.org (PDF, JPG or TIF, with 300-600 dpi, fonts and images embedded), with check or Visa/Mastercard info sent same day.

DEADLINES

Spring—February 1st (issue mailed early March)
Summer—May 1st (issue mailed early June)
Fall—August 1st (issue mailed early September)
Winter—November 1st (issue mailed early December)

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<http://blog.cdss.org>

SUPPORT

CDSS is a 501(c)3 organization; dues and donations are tax deductible. For the many ways you can support us and the community at large, visit <http://www.cdss.org/ways-to-give.html>. Your help is much appreciated.

PLANNED GIVING

Does your will include the Country Dance and Song Society? If not, please consider ensuring that the programs, publications and services that matter to you continue in the future with a bequest. It's practical and tax deductible. For information about bequests, wills, etc., go to <http://www.cdss.org/planned-giving.html>.

Just In Time

Thanks for Will Loving's article on Techno Contra (*CDSS News*, Fall 2013) which I found helpful as I prepared for my first evening as a contra DJ. In particular, I noted Loving's comments about music that is "frequently not 32-bar square." As a longtime dance musician I take great joy in connecting music and dance and love contra in particular for that dynamic. One of the things that intrigued me about techno contra was the possibility of using different means to that end. DJs have all kinds of tools for builds and drops: beat rolls, effects and so on, all of which, it seemed to me, could be used to achieve that satisfying "Oh gosh! Here comes my partner! . . . just in time now . . . ready, steady . . . BALANCE!" moment. Now that I've done my first DJ evening I can say that the hours I spent figuring out how to do just that paid off. Even if I didn't nail it every time, at least I proved that it can be done, that the caller can drop out, and that contra dancing to recorded/remixed/manipulated music can achieve moments that are—dare I say it?—"zesty."

Bob Walser, Minneapolis, MN

Correction

Just got my *CDSS News* (Winter 2013-2014) and wanted to let you know there is a minor error in the "Cascade Promenade—A Northwest Dance Phenomenon" article. In the paragraph about the Thursday night Lake City dance, it should be seventeen callers and six bands (not seventeen bands and six callers). The introductory workshop is at 7:30 pm.

FYI, Seattle's Lake City Contra Marathon started in 2006, and has always been a benefit for the Northwest Folklife Festival. A few years later Sue Songer (of Portland) suggested scheduling it on the same week in March as the Portland Megadance dance...then along came the Portland Roadhouse concept...and then KABOOM! The fabulous Cascade Promenade!!!

Sherry Nevins, Seattle, WA

English Jam Band in St. Louis

It seemed to me that it would be a fine thing if we could locate some more musicians to play for our English dances. Rather than do the sensible thing, which was to locate the best musicians I could find in St. Louis, and somehow, some way, get them to come dancing just once so they would be enticed into playing, I decided to put out an open invitation to as many dancers as I could, and start holding an open jam session to learn some English dance tunes, with an eye to playing occasionally in a larger ensemble.

The only stipulation I made was that players should be able to read music, in keys up to two sharps or flats. I have no opinion about whether playing from sheet music is superior (or inferior!) to playing by ear, but, given my background as a classical musician,

I simply understand that process better, so I can help more. (I would love to see someone else create a “learn by ear” English Jam Band—wouldn’t it be fantastic to compare, um, notes?)

We started meeting in September of 2013 on Thursday nights at my house. We had four fiddlers, a concertina player, an Irish harp player, a pianist and two banjo players. The concertina player couldn’t really read music, and decided to drop out. One of the fiddlers didn’t much like my enthusiasm for trying simple improvisations, and stopped coming too. But we added another fiddle or two, and two flutes, and by December, the Jam Band filled the stage at our Yuletide Ball.

Our current efforts are aimed at providing live music for a homeschool English dance series which features Dr. John Ramsay as the caller. We had our first outing on January 10, 2014, and the response of the dancers was very enthusiastic! In addition, several of the dancers came up afterwards and said they wanted to play too. That, of course, was the goal in the first place, so I’m really pleased that our players created such good PR!

I should mention that about half of our “regulars” are under the age of twenty. If they can learn to play in the enthusiastic, improvisatory style we’re trying to foster, I believe the future of our sport will be assured in St. Louis.

Martha Edwards, St. Louis, MO

CDSS is Looking for Stars!

CDSS is always on the look out for star volunteers. Are you one? Do you know someone who is a star?

The CDSS Board will have a number of Board members completing their terms next year and is seeking nominations for those positions before the end of this June. As well, we’re often looking for people to participate in task groups and Board committees as community member representatives. And as planning for our Centennial celebrations kicks into high gear, we’re anticipating all kinds of opportunities and will need volunteers. We’re asking for your suggestions.

Think about yourself and the people you know in your local community. We’re looking for people who have the appropriate mix of skills, experience, time, energy, teamwork style and have a passion for the dance, music and song that we all love! See our website for more specifics about the experience we’re looking for: <http://www.cdss.org/governing-board.html>. We’re particularly interested in increasing the number of younger volunteers.

Please send your suggestions by June 30, to the CDSS Nominating Committee via email to wturnip@sympatico.ca or by mail to 301-140 Bathurst Street, Toronto, ON M5V 3N8.

*Bev Bernbaum, Chair
Nominating Committee*

photo courtesy Martha Edwards



What CDSS Was Able To Do with Your Support Last Year

Ever wonder if we’ve put your membership dollars, camp fees and donations to a good use? Have a look at <http://www.cdss.org/what-cdss-was-able-to-do-with-your-support-in-2013.html>. As always, we are grateful to our members and friends for the many ways you help our work. Each year we publicly thank those who contributed to last year’s annual appeal, special funds, scholarships, matching gifts, etc. The list for 2013 is now on our website, <http://www.cdss.org/our-donors.html>.

Robin Hayden, Development Director

Group Corner—Liability Insurance

So, your group is wondering about insurance for the dance.

Why do we need insurance? There are actually quite a few good reasons for a group to be insured. First of all, the hall you are renting may require it. Secondly, it covers the group, and the members of the group, for liability if a claim should occur. Lastly, even if there is no liability proven, it can be quite costly to defend against a lawsuit. If the group is insured, the insurance company pays to defend.

What kind of insurance do we need?

Most groups need a basic commercial general liability policy. You will want it to have at least \$1,000,000 per occurrence and \$3,000,000 aggregate coverage. Since most of us are volunteer organizations, you will want to make sure volunteers are not considered employees and therefore not covered. This is liability insurance only; it covers you if someone decides to sue your group for damages. It does not cover loss or theft of equipment, cancellations of events due to weather, or what-have-you. It also does not automatically pay out if someone twists their ankle. This is for when the damage is serious enough for you to get sued.

Where can I get such a policy? You can procure a policy like this through CDSS if you are a Group Affiliate, or through Fractured Atlas (which, by being a member of CDSS, you are also an associate member of), or through your local insurance carrier. Be sure to investigate both yearly and by-the-event options to get the best deal for your needs.

We at CDSS are here to advise your group on insurance (and a variety of other topics too) in any way we can. Feel free to drop me a line at sales@cdss.org or give us a call, or see our group insurance at <http://www.cdss.org/group-liability-insurance.html>.

Jeff Martell, Sales and Services Manager

Looking for a Home for Those Airline Miles?

Collaborating and fundraising for our Centennial festivities in 2015 will have us traveling to communities across the US and Canada by air, in cars and on trains. Do you have airline miles you could donate to help us with travel? For 2014, we're looking for six individuals to donate miles.

With budgets stretched to the limit, it would be a tremendous help. If you have accrued enough miles for a full ticket and are willing to purchase a ticket for CDSS staff travel, please contact Christine Dadmun, christine@cdss.org, 413-203-5467 x 104. Thanks so much!

Outreach Updates

Thanks to our donors' generosity, CDSS Outreach Funds are supporting these projects and activities:

• Conferences

We've just posted a new section on our website, <http://www.cdss.org/conferences.html>, for an overview of leadership conferences that CDSS has cosponsored so far. We will be adding links to provide in-depth information, including session topics, archived notes, testimonials, photos, *News* articles and more. As you'll see, these events have had far-reaching and long-lasting effects, revitalizing music and dance communities from coast to coast.

This new tab is also the place to go for updates about plans for the Southwest Regional Organizers Conference. If you'd like to be involved with this conference, please contact Linda Henry.

• Scholarships

The influx of scholarship applications for our 2014 summer camps has begun. If a scholarship would help make it possible for you to participate, read the information about scholarships, fill out the Scholarship Form and return it to CDSS with your camp registration and deposit by March 24 if possible. Applications received by that date will be processed first; however later applications will be considered if funds are still available.

• Matching Scholarships for Affiliates

Do you have up-and-coming leaders, musicians, callers or administrators in your community who would be enriched by attending one of our summer programs? See the information on our website.

• Grants

Upcoming deadlines are June 1 and October 1; to apply visit www.cdss.org/outreach-funds.html.

For questions about scholarships, grants and CDSS-supported conferences, please contact Linda Henry, Outreach Manager, at outreach@cdss.org or 413-203-5467 x 105.



Bylaws Changes

We will announce the results of the recent bylaws vote on our website in early April, <http://www.cdss.org/cdss-bylaws.html>, and in the next newsletter.

Contra Dance Callers Survey

The results of the recent callers survey can be seen on our website at <http://tinyurl.com/mgw9lzu>, or you can access it through Mary Wesley's post on our blog, <http://tinyurl.com/pedr5au>. Our thanks to the members of the task group who spearheaded this project—Lynn Ackerson, Emily Addison, David Chandler, Martha Edwards, Lisa Greenleaf, Chris Page, Louise Siddons, and Mary Wesley—and to the nearly five hundred callers who responded.

Celebrate!

We're in a celebratory mood as we move closer to our Centennial—see info on the next page—and we want to recognize others who have important dance, music and song anniversaries coming up. Do you know someone who is celebrating a milestone? Are you? Please share the news with us: office@cdss.org.

Music Videos

Here are two excellent videos about the effects of music on people with Alzheimer's and dementia. The first is an interview, containing excerpts from a documentary called "Alive Inside: A Story of Music & Memory," http://www.democracynow.org/2014/1/22/alive_inside_how_the_magic_of.

The second video has some of the same material from the film, but it includes an interview with the neurologist Dr. Oliver Sacks, <http://musicandmemory.org/>. (Scroll down about halfway for the Sacks interview.)

Both are well worth watching. Many thanks to David Millstone for the links.

Obituaries

Obituaries will be in the online version of this issue.

Thanks and Welcomes

The following officers and at large members will be leaving the CDSS Board this spring; we thank them for their hard work: David Chandler (secretary), Gaye Fifer, Brian Gallagher, Scott Higgs, Jesse Pearlman Karlsberg, and Pat Petersen.

Coming onto the Board in April will be Brooke Friendly (Oregon) as secretary, and these at large members: Shawn Brenneman (Virginia), Martha Edwards (Missouri), Michael Hamilton (Ohio), Dorcas Hand (Texas), Alex Krogh-Grabbe (Massachusetts), Sharon McKinley (Maryland), and returning incumbent John Mayberry (Ontario).



A Dance Writing Contest with a Twist

Writer, poet, musician—and CDSS member—Tyler Johnson, of Carrboro, North Carolina, is holding a dance contest for callers and choreographers. The first prize will be a \$100 donation, given to CDSS in the name of the person that writes the best dance for two tunes, "Bluets" and "A Carriage Works," from Tyler's new book, *Tales from the Red Book of Tunes*.



The deadline is May 15, 2014. Listen to the tunes, read the rules, and enter the contest at <http://www.tylerjohnson.com>. Dance writers of all experience levels are encouraged to apply.

Tales from the Red Book of Tunes is a dance adventure book that takes you from "a contemporary contra dance back to the murky myths where the music began." CDSS will be carrying the book in our Store, just in time for your spring and summertime reading; more later.

Remember, the entry deadline is May 15.

CDSS—A National Arts and Education Organization

by Rima Dael, Executive Director

On the cusp of our Centennial year, we are looking forward to the future. For nearly one hundred years we have been spreading joy and building community through dance, music and song. Our founding was as the American chapter of the English Folk Dance Society, where one could come learn how to play music, dance and sing in the English, and later Anglo-American, traditions. In later years, May Gadd, longtime director of CDSS, described headquarters as “organizing a number of activities and services as a bureau of information to any part of the country.” She went on to talk about “providing resources to the field through instruction booklets, records and materials for callers, teachers, musicians and dancers.”

By staying true to that mission, and changing with our communities’ needs, we have sought to become more of that “bureau of information” in the twenty-first century, harnessing the best of our past to lay the groundwork for a vibrant future.

Ongoing series and events are well run by community volunteers at the local level across North America. We support that work with services and grants. In addition, as a national arts organization, we are able to concentrate on big picture needs and trends, such as serving as a centralized hub for resources, support and information services; connecting dance, music and song communities to one another and to CDSS; and advocating for the vitality and sustainability of traditional dance, music and song far into the future. As an education organization, we are able to continue providing skill building opportunities in dance, music and song at our summer camps and to support educational opportunities for dancers, callers, musicians, singers, organizers and teachers.

Our future priorities are the same as our Centennial priorities:

- Raise the visibility of traditional dance, music and song
- Reach and connect people in and outside our community who were not connected before
- Affirm that our participatory arts can change lives

Onward to the Centennial—CDSS 2015! We look forward to celebrating together.

Community100 and CDSS’s Centennial Tour



The Community100 website is being created to showcase and celebrate local community heroes, community histories, and sights and sounds of CDSS Centennial celebrations around the country; to share “This I Believe” essays about dance, music, song and other personal stories, videos, photos; to create a graphic historical timeline illustrating one hundred years of dance, music and song in North America; and to present the inaugural issue of *Country Dance and Song*, the new online journal of CDSS.

After a call for applications to our constituent communities across North America, we have chosen seven communities, five in the United States, and two in Canada, to whom we are bringing skill- and capacity-building opportunities, tailored to the needs expressed in their applications. Artist/teachers will visit each community for between five and eight days of workshops, master classes, outreach and public events. The communities are: Coos Bay, Oregon; Austin, Texas; Lawrence, Kansas; Phoenix, Arizona; Morgantown, West Virginia; Owen Sound, Ontario; and Halifax, Nova Scotia.

We sent out a special Save the Date e-communication, with video, in early February. (If you missed it, here’s the link: <http://www.cdss.org/centennial.html>.) Another Centennial e-message will be sent in March and will be posted on the above link. Community100 will keep you abreast of our plans as they unfold, ways we can celebrate together, updates about the Tour, and other events.

Book Review—*The Shenandoah Harmony*

reviewed by Brendan Taaffe

Many CDSS members will be familiar with shape-note singing, a New England hymn tradition that dates back to the early nineteenth century. The tradition gets its name from the different shapes assigned to the notes of the scale, a system introduced to aid sight-reading in 1801, and is marked by stark harmonies, powerful rhythm, and a certain wildness. When I moved to Vermont in my early twenties, I was adopted by an elderly couple who lived in a rambling farmhouse up in the hills above Ludlow. One fall, Kate suggested that I might enjoy accompanying her to the New England Convention, held that year in Chelsea, Vermont. Entering that little white church on the town green was a life-changing experience: there were at least two hundred people in there, singing like their lives depended on it, the tin walls rattling. Standing in the middle of that wall of sound is unlike anything else. And not only is the music compelling, but the community encourages broad and democratic participation (and the potluck was really good). Anyone can lead. Anyone can sing. Everyone is welcome.

If you have been to CDSS's programs at Pinewoods or other camps, you'll have likely seen a group of people gathered around tables in the dining hall, singing old songs from a maroon-covered book called *The Sacred Harp*. Originally published in 1844, this is the central text of the shape-note singing community and is what you will most likely use if you go to a sing anywhere in this country. Or any other country, for that matter, as shape-note singing has been catching on in Europe and there are now conventions in England, Ireland and Poland. And singing is the point, because this music, above all, is a singer's tradition. It invites participation. "There is," Larry Gordon wrote, "no other easily accessible written choral music which is so much fun to sing." In early days, there were a wide variety of books in use, including books like *Southern Harmony*, *The Social Harp*, and *The Kentucky Harmony*. In recent years there has again been a proliferation of new collections of shape-note songs: the *Northern Harmony* is on its fifth edition and the *Norumbega Harmony* is a lovely collection that came out of the Boston area in the 'naughts. *The Shenandoah Harmony* (2013) is the newest, and biggest, songbook to come out of the thriving community of shape-note singers.

The committee that put together *The Shenandoah Harmony* was inspired by the work of Ananias Davisson, an early composer and compiler

who published five editions of the *Kentucky Harmony* in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia between 1816 and 1826. Which makes you wonder a bit about his grasp of geography, but there's no doubt about his knack for a good song. Most famous as the composer of "Idumea," his greatest talent may have been as a compiler. His books combined recently composed pieces from New England with the frontier sound of camp meeting songs and folk hymns. By bringing together Davisson's collections with a number of contemporary pieces, *The Shenandoah Harmony* presents an interestingly varied body of song: in addition to the expected exultations of God and lamentations of woe, there are also a few choice Broadside ballads, including "Buonaparte," a personal favorite. The committee has done an impressive job: the book is visually attractive, the songs are easy to read and meticulously researched, the paper is thick enough, and the book feels good in your hand. This is the most important thing, because it's meant to be used. These songs are good for singing and there are some gems that those of you familiar with *The Sacred Harp* will love discovering. Make sure to check out "Rockingham."

In considering this new book, I come to realize that each of these collections is a reflection of the community it grew out of. *Northern Harmony* grew out of Village Harmony, Larry Gordon's incredible organization that has been hosting teen singing camps for twenty-five years and which has inspired a lot of these young singers to compose new music in the shape-note tradition. In the spirit of disclosure, I should mention that I have led Village Harmony sessions and that a number of my pieces are included in the latest edition of *Northern Harmony*. But what's relevant here is the nature of that specific community: based in New England, diverse in their religious beliefs but brought together by the joy of singing, there is a tendency towards less Christocentric texts, obvious influences from other musical traditions, and—in addition to Watts and Newton—the presence of texts from nontraditional hymn writers like Emily Dickinson, Longfellow and Dylan Thomas. *The Shenandoah Harmony*, by contrast, grows out of a community of singers with strong ties to the Southern style of singing. Jesus makes more of an appearance, the new compositions are squarely in the pocket of the tradition, and the vision of the world is all together starker: this last

continued on page 12

Madison's Tuesday Night Dances—Fostering Talent for More Than Twenty Years

by Carol Ormand

photo courtesy John Peterson



Madison, Wisconsin, has a weekly Tuesday night contra dance, and it's one of my favorite things about living here. (We also have some Saturday night dances, but this article is not about them. Yes, that's right: in Madison, Wisconsin you can contra dance more than once a week.) The Tuesday night dance is open band and open mic. That has the potential to make it a less than satisfying event—see Luke Donforth's recent, excellent article about why ("On Open Stages," *CDSS News*, Winter 2013-2014)—but instead I see it as one of our greatest strengths. Running for over twenty years now, it has allowed us to grow an incredible pool of talent for a community of our size. On a recent November evening, we had seven callers and a dozen musicians in a hall packed with about forty dancers. Those numbers could have been even higher; there were a few musicians who chose to dance instead of playing that night, and one caller who chose to play music. What would those numbers be if you had the same proportions in your community?

Here are the keys to our success, from my perspective as a caller and musician.

Experienced dance musicians anchor the band. When I moved to Madison, a little over eight years ago, I joined the band. The lead rhythm player at that time was Bill Obermeyer, and he'd been the lead rhythm player for several years. He still is. He has probably played for more than a thousand evenings of contra dancing. I estimate that I have played fiddle for over four hundred evenings of contra dancing, and other musicians in the band are as experienced as I am. Bill and I are both in the band almost every week of the year, as are several other musicians who are also quite dedicated to playing regularly. The band is open to anyone, but this core of musicians who come to play every week forms a strong foundation for the band.

The band has a relatively short, accessible set list. We don't spend time trying to put together tunes or medleys on the fly; we play from our set list. It changes over time, but very slowly. When a new musician shows up, we provide them with sheet music (if they read it) and/or put them near a strong musician (if they play by ear). There's enough variety in the tunes to take the dancers on a musical journey over the course of the evening, but enough continuity from one week to the next that new musicians have a fighting chance of learning our repertoire in a reasonable amount of time. The vast majority of the tunes we play are on the easier end of the spectrum. We're not out to impress the dancers with our technical prowess on our instruments. We just want to provide good, solid, enjoyable dance music.

The band cultivates an ethos of playing for dancers. This may sound self-evident—it's a dance band, right? But there's more to playing for a dance than playing the notes on the page. New dance musicians aren't necessarily aware of how playing for dancing is different from playing in other musical traditions. So, we occasionally get together to talk about those differences and to practice varying how we play the tunes, listening, and responding to each other's musical ideas. We also practice playing the music to match the dances, emphasizing balances, or smoothing out phrases to match smooth choreography, for example. These gatherings also allow the callers in the band to talk about the caller's perspective and answer other musicians' questions about how the dances and tunes fit together.

One of our most experienced callers mentors and coaches new callers. Steve Pike started calling at the Tuesday dances about twenty years ago, and he still calls regularly. When someone expresses an interest in learning to call, Steve works with them to prepare for their debut. He makes sure that they understand the mechanics of leading the walkthrough and calling a dance, and he provides them with some appropriate dances. Then, in the most subtle manner I've ever seen, he stands near them the first time they call, ready to coach them (but only if a need arises). I've watched him manage some amazing on-the-spot coaching—getting a novice caller back on the phrase of the music, helping them spot and prevent a potential set breakdown, explaining how to let the band know when to end. And he does it in a completely supportive, unobtrusive way—I'm pretty sure the dancers have no idea Steve has done anything at all, so the credit goes to the novice caller. Pure awesome.

The band can choose tunes to match the dances without the caller's input, if desired. The band watches each walkthrough. Bill and I

know how tunes and dances fit together, and we have many years of experience choosing the tunes for each dance. This means that callers don't need to figure out what to tell us about the dances to help us choose the tunes. We welcome their input, if they have requests—we just don't require it. So that's one less thing for novice callers to have to think about.

There is almost always an experienced caller in the hall. There are usually several. So, if one caller is struggling (for any reason), or having difficulty connecting with the dancers, there is someone ready to step in, teach and call a dance or two to rebuild the dancers' confidence.

Cross-training. Several of our regular dancers have tried their hand at calling or playing for the dances, and all of the callers and most of the musicians are also dancers. We have several musician callers. The dancers as a whole are more sensitive to the music, and musicians are sensitive to the needs of the dancers and the dynamic of the dance. One side benefit of the size of our hall is that we don't need to amplify the band (even when it is small). This makes it easy for musicians to drop in or out of the band over the course of the evening.

It happens every week. Nobody—caller, musician, or dancer—need be a beginner for very long. I think it's easy to miss the importance of this. I know of many communities that have occasional open band and/or open calling events. But how is a novice supposed to get any real practice if that only happens once every three months? Or even once a



photo by Carol Ormand

(Book Review, continued from page 9)
fitting for a collection that celebrates someone whose best-known song, “Idumea,” asks, “And am I born to die? To lay this body down? And must my trembling spirit fly, into a world unknown?”

This is part of what Greil Marcus calls “the old, weird America”: that world only hinted at in the music school textbooks when they acknowledge William Billings as an American composer but mostly dwell on the fact that he wasn’t very pretty to look at. Which is fine, because pretty isn’t exactly the point of this music. It’s supposed to move you, and draw you in. Marcus, talking about Tennessee singer Clarence Ashley, wrote, “[this music] can be understood but never explained; because it can place the listener, pull the listener’s feet right out from under, but cannot itself be placed.” Or in the words of Swedish poet Tomas Tranströmer:

The music is a house of glass standing on a slope;
rocks are flying, rocks are rolling.

The rocks roll straight through the house
but every pane of glass is still whole.

Brendan Taaffe is a guitarist, fiddler, singer and composer in New England’s contra dance and Irish music community. He is the author of Handy with the Stick, a book about Irish fiddling, the director of the Bright Wings Chorus, and the founder of Turtle Dove, an organization that sponsors harmony singing camps for adults.



(Madison, continued from page 11)
month? Having the opportunity to get experience playing or calling for live dancers every week significantly shortens the learning process.

The dancers support new callers and new musicians. The value of this, too, is easy to underestimate. Our community is absolutely fantastic. The Tuesday night dance is not without its rough spots. Every once in a while, we have a novice musician or caller who takes a little longer than average to develop their skills. While that person is learning, the dancers have a less-than-ideal dance experience each week. But the dancers don’t seem to mind. It’s clear to me that the community understands that their patience with novices is an investment in our collective future. If we want to grow new talent (and every community needs to

grow new talent, sooner or later), then we need to be supportive as people learn to play or call for dances. I absolutely love that the dancers here get this.

I was the beneficiary of this attitude myself, eight years ago: when I arrived here in Madison, I had played music for contra dancers exactly once before in my life, but I was welcomed into the band and encouraged to return. When someone new shows up with an instrument and I welcome them to the MOB (the Madison Open Band), I’m just paying it forward.

Would this kind of event work in your community? I think there are several key ingredients that increase the likelihood of success:

- A hall where you can dance every week. While I suppose almost any dance hall would do, I love the intimate atmosphere of our cozy little hall. With forty dancers, it feels packed. At the same time, that’s not as intimidating for newer callers and musicians as a larger crowd might be. We are, quite frankly, lucky to have such a hall with affordable rent.

- A cadre of callers who are committed to having at least one experienced caller at the dance every week, and to mentoring new callers. We don’t pay our callers, so this is a significant investment of time and is a gift to the community.

- A cadre of musicians who are committed to having at least one experienced rhythm player and one experienced melody player at the dance every week, and to mentoring new dance musicians. We don’t pay our musicians (not even the anchors), so this, too, is a gift to the community.

- A community of dancers who understand that they are growing the next generation of talent, as well as getting an opportunity to dance more often. Our dancers do pay to dance—we use the money to pay the hall rental—so they are literally paying for the pleasure of helping to cultivate new talent.

If you have these seeds, you have the makings of a phenomenal dance series. The Tuesday night dances in Madison make my heart sing. I’m so grateful to have landed in this community.

Carol Ormand has been dancing since 1985, calling since 1990, and fiddling for dances since 2005. Fiddling with the MOB on Tuesday nights is the highlight of her week.



News from Canada—Dancing with Style

by Jo Young

“Dancing with Style”—not only a lofty, but certainly obtainable, goal (with a little dance experience and a great teacher!), but also the name of an advanced dance workshop—was held last October in Vancouver, British Columbia. The workshop, designed by Rosemary Lach, a well respected English country dance caller from Victoria, is based on the ideas of the late teacher and choreographer Fried de Metz Herman, and was well received at its premiere in Victoria. Initially our biggest problem was that we were unsure how the workshop would be received on the Canadian mainland: would we have enough participants interested to cover all the costs or would we be left with money owing? Our problem was solved by an Outreach Grant from CDSS, which gave us the courage and financial security to commit to the workshop. As it turned out, not only did we not need to make use of the grant but we were able to make donations to both CDSS, in acknowledgement for their backing, and to our local Vancouver English country dance group—a great result from a great workshop.

Once we decided to go ahead with the workshop, things started well, with registration being keenly taken up resulting in a total of twenty-six attendees, almost twice the number we were originally hoping for. The workshop itself was very well received

as being the advanced level workshop that it was and most people appreciated that dancers with a higher level of experience had been targeted for attendance. The workshop did not provide any new concepts per se, but it certainly provided a wealth of new ways of looking at things as well as some new techniques to improve dance style.

One of the main ideas that dancers liked was that of continual flow during a dance, to be moving whenever possible to smoothly connect each figure

with the next one. Under Rosemary’s instruction everyone enjoyed practising some of the techniques that Fried had developed to assist with this aspect of dancing, such as easing out and spiralling. One dancer, of six years’ experience, said that it was good to be made consciously aware of the need to keep the flow of a dance going and that now she felt she had some techniques that she could apply to help her with this. Another experienced dancer said that even after more than twenty years dancing he was still able to gain new insight into ways to make his dancing smoother, such as taking longer with turning people and making more eye contact with other dancers. More advanced ideas, such as set awareness, were appreciated by the dancers; it certainly gave me a sense of dancing with everyone in my whole line when we all moved together to complete a cross and turn single—it was great. As a caller myself I love being on stage and being able to see the times when all the lines are moving together—I consider it one of the

perks of calling. When asked, after the event, Rosemary said she really enjoyed seeing the improvement in people’s overall dancing style between the first and the last dance. She was also glad that people seemed to have taken pleasure in both the workshop and the changes they had been able to make to their dancing style.

We want to especially thank Rosemary Lach for the workshop and Susan Larkin (violin and recorders) and Jonathan Taylor (cello), the

wonderful musicians who played for us. Also we are grateful to Jane Srivastava for organising the workshop and to all the other local dancers who helped make the event successful. And a big thank you to CDSS for covering our funding for this event; although we are exceedingly glad that we didn’t need to make use of the grant, without it we would not have had the courage to organise the workshop in the first place.



photo courtesy Jo Young

“News from Canada” features news about Canadian events and groups. Ideas for articles should be sent to Rosemary Lach, rosemarylach@yahoo.ca or to Bev Bernbaum, wturnip@sympatico.ca.

Yoga for Dancers—Resting

by Anna Rain

Using yoga poses to rest is an important part of a healthy and balanced yoga practice. The act of settling the body and letting the pose soothe tired joints and jangled nerves is a gift to both your physical and emotional Self. When you take the time to allow your body to be comfortable, still, and quiet, you send the message that you are attentive to the needs of the body, and when you listen thus, your body is more likely to tell you what it needs. My teacher says, “We so often expect our mind to tell our body what to do. Get in a restorative yoga pose and let your body tell your mind what to do!”

Here are a few poses that many people will find restful and renewing. If you find that the poses are not immediately comfortable, take the time to read the complete instructions and use support to help your body release fully.



Downward Facing Hero Pose (Adho Mukha Virasana)

Kneel on a mat, blanket or carpeted floor with your big toes touching and your knees far enough apart that you could conceivably drop your torso in between your inner thighs (see photo above). Flex the knees deeply, flex the hips



deeply, and keep your hips low and close to your heels if you can. Rest your forehead on something: the floor, your hands, a folded blanket, a book or a block. Let the arms lie on the floor over your head and relax them completely.

- If your knees hurt: take a folded blanket and tuck it deep into the knee pits to create space in the knee joint (photo below left).

- If your hips don't rest on your heels: place a folded blanket on your heels, high enough so that the buttocks can sink into the blanket.

- If your hips are significantly higher than your head: rest your head on a support so that the spine is closer to parallel to the floor and not tilting toward your head (center photo).

When the head rests, the nerves are soothed and the stimuli of the external world are reduced. The very act of putting your body in this pose gives it the signal to quiet the mind, to let gravity release the muscles, to soften the tendons around the joints.



After you have rested for some minutes in Downward Facing Hero Pose, stretch your arms actively on the floor in front of you. Draw the outer hips back, in the opposite direction of the fingers. Rotate the upper arms externally: roll the biceps from the inner arm to the outer arm. As you lengthen your arms, roll the biceps, and draw the hips back, note how moving the fingers and hips in opposite directions allows the trunk to be longer and longer. Let the active arms assist the side ribs to stretch. The more you roll the biceps out, the more your thoracic spine (the part of the spine between your shoulder

blades) can lengthen and eventually open toward the floor (toward the front body). This is an easy—if pleasantly time-consuming—way to open up the thoracic spine: gravity helps it move in the direction you want it to go, and the external rotation of the arms emphasize that direction.

Reclining Cross-legged Pose (Supta Swastikasana)

Sit at the front of your mat, or on a carpeted floor. Cross your legs, and note which shin is closer to you (you'll want to do the other side—tuck the other shin in first—after you do this side). Lie back on your elbows, and use your thumbs to adjust your buttock flesh away from your waist. This helps to lengthen and spread the low back (photo right). Lie all the way down and put your arms over your head. Relax the arms completely. You may find that you have a pulling in one or both groins. As long as you are not in great pain (see below), this is a fine and necessary hip-opener.

- If your low back is uncomfortable: Actively stretch the arms (palms up) over your head (photo lower right). The stretch of the arms will draw the trunk long and lengthen the low back.

- If the floor feels too far away: Fold a blanket (or two) about eight inches wide and a little longer than from your hips to your head, and lie on that. Put another blanket under your head so that your head tilts toward your chin.

- If your arms don't rest on the floor over your head: Take the arms straight out from the shoulders like a T, with the palms up. Roll the front tips of the shoulders toward the floor.

- If you feel an unbearable stretch in the groins: Tuck a folded blanket under each outer thigh, so that the thighs rest on something instead of dropping toward the floor.

Explore how the pose feels to you with your arms actively stretching overhead: when the arms are active, can you feel how the trunk is lengthened? The crossed legs provide a base, and the arms draw the trunk away from the base, creating space in the abdominal area. So much of the time, we compress the abdominal region, but this pose gives space to the abdominal organs. When there is space around the organs, they have fresh blood circulating around them and room to expand as they need to function well. Length in the trunk is more apparent when the arms are overhead,

but the arms stretching like a T to the side also opens the chest.

To come up: either join the knees with the feet on the floor and swing your knees to your chest to roll up OR join the knees and roll to the side, getting up carefully with the head heavy and the neck soft (don't lift your head first!). Cross the other shin in first and repeat on the second side.

Many of us have the habit of having a glass



of wine or watching a Netflix episode to unwind (and there is a reason I know this!). Give yourself the time and the space to release your body into the cradle of gravity (using props as needed for full relaxation). See how you might quiet the mind and ease the body with a restorative pose. Doing a restorative practice counts: it's legitimate yoga. Try both the completely passive options and the arms-activated options and note how your body and mind respond to each one.



Anna Rain is a Certified Iyengar Yoga Instructor. She'll be one of the callers at this year's Catapult Contra Showcase in Atlanta, May 23-26. Join her at Pinewoods where she'll be leading English country dance at Early Music Week, June 26-July 3.

Traveling Execs

As you know, in addition to its phone and online meetings several times in the year, and attending the annual CDSS Board meeting in April, a subset of the Board—the Executive Committee—along with Executive Director Rima Dael, travels to different dance communities twice a year to meet face-to-face. The following reports are about the November 2013 and February 2014 Exec meetings.



Rima Dael explains some of CDSS's programs at Sunday's lunchtime potluck discussion with members of the Pittsburgh community; photo by David Millstone

Iowa, November 2013

by Gaye Fifer

On the weekend of November 22-24, 2013, the Executive Committee of the CDSS Board met in Ames, Iowa. Those present included David Millstone, Jenny Beer, David Chandler, Carol Marsh, Jill Allen, Pat Peterson, and me. We were hosted by local community members and treated to potlucks, dances and community meetings throughout the weekend. Thanks to Linda Lieberman, local organizer and former Board member, for working out all the details of our time in Iowa. In addition to socializing and getting to know the local scene, the Exec spent all day Saturday meeting to discuss and work on CDSS business.

The Board and staff have been working on finalizing our Strategic Direction for the next four years. This plan will help to direct our energy and plans for the Centennial in 2015 and beyond. We approved the document at this meeting and will use it to communicate our vision of CDSS as a responsive, forward-looking and effective arts and education organization. We hope this will help create a solid foundation for our next one hundred years. Our overall objectives are to raise the visibility of traditional dance, music and song; to promote and advocate for musicians, singers, dance and song leaders; to strengthen and connect dance, music and song communities; to strengthen CDSS's role in the arts and education sector; and to raise money to support these initiatives and our

mission.

We spent a good amount of time looking at plans for the Centennial in 2015. We are excited that the Centennial Tour has been so well received. Folks are excited to be participating and planning for this educational and community-building celebration. We are also planning to involve as many communities as possible in celebrating locally, with help from the CDSS office in terms of ideas and suggestions. The office will send toolkits to local affiliates this year; look for ways you can participate. We also will have an updated website, so everyone can share what they are doing with each other.

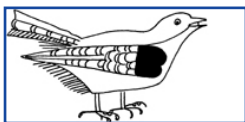
We discussed the goals and mission of the CDSS camp weeks in general. We hope to provide an experience that includes learning new skills, sharing, fun and community building, with each camper having something to take home to his/her local community. We are looking at ways to help make camps be even more effective in reaching these goals, while remaining affordable, paying staff fairly and attracting more campers. Although CDSS's room and board costs have increased at our camps, we have lowered tuition rates to keep camper fees at 2012 levels.

The Exec considered how to help fund all the many projects and services we want to offer. The office is working hard to raise funds and awareness of expenses and costs. The Board is also looking at ways we can be active participants in fundraising.

We received reports from many Board committees and task groups, including finance, nominating, awards, contra dance, song and governance. The Executive Committee approved suggested bylaws changes which will make it easier for the Board to operate effectively and efficiently. After the full Board approves these bylaws changes, we will send them out to the membership to approve early in 2014. *

It has been my pleasure to serve on the Board of the Country Dance and Song Society—I go off in April—and I am inspired at each meeting by the commitment and dedication I see from both Board members and CDSS staff, and am optimistic that we can become more and more effective and visible in continuing the traditions we all love and connecting with those who share our passion.

*See note on page 7.



Pennsylvania, February 2014

by David Smukler

First of all, during our visits to other communities, the Exec focuses on participatory dancing and singing. Host communities typically find a way to synchronize our visit with community dances. In Pittsburgh we had three rich opportunities to dance: their regular Friday night contra at the Swisshelm Park Community Center, a specially arranged English country dance on Saturday night at the same hall, and a Sunday afternoon waltz session at a neighborhood community center. The locals graciously allowed us as visitors to call for the evening dances, and so calling was provided by a rotation of Exec members. Allison Thompson, a longtime member and friend of CDSS, provided large paper timelines in the hall for Friday and Saturday nights' dances. These both educated dancers about CDSS history and gave them the opportunity to add themselves and their relationship to the organization into the timeline.

Another thing that happens when the Exec comes to town is that we try to engage in conversations about dance and song both in the host community and beyond. On Sunday morning, a large and thoughtful group of community members gathered at Gaye Fifer's home in the Squirrel Hill neighborhood for a lively and, at times, passionate discussion about what is working well in Pittsburgh and what some of the challenges there are. Folks in Pittsburgh are justifiably proud of the longevity of their relationship with participatory dance and song. Indeed they were one of the first branches of the organization that is now called CDSS, and like the larger organization was founded in 1915. They are proud to have established a culture where newcomers are welcomed well. Newcomers are regularly asked to dance, and this behavior is acknowledged and valued. The Pittsburgh folks also have often done a good job supporting dances at local colleges, or having special nights to bring a friend who is new to dancing: half price for both you and your friend, or full price if you don't bring someone new. Some challenges they have experienced include addressing questions about how dances get organized and led. As in many dance communities, there are situations where people would like to pass the torch to others, but there is not a clear way for this to happen.

Of course, lots of feasting tends to happen on such visits as well....

And then there is the actual meeting of the Exec. We always try to talk about interesting ideas from CDSS affiliates, such as a matching camp scholarship offered in Rochester, New York (see sidebar), which we hope we can share more widely.

Some topics are organizational, and focus on keeping the CDSS wheels turning. While not as stimulating as Centennial planning or envisioning the next one hundred years of CDSS, seeing to these details is an important responsibility of the Executive Committee.

Adopting the annual budget was part of a more complex discussion at this meeting. CDSS is a financially stable organization and has been for many years, but it operates on a lean budget. While both camps and the bookstore bring in some income, those tend overall to be break-even propositions. Consequently, we depend heavily on people who care enough about CDSS to invest in us, through time, energy and monetary donations. This investment in dance and song is what allows us to continue to do the things we love to do and do well: offering grants, advice or hard-to-find materials related to dance and song; running or supporting camps, classes and workshops that build new generations of dancers, singers, callers and musicians; and building an increasingly extensive set of publications, many of which are online and available free. Our budget discussion focused on a balance sheet that attempts to square our desire to take on more projects with the realities of living within our organizational means. We discussed the role of staff, board members and our general membership (which has been growing) in building a stronger culture of support, so that giving can flow both into and out from CDSS: a stronger donation stream to support our activities and resources, more and more of which we'd like to make freely available to local communities and individuals. Like home budget discussions, these conversations are important, but at times uncomfortable.

Another set of discussions was more visionary. Our Centennial year is fast approaching, and plans for the Centennial Tour and other activities to celebrate our birthday were explored and refined. Talking about the Centennial was energizing! Exciting plans are afoot for new publications and resources, as well as creative ways to extend the reach of CDSS in new directions. But these discussions led to rich and occasionally challenging conversations about the future of CDSS beyond the Centennial. What will CDSS of the future look like? How will it relate to other organizations that promote participatory arts? We talked about demographic changes, and how these might affect our longterm health as an organization. We discussed how to ensure longterm continuity of CDSS and the joy it offers.

One such topic related to the role of camps. A Board task group has been exploring the possibility of establishing a new camp location far from the East coast; indeed, they have found a suitable location. Now comes the bigger challenge: determining what CDSS can and cannot support. Although we do not currently have the capacity to organize and oversee an additional weeklong camp program at a new site, can we imagine CDSS with more camps in the future? What are potential benefits of this opportunity and how might we build the capacity to allow for such growth? Conversely, can we imagine a CDSS without camps, or with a different relationship to camps? Are there alternate models—cooperating with other groups, for example—by which we can help new camps emerge? The New Camps Task Group was thanked for its work to date and asked to do additional research to help us answer these questions.

By the end of Saturday afternoon, after eight solid hours of discussions, we were more than ready for the potluck and the dancing that followed. Thankfully, our local hosts took assiduous care of us, and we are extremely grateful to all of the Pittsburgh community members for their warm and genuine hospitality. Thank you to Pittsburgh, and we look forward to our next traveling Exec meeting, November 21-23, 2014, in Oklahoma City.

Paying It Forward: CDR's Matching Scholarships:

by Lisa Brown

One afternoon, two years ago, over a shared glass of iced tea, two of the organizers from CDR (Country Dancers of Rochester) came up with the idea of sending two teenage dancers to camp. Maxine and Alli were long time regular dance attendees under 18 years old. After speaking to all the parties involved, including the girls, their parents and CDSS, they learned that Alli was interested, but Maxine was not. The English country dance community agreed to raise the funds to send Alli through donations. They also helped her to apply for a camp scholarship from CDSS. Much to everyone's surprise and delight, Alli received a full scholarship to camp, and the money raised locally was used to pay the cost of Alli's safe travel to and from camp. Alli had a fantastic time at camp that summer.

The great success of this effort led to an agreement with the CDR board to set aside money in their budget each year for a scholarship to send a CDR member to camp. This year a system is in place with a scholarship application period during January and February. Several dancers have applied. The combination of scholarship money from CDR, matching grant money from CDSS, and camp scholarships from CDSS will enable CDR members who might not have previously been able to attend camp to attend.

Poems, Old and New

Hands Four

by Steven Howland (2013)

Hands four from the top,
Bow to your partner,
Bow to your neighbor,
With your neighbor balance and swing.
Boy, she has cold hands.
All join hands and circle to the left.
With left hand in neighbor's cold right hand
Notice how warm your partner's hand is.
Does that mean my hands are warm to some
And cold to others?
And my next neighbor in the line has hands that
Are sweaty, the next cold and dry,
Then soft with youth, then calloused with age,
The next hand a rock solid grasp
To make up for an unstable body.
I'm focused on hands tonight at the dance
So many wonderful hands to hold my hand
So many light, firm, finger, palm touches, each
For seconds at a time yet sharing The wisdom,
energy, and intimacy of life.

I've always found this a hard subject to write about, but this came into my head the other night after a wonderful night at the Greenfield (MA) Contra Dance. ~ S.H.

The Ballad Of William Sycamore (excerpt)

by Stephen Vincent Benét (1922)

I can hear them dance, like a foggy song,
Through the deepest one of my slumbers,
The fiddle squeaking the boots along
And my father calling the numbers.

The quick feet shaking the puncheon floor,
And the fiddle squealing and squealing,
Till the dried herbs rattled above the door
And the dust went up to the ceiling.

There are children lucky from dawn till dusk,
But never a child so lucky!
For I cut my teeth on "Money Musk"
In the Bloody Ground of Kentucky!

Contra Dancers

by Harvey J. Gardner (2012)

Smiling through the waiting game
youths and seniors, swift and lame
contra goddesses and gods.
caller checks the card then nods,
fiddler spins a spidery tune
to weave a web around the room.

With sparkling eyes and glistening skin
like God's own galaxies we spin
to give His gravity the slip
while hoping He can't break our grip.

Feet and hands and hearts keep time
in a transcendental climb
to swing into familiar grooves
distilling Life to contra moves.

We end the dance as half-spent jewels
dispersed celestial molecules
to reassemble in four-mations
of stellar contra constellations.



photo by Stewart Dean

Laura's Third-Quarter Century

by Bob Stein

Formation: Longways

Music: Slow, flowing tune

- A1 Mad robin (women in center)
Neighbors swing
- A2 Hey three-quarters (men pass left shoulders to begin)
Partners gypsy
- B1 Partners swing *
- B2 Long lines, forward and back
Roll partner away (from right to left)
Circle right three-quarters

* For those who don't like a long 16 count swing, they can gypsy twice

© 2012 Bob Stein

Author's note re: mad robin figure: Your body follows the path of a dosido while you are moving sideways, facing your partner across the set. The women are initially in the center with the ones moving down while the twos move up, and then return to your starting place with the men in the center and the ones moving up while the twos move down, facing your partner the entire time.

I wrote this dance for my wife Laura's 75th birthday in November 2012.

~ R.S.

Bob Stein began dancing squares and contras as a child in upstate New York and has been dancing ever since. Later, when the family moved to Michigan from the Boston area, there was only a small contra dance in Detroit, so he asked at Elderly Instruments for musicians to play for a dance, and started calling. "Whenever I was back in Boston," he says, "I would take notes on how callers, especially Ted Sannella and Tony Parkes, would teach and call, and I would practice calling to the Yankee Ingenuity record as well as at rehearsals of the local dance musicians. Now we have a vibrant dance community in Michigan, with regular dances in every part of the state and many excellent callers and musicians, plus four dance weekends a year scattered across the state."

Editor's note: "It is hard to imagine a more soundly established classic of the repertoire," wrote Graham Christian in the Tell Me More column (CDSS News, Spring 2010), "than [the 1695 English country dance] Mad Robin...with its 'signature figure'...the shuttle-like chase for the leading couple around the standing neutral couple, followed by a rewarding two-hand turn..." So loved, in fact, that's it's been adapted over the years by contra dances as well; see the dance on the next page.

Mad, Mad World

by Martha Wild

Formation: Duple Improper

- A1 Long lines forward and back
Mad robin (women pass to the right in front of men at start)
- A2 Women pass by the left shoulder and
Gypsy and swing partner
- B1 Pass through across the set and California twirl
Mad robin (men pass to the right in front of women to start)
- B2 Men pass by the left shoulder and
Gypsy and swing neighbor

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Dance Editor's notes: In contra dancing, a "mad robin" can be thought of as a dosido on the side of the set while facing across the set. For example, in the mad robin in A1, the neighbors walk the path of a dosido, but do it while facing and keeping eye contact with their partner across the set. It helps if the gent gives his neighbor a little tug at the end of the long lines to help her into the mad robin.

In B1, the pass through and California twirl is similar to a right and left through, but provides a better entrance into the second mad robin with the ladies giving their partner a little tug to help in the transition. Again the path is a dosido, but this time it is with their partner on the side while facing their neighbor across the set.

The dance can be seen on YouTube:

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=qHscaBxLW5c (with Firecloud and Lynn Ackerson)
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LrQcayS9CrM> (Preview) (with Perpetual Emotion and Susan Petrick)

I'm glad people are having fun with it.

~ Lynn Ackerson

Martha Wild lives in San Diego where she's called contras since 1989. She started writing dances at about the same time. She's been a research scientist most of her life, as well as a college professor, an epitope curator and a grant writer.

CDSS Sings—“Black Jack Davey,” or Ballads: Alive, Well, and Changing

by Sally Rogers

When I was new to the folk world, in high school, my first “Ah-hah!” moment was when I discovered the Child Ballads. I suddenly realized that Simon and Garfunkel didn’t write “Scarborough Fair” and that its roots went deep down into history. A couple years later I had a second “Ah-hah” moment when I discovered that “The Whistling Gypsy” that I had known from an old Limelighter’s record was another one of those classic ballads. I was living in Ann Arbor, Michigan at the time and started to attend concerts at the venerable coffeehouse, The Ark. There I met folksinger, Mary Addis, who taught me her version of Child Ballad #200, or “The Gypsy Davey.” She had made a lovely nontraditional arrangement on her dulcimer which she taught to me and which I play to this day, no doubt folk-processed a bit. I related well to the young bride who left her stodgy life to be a gypsy’s lover. It sounded so romantic. And after singing a lot of old ballads, this one was the only one that seemed to have a “happy” ending, at least for the lady. Ladies were always getting left by their lovers at best or getting their heads cut off and coming back as ghosts to haunt their murderers at worst.

I was fascinated by the attempts of Francis James Child, the noted Harvard ballad scholar, to connect the ballad story to historical fact. Whether or not his connections are true, they make a great story: The Earl of Cassilis married his first wife, Lady Jean Hamilton. She had apparently had an earlier lover, whose name was Johnny Faa. After several years of marriage and two children, her lover returned disguised as a gypsy, and in the company of a gypsy band, while her husband was abroad. He convinced her to come with him, but the Earl returned home before they got away. He hanged the whole lot of them for their treachery, except for Lady Hamilton, who was condemned to live out her years in a tower. Her room faced the stairway whereupon the heads of all the gypsies were carved, Johnny Faa’s at the top where she could well see it. There are many reasons that make this story a stretch, but what a story! And what a ballad!

In Bronson’s *The Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads: Vol. 3*, there are one hundred twenty-eight versions of this romantic story of a lady leaving her wealth, her husband and her baby to go live the life of a gypsy with her true love. The American

versions seem to diverge the most from the original, at least in the name of the amorous gypsy. Number 128 of Bronson’s versions replaces “Gypsy Davey” with “Harrison Brady.” The woman in question ends her story by saying, “Last night I slept in my downy bed,/And in my arms, my baby;/Tonight I’ll sleep in the Pittsburgh jail/In the arms of Harrison Brady.”

And, of course, the folk process continues. But with the advent of the computer, digital recording and video, you’d think that these old ballads might ossify. Proof that new singers bring new life to old stories lies in Mike Agranoff’s 1996 sequel to the ancient ballad. He says:

“I’ve always had trouble with the Gypsy Davey ballad. It’s this wonderfully romantic story of the handsome stranger who rides in out of the countryside and steals the heart of a lady. My problem is I’ve always felt for the husband. There is nothing I’ve read in any of the versions of the ballad to indicate that the husband has done anything to merit being abandoned by his wife.... The other problem I have is this: What is a high-born woman, who has lived in luxury all her life, and has no survival skills, going to do on the road with a band of gypsies? It’s not going to last a month. And no matter who abandons whom, she’s going to be pregnant when they part ways. So a year later, in desperation, cold and hungry, she arrives at her husband’s door, babe in arms. That’s where I picked up the story.”

Mike’s new version is entitled “Gypsy Davey One Year After.” Enjoy the old story, and now what do you think of this new take, from the husband’s point of view?

Well met, well met my own dear wife.
Well met, my blue-eyed lady.
How strange to see thee at my gate.
How strange to see thy baby,
Thy dark-eyed crying baby.

Come in, come in, my own dear wife.
Come in out of the rain-o.
Come dry thy feet and warm thy hands
All by my fire again-o,
All in my hall again-o.

Call for the cook to bring thee meat,
The maid to bring thee wine-o.

And for also the suckling nurse,
Thy babe that he might dine-o,
Thy hungry babe might dine-o.

Where is thy gown of silk so fine,
Thy boots of Spanish leather?
And where is the Gypsy Davey now
Since you rode off together?
Rode hand in hand together?

Thou left behind thy goose-feather bed,
Thou left thy husband and baby
All for to lie on the cold cold ground
In the arms of the Gypsy Davey,
The handsome Gypsy Davey.

Thou took'st with thee my best grey mare.
To ride when thou didst part-o.
Thou took'st with thee my silver and gold,
And took as well my heart-o.
Forever took, my heart-o.

I could forgive my best grey mare.
Of gold I have great store-o.
But my heart I gave but once away,
And I cannot give it more-o,
Which grieves me ten times more-o.

Come, daughter, greet thy mother dear.
Come greet thy new half-brother.
Come wish them well before they go
And leave this hall forever,
And bid farewell forever.

Mike might not have had to write this powerful sequel if he had only read or sung this version collected by John H. Cox in his *Folk Songs of the South*. Collected on March 24, 1916 from Miss Violet Noland in Davis, West Virginia, her version ends:

She mounted on her bonny beast,
Her bonny beast so speedy;
She rode all day and she rode all night,
Till she came to her home and baby.

“Last night I slept on the cold, cold ground,
With all the gypsies around me;
To-night I sleep in my own feather bed,
With my husband and my baby.”

No doubt either Miss Noland or someone from whom she learned the song had a moral dilemma similar to Mike's. Her solution was for the lady in question to see common sense and return home.

So what would you do in her shoes? ...in his?

References

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Listen to Sally Rogers sing “Black Jack Davey,” from her recording We’ll Pass Them On, on our website, <http://www.cdss.org/cdss-news.html>

The multi-talented Sally is an educator, performer and songwriter; see her website, <http://sallyrogers.com>. We’re delighted to have her contribution in this issue’s CDSS Sings column. And thanks, as well, to Mike Agranoff, for joining in.

Letters are welcome, by the way, in response to Sally’s question above: “So what would you do in [the lady’s shoes? ...in [her husband’s]?” Anyone want to speak up for Davey himself? Send your opinions to news@cdss.org.

CDSS Sings—Black Jack Davey

Child Ballad #200, from the singing of Mary Addis and Sally Rogers

Black Jack Da - vy came ri - ding by, down to the ri - ver sha - dy. He
whist - led high and he whist - led low and he won the heart of a la - dy, He
won the heart of a la - dy.

Black Jack Davey came riding by
Down to the river shady.
He whistled high and he whistled low
And he won the heart of a lady. (2x)

“He is no gypsy,” her father said,
“But Lord of free lands all over.”
“I shall live ’til my dying day
In the arms of my gypsy rover.” (2x)

“Take off, take off your high-heeled boots
All made of Spanish leather
Jump behind me on my horse
And we’ll ride off together.” (2x)

So she took off her high-heeled boots
All made of Spanish leather,
Jumped behind him on his horse
And they rode off together. (2x)

That night when the master he came home
Inquiring for his lady,
The maid she spoke before she thought,
“Oh she’s gone off with Black Jack Davey.” (2x)

“Go saddle me my fastest horse,
The white one that’s so speedy,
And I shall ride o’er the countryside
And I’ll bring back home my lady.” (2x)

He rode and he rode o’er the countryside
Down to the river shady
And there he spied his own wedded love
In the arms of Black Jack Davey (2x)

“Take off, take off your long, long gloves
All made of Spanish leather.
Give to me your lily-white hand
And we’ll ride home together.” (2x)

She’s taken off her long, long gloves
All made of Spanish leather,
Given him her lily-white hand
And said good-bye forever. (2x)

“Could you forsake your house and lands?
Could you forsake your baby?
Could you forsake your own wedded love
To go with Black Jack Davey?” (2x)

“Yes, I’ll forsake my house and lands
And I’ll forsake my baby,
I’ll forsake my own wedded love
To go with Black Jack Davey.” (2x)

Last night I slept on a goose-feather bed
With silks and sats for covers.
Tonight I sleep on the cold, cold ground
In the arms of my gypsy lover.” (2x)

Tune typeset by Peter Barnes



CDSS NEWS
Country Dance and Song Society
116 Pleasant Street, Suite 345
Easthampton, MA 01027-2759
www.cdss.org

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