

CDSS NEWS

SPRING 2016



COUNTRY DANCE AND SONG SOCIETY
CELEBRATING A YEAR OF SONG IN 2016

Balance and Sing Store Update ~ Spring 2016

The Playford Assembly



125 Early English Country Dances
1651–c.1820

Graham Christian

The Playford Assembly: 125 Early English Country Dances, 1651–c. 1820
by Graham Christian

Easthampton, MA: The Country Dance and Song Society, 2015

\$35, <http://store.cdss.org/product/1116-playford-assembly>.

Opening *The Playford Assembly* is like meeting someone for the first time but immediately feeling like old friends. Dancers familiar with Kate Van Winkle Keller and Genevieve Shimer's *The Playford Ball* will recognize the format of Graham Christian's eagerly awaited sequel which gathers together 125 historical dances that have become an integral part of the contemporary repertoire: 25 for the intervening years between the *Ball* and the *Assembly* and 100 in honor of the Country Dance and Song Society centennial. Tune and dance instructions appear at the top, with facsimiles, illustrations and commentary—in an easy-to-read, albeit small, serified font—artfully arrayed below.

The Playford Assembly should be an indispensable part of any dancer's library. Teachers gain in one volume a solid core repertoire reconstructed by Charles

Bolton, Tom Cook, Fried de Metz Herman, Christine Helwig, Colin Hume and Andrew Shaw in addition to Cecil Sharp, Pat Shaw and many others. The table of formation, key, meter, date and difficulty is a handy reference for programming. The glossary of formations, figures and steps makes this a good stand-alone volume for newer dancers, and Austen enthusiasts will find "A Trip to Netherfield: An Authentic Jane Austen Ball" of particular interest. Graham Christian's eminently readable and concise historical introduction brackets the dances themselves along with an extensive bibliography that includes databases and online sources.

Ultimately the reason any reader will return again and again to *The Playford Assembly* is the wealth of scholarship presented in the commentaries. Graham Christian cloaks his considerable dance, literary and musical expertise in an engaging and lively writing style. Each title offers us a glimpse into the society of its day and invites us to take a dance. Ever wondered what "Ore Boggy" meant, or what "Mrs. Savage's Whim" was, or craved the "News From Tripoly"? You'll find the answers, and so much more, in *The Playford Assembly*!

Review by Orly Krasner

New shipping schedule

Mail orders, donations and memberships are processed each work day, Monday–Friday, 9:30 am to 4:30 pm. Books, recordings, etc., will be shipped from our store twice-weekly only, on Tuesdays and Thursdays.



B E L L S

As we go to press, the shipment of morris bells are on their way from England! We'll have notice of their arrival on our online store site, <http://store.cdss.org/>. Let the spring begin!

413 • 203 • 5467 x 3

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www.store.cdss.org

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Editor—Caroline Batson
Tune Editor—Peter Barnes
Dance Editors—Lynn Ackerson, Barbara Finney, Dan Pearl,
Joanna Reiner, Jonathan Sivier
Song Editors—Lorraine Hammond, Jesse P. Karlsberg,
Natty Smith

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Contents

- 2 Balance and Sing (Store Update)
- 4 Letters and Announcements
- 7 2016 Lifetime Contributor—Jeff Warner
- 8 CDSS Sings—Now Is the Cool of the Day
- 10 Musicians Column—Back Row Bands
- 12 Hive Mind—Attracting New Participants
- 13 Dancing Lad, a poem
- 14 A Salesman Amidst Scholars—Ozarks Song
Collector Max Hunter
- 16 Cooperation and Consensus—Scissortail Traditional
Dance Society of Oklahoma
- 18 CDSS Goes to New York, New York!
- 21 Advertisements



CDSS OFFICE

116 Pleasant Street #345, Easthampton, MA 01027-2759
413-203-5467, fax 413-203-5471, 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
Database & Membership Assistant, Loretta Stober, x 104, loretta@cdss.org
Director of Camp Programs, Steve Howe, x 102, camp@cdss.org
Director of Communications Caroline Batson, x 101, caroline@cdss.org
Director of Development, Robin Hayden, x 107, robin@cdss.org
Director of Education Dept, Pat MacPherson, x 106, pat@cdss.org
Education Associate, Mary Wesley, mary@cdss.org
Education Specialist, Nils Fredland, nils@cdss.org
Outreach Manager, Linda Henry, x 105, linda@cdss.org
Sales, Services & Data Specialist, Sarah Pilzer, x 103, sarah@cdss.org
Webmaster, Lynn Nichols, webmaster@cdss.org

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Board bios and photos at <http://www.cdss.org/governing-board.html>.

To receive store and office updates, please add news@cdss.org, office@cdss.org and store@cdss.org to your address book.



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 dance, music and song bring to individuals and communities. 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: Jeff Warner (photo by Ralph Morang); see article on page 7.

2016 Lifetime Contributor—Jeff Warner

The Country Dance and Song Society is pleased to announce that Jeff Warner of Portsmouth, NH, is the 2016 recipient of the CDSS Lifetime Contribution Award. Jeff is one of the nation's foremost performers and interpreters of traditional music and an advocate for bringing folk music to people of all ages, through his deep knowledge and love of American and English folk songs. His warmth and encouragement of singers, both experienced and new, young and old, has enriched many lives.

Jeff grew up in New York City, listening to the songs and stories of his father, Frank Warner, and the traditional singers his parents met during folksong collecting trips through rural America. When traveling with his parents, he listened while they recorded the locals who remembered the old songs of their region and community. (These recordings are preserved in the Library of Congress.)

In the 1960s, after receiving a BA in English at Duke University, and after a two-year stint in the Navy, Jeff was editor-in-training at Doubleday Bookclubs, heading, it seemed, toward a literary career until a friend asked if he would help run a nonprofit music school, the Guitar Workshop, in Roslyn, Long Island. He stayed with the school for nine years, working as administrator, guitar teacher, grant writer, and community program coordinator, and learning music theory and arrangement by teaching. His position also helped put him in touch with the significant people involved in the post-WW II folk revival movement that was embraced by both the commercial and academic worlds. In the '70s, he left to carve out a career for himself in historical music. Because of the US Bicentennial there was an increased demand for American songs in schools and Jeff filled that need with outreach programs into the schools.

He says that he is not a traditional singer in the academic sense—someone who has acquired the traditions either through ethnicity or family ties—but refers to himself as a singer of traditional songs taking an historical approach to the music.

"I teach American history and culture through traditional song and"—borrowing a phrase from historian David McCullough—"making history

as interesting as it really was." For Jeff, old songs are like archaeological objects which teach about history—"they're living historical artifacts that serve as evidence about the people who used them and the times they lived in."

In 1997, he moved to Portsmouth and began performing in New Hampshire schools as a Roster Artist through the State Arts Council. He has recorded for Flying Fish/Rounder, WildGoose (UK), and other labels. His first solo compact disc, recorded in 2005, is *Jolly Tinker* on Gumstump Records. His 1995 recording (with Jeff Davis), *Two Little Boys*, received a Parents' Choice Award. He is the editor of his mother's book, *Traditional American Folksongs from the Frank and Anne Warner Collection* (Syracuse University Press, 1984), and producer of the CD set *Her Bright Smile Haunts Me Still: The Warner Collection* (Appleseed Recordings, 2000), which is comprised of his parents' field recordings. He appears on the NH State Arts Council's 2003 compact disc *Songs of the Seasons*, for which he also co-wrote the liner notes.



From 1979 to 1993, Jeff toured nationally for the Smithsonian Institution. He continues to travel extensively in the US, Canada, and the UK, performing at museums and historical societies, folk clubs and folk festivals. In addition to singing and storytelling, he plays concertina, banjo, guitar, and several "pocket" instruments, including bones, spoons, and the jig doll/limberjack.

He is past president of the Country Dance and Song Society, and a past officer and founding member of the North American Folk Alliance (now Folk Alliance International). He has been an artist for Virginia and Ohio Arts Councils, is a speaker for NH Humanities, and is a producer of the Portsmouth Maritime Folk Festival. In 2007, he was named a NH State Arts Council Fellow.

We're thrilled to honor the many accomplishments of Jeff Warner. Location and date of the award presentation will be announced later. In the meanwhile you can listen to him sing "Baldheaded End of the Broom" from *Jolly Tinker*, <http://www.jeffwarner.com/Baldheaded.mp3>.

CDSS Sings—Jean Ritchie and the Cool of the Day

by Dan Schatz

*Now is the cool of the day
Now is the cool of the day
O This Earth is a garden, the garden of My lord
And He walks in His garden in the cool of the day.*

There was never a time when Jean's Ritchie's voice wasn't part of my life.

Growing up as I did in a community centered around folk music, she was a constant influence. Dulcimers, autoharps, banjos, guitars and voices rang with songs like "The L&N Don't Stop Here Anymore," "Blue Diamond Mines," and "My Dear Companion"—not to mention older ballads and play party songs—"Loving Hannah," "The Cuckoo" and "Jubilee." Best of all was Jean's own singing—gentle, unassuming and beautiful, with that clear, high voice that took you right to the hollers of Perry County, Kentucky.

I was in my thirties before I got to know Jean personally—she and her husband George Pickow hosted a folk music picnic at their home in Manhasset, NY. We all sat down and sang together, and you've never heard the Long Island suburbs as quiet as it got in that yard when Jean sat down with her dulcimer and started playing "Pretty Saro." That was the day I learned about Jean's graciousness, generosity and humor. This is a woman whose music had given voice to the beauties and tragedies of Appalachian life and culture, who had influenced millions, who had played the Royal Albert Hall and Carnegie Hall, whose singing had helped shape American music, who could rock a baby to sleep in one breath and dress down the strip miners in the next—and here she was, opening her home to all of us without a second thought. In typical form, she found a kind word for everyone who sang that day.

We made music from afternoon to evening, and as shade began to spread over the yard, Jean sat in her garden and sang:

*My Lord, He said unto me,
Do you like My garden so fair?
You may live in this garden if you keep the grasses green
And I'll return in the cool of the day."*

I'd heard the song dozens of times, but I don't know that I'd ever really listened before. That was the moment when its full impact hit me—the beauty and imagery of Jean's words, echoing the biblical story of the Garden of Eden, but also Jean's very contemporary message of responsibility and covenant with earth, the divine and one another.

*You may live in this garden if you keep the waters clean.
You may live in this garden if you will feed My lambs.
You may live in this garden if you keep the people free.*

I got to know Jean and her family after that picnic, and she donated a song to an album I coproduced

honoring her friend Utah Phillips. When she received her copy she wrote me a note, thanking me and expressing the hope that someday, someone might do something like that for her. A few months later, Jean suffered a stroke, and I began to wonder whether it might be time to make that CD. After George died Jean, now retired back to Kentucky, mentioned to another friend, Mick Lane, that she worried her old music friends might forget her, and we decided the time had come.

Mick, our friend Charlie Pilzer and I started gathering artists to record what became the CD *Dear Jean: Artists Celebrate Jean Ritchie*. Jean was living quietly and comfortably

in Kentucky, but now she knew she wasn't forgotten. Recording her songs, every single artist gave back to Jean some of the love and support that she had given to all of us for so many years. It was as if, recognizing that Jean now walked in the cool of her own day, the music community she helped to create had come back to her garden to return some of the love, beauty and wisdom she put into the world.

continued on page 20



photograph by George Pickow

Jean Ritchie

Now is the Cool of the Day

by Jean Ritchie

Words and music by Jean Ritchie. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

verse

Am Em A Em A

My Lord He said un-to me. Do you like my gar-den so fair? You may

live in this gar-den if you keep the grass-es green. And I'll re-turn in the cool of the day.

Em A E7 A

chorus

Am Am E Am G Am

Now is the cool of the day. Now is the cool of the day.

Am G Am Am

O this earth is a gar-den, the gar-den of my Lord. And He walks in his

C Am

gar-den in the cool of the day.

Then my Lord He said unto me,
Do you like my garden so pure?
You may live in this garden, if you keep the waters clean,
And I'll return in the cool of the day.
Chorus

Then my Lord He said unto me,
Do you like my pastures of green?
You may live in this garden, if you will feed my lambs,
And I'll return in the cool of the day.
Chorus

Then my Lord He said unto me,
Do you like my garden so free?
You may live in this garden, if you keep the people free,
And I'll return in the cool of the day.
Chorus

Tune typeset by Peter Barnes

Musicians Column—Back Row Bands

by Sue Songer

A new column for dance musicians, coordinated by David Firestine. This month's guest author is Sue Songer.

"That's how I learned to play." David Kaynor, fiddler and caller, Montague, MA

"It was a great thing to witness the big rush the dancers got out of the band's music and to be a small part of that." Jennifer Publicover, flautist, Halifax, NS (referring to occasions during the CDSS Centennial Tour)

"In addition to furthering the sense of community amongst musicians of all levels, the best thing is being up close to the 'action' onstage that makes the magic." Sherry Butler Lowe, fiddler, Bradenton, FL

"It's an opportunity to learn new music and learn new interpretations of that music, with folks whom I might not get to play with as often otherwise—a tremendous inspiration!" Anne Duston, fiddler, Portland, OR.

The above comments from musicians of diverse skills and backgrounds all refer to the same experience—sitting behind the hired band at a contra dance and playing as a member of what this article refers to as a Back Row Band. Participants in the Back Row are usually small in number. They are not miked and might not know the repertoire of the hired band. They probably won't receive any coaching from the Front Row. They are not expected to play the tunes well (or even at all) but rather to grab onto whatever notes they can, likely by ear (although sometimes the hired band might have sheet music or a set list available). The purpose of playing in a Back Row Band is not really to learn tunes or to play them fluently. It is to observe, participate in, and experience dance music in a way that can never be learned from a tune book or recording.

There is a distinct difference between sometimes large open bands that play from time to time in many venues and the Back Row Band setting. Open (all comers) bands typically are directed by leaders who are responsible to the open band members for choosing or teaching tunes that are commonly known and imparting information and instruction about

how the music will be played. Open bands can involve considerable up-front organization. Extra mics might be set up on stage for willing musicians.

Playing in a Back Row Band is different from playing in an open band because the Back Row will be carried by the sound of the hired band rather than the large-group sound of the open band. Back Rowers could be complete beginners or accomplished musicians. The Back Row Band will feel the lift and drive, the ebb and surge of the music and the responses these variations bring from dancers. It is a terrific

method of learning by ear, whether trying to discern a key signature or emulate a style of playing. It is an excellent exercise in fitting in with other musicians. Back Row members may not come away from the evening with new tunes nailed

down, but they may bring home some tune titles they want to pursue further and some techniques and arrangements (a.k.a. "tricks") they would like to try in their own settings.

Years ago many places, including my own dance community in Portland, OR, actively encouraged Back Row Bands. I was able to learn dance musicianship by sitting and noodling behind a variety of bands. During the 20+ years I have been hired to play for dances, my bands have welcomed numerous Back Rows on our stages. Today this practice doesn't appear quite as widespread as it once was, so I am writing to encourage others to give it a try. Besides the benefits to the Back Row musicians, this setting fosters the development of local musicianship, creates bonds between experienced and newer musicians, and delights dancers, who often enjoy the community spirit and energy coming from a stage that holds more than three or four musicians.

By now, some of you are likely thinking, "Yes, but what if..." What if there isn't room on the stage? What if the Back Row Band is too loud? What if it is too distracting? What if a member is overly demanding? What if it prevents me from enjoying my bandmates? What if someone brings a bagpipe? These valid concerns can all be managed through thought

"Today this practice doesn't appear quite as widespread as it once was, so I am writing to encourage others to give it a try."

and attention beforehand. The guidelines and role clarifications below will help make a Back Row Band experience successful for all involved. Communities will of course need to adapt these suggestions to fit their own circumstances.

Basic Requirements

- *Willingness and Suitability of the Hired Band.* If a band member, the band as a whole, or the caller will not be able to focus adequately on their own performance while others are on stage with them, if they are not comfortable being observed at close range, they are not good candidates for hosting a Back Row Band. At least one person in the band will need some ability and enough mental space to address probably minor issues that might arise from Back Row players.
- *Sufficient Room on the Stage.* The stage or playing area must be large enough to accommodate both the hired band and the Back Row with enough separation between the two groups that the Back Row will not interfere with anything band members need to accomplish among themselves. The amount of stage space needed depends on the number and types of instruments involved and the needs of the hired band. If the stage is not suitable, a Back Row might not be possible.
- *Adequate monitors and hall amplification.* With adequate monitors, the hired band members will hear each other well and will hardly hear the Back Row Band at all. Without adequate monitors, a Back Row might not be possible. There also must be adequate amplification of the hired band in the hall. Otherwise the Back Row might overpower the band on the dance floor. With good amplification, the Back Row will probably not be heard on the floor.
- *Appropriate Instruments in the Back Row.* Some instruments such as bagpipes, a drum kit, a bombarde will overpower the hired band no matter what. Someone must be able to politely tell these musicians that the Back Row is not appropriate for their instrument.

When the above conditions are met, the setting is conducive to a Back Row Band. Clarification of roles is the next order of business. Band concerns about the Back Row demands and potential for distraction, auditory and otherwise, can be greatly alleviated by making sure the roles of each group are clear. The guidelines that follow are usually implicitly understood in communities with a long-standing

Back Row friendliness. They may need to be spelled out in places that are trying it for the first few times.

The hosting musicians are responsible for:

- Producing their very best possible music for the caller and the dancers. This is their first responsibility and where their primary attention must be directed.
- Making all of the musical decisions and choices.
- Informing the Back Row Band (or one member) if they are too loud or distracting to the band in any other way.
- Arranging the seating on the stage.
- Saying no to the bagpiper or to any other Back Row musician who is making the evening challenging. (This degree of difficulty rarely occurs.)
- Informing the Back Rowers about upcoming music only as time allows. This might mean little or no information for them. That's OK.
- Projecting a welcoming attitude even if there isn't time for much else.

The Back Row Band members, no matter what their level of accomplishment and experience, are responsible for:

- Following any directions or requests of the hosting band and caller with the understanding that they may not have time to explain or to be as congenial as the situation deserves.
- Blending in and following along musically. Staying out of the way of the band.
- Not asking the band for special favors such as a mic or a solo or a particular seat
- Being musically alert—falling in with whatever the band is doing, whether or not the band has provided advance information. For instance:
- If the fiddles in the band have dropped out, the Back Row fiddles should also drop out.
- If the band is playing quietly, the Back Row should follow suit.
- If the band has a lot of fancy arrangements, it is probably best for the Back Row to drop out during switches and endings so as not to interfere with whatever the band has planned.
- Being watchful for upcoming switches and endings. Band members might not have time to give cues to the Back Row (although many will do so).
- Being OK with not knowing the music, perhaps not playing unfamiliar tunes as well as one would like to (or at all), and minimal attention from the band.

continued on page 13

Hive Mind—Attracting New Participants

Every group is eager for fresh ideas for particular challenges. The Hive Mind is a new column with readers sharing insights about different subjects (see next page for the Summer topic). Our thanks to caller Scott Higgs for coordinating the column, and thanks to this issue's participants.

Emily Addison

Ottawa Contra, www.ottawacontra.ca, Ottawa ON

Ottawa Contra has had some pretty good success getting new participants in the door. (On average, we have 15 brand new people each dance.) Just a few strategies we use include:

- posting on online calendars (local public radio calendar, city government calendar, a local calendar of all dance events in the city)
- cross-advertising with groups with possible like-minded interests (e.g., folk dancing; outdoor adventure clubs)
- promoting through our current dancers (Facebook events that they can pass onto their friends, a prize for our current dancers on who can bring the most new people who come back a second time using our second dance free cards)

With new people coming in the door, we're now working hard on converting those new folks to regular dancers.

Chloe Mohr

Mt. Airy Barn Dance (Germantown Country Dancers affiliate), Philadelphia, PA, <https://www.facebook.com/MountAiryBarnDance>

We renamed our family dance to be called a “barn dance,” and also now use the name of the neighborhood where it takes place. We have reached out to homeschool communities, neighborhood groups, and our own contacts in the area. We have made it clear that all ages are welcome, including adults who come without kids. We have the same three callers who rotate calling: they have gotten to know the attendees and built the community feel. We have a mini family camp style “gathering” in the middle, singing a song or two together, and sometimes having an attendee share a talent. We have worked to build a sense of community and

regular attendance. It's been successful and very fun!

Catie Condran Geist

Melbourne English Dancers, Melbourne, FL, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/676021995760720/>

We have been able to attract new dancers by encouraging cosplay (costume play) and Steampunk enthusiasts to dress up in historic or vintage or fanciful outfits for our dances. We have dress-up dance parties throughout the year and costume parties for Mardi Gras (we dance on Tuesday evenings, and Mardi Gras is always on a Tuesday!).

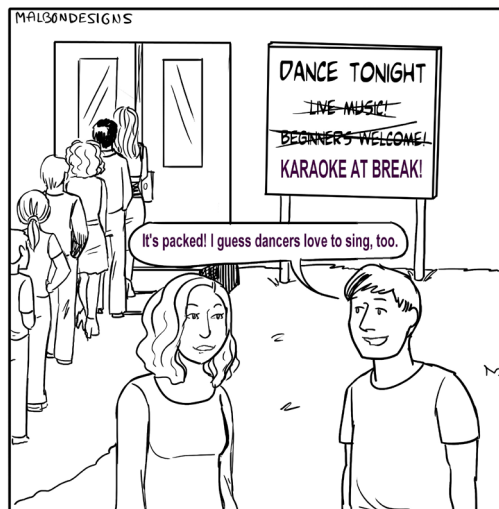
We also have a Talk Like a Pirate Day Contra Dance on the third Friday of September every year, and everyone loves to dress up for that dance. So, my suggestion is to find a young person who is a natural leader of a cosplay group or a Steampunk group or a college/university group and talk to that young person about bringing groups of friends to your dances. Maybe one night a month could be a dress-up dance party and everyone could be encouraged to wear at least one accessory that would be part of the theme (a hat, a scarf, a certain color, patterned socks, etc.). It has been my experience that personal

invitations bring in new dancers.

Scott Higgs

Germantown Country Dancers, Merion, PA, <http://dancewithjaneausten.com> and <http://www.germantowncountrydancers.org>

In Spring 2008, Germantown Country Dancers created two special dances, to coincide with national Jane Austen publicity. We hoped to attract people with no dance connection—who would see dancing on TV, get excited, and perhaps go out one evening to try something new. Once they arrived, we would make sure that they had a wonderful time. Special full-color flyers (with a movie photo) were distributed to libraries, historical societies and colleges all through



the Philadelphia area—much wider outreach than usual. To provide an easy-to-remember link, we established the website, DanceWithJaneAusten.com. Two Wednesdays featured the Jane Austen theme. Our regular dancers were excited about welcoming newcomers and making the events special (many dressed-up, or brought refreshments). These events enjoyed a huge surge in attendance, averaging over 80 dancers per night. Despite this success, we did not pick-up any new longterm dancers.

Some thoughts:

- 1) Piggybacking on TV/movie publicity gave us a priceless boost in visibility.
- 2) Many non-dancers are willing to try dancing, given a special opportunity.
- 3) Next time, we might put less effort into PR, and more into thoughtful, systematic follow-up of new prospects.

Our next Hive Mind topic: MILESTONE CELEBRATIONS. People celebrate birthdays, weddings, memorials, anniversaries, and more with music and dance. Please share your story of such a celebration. What elements made it special and memorable? Were there any lasting effects for the community?

Please submit your brief story (200 word limit) at <http://www.cdss.org/hive>.

(Back Row Bands, continued from page 11)

Some Back Row musicians will advance to Front Row playing, while others will be forever content with participation in the Back Row. No matter what the goals of a Back Row player, this setting provides a hands-on, ears-on, in-the-moment, on-the-fly experience with advantages laid out above. The hired band has the pleasure of two kinds of participation in its music—that of the dancers on the floor along with the energy and enthusiasm coming from the Back Row behind. Encouraging a Back Row is the essence of “Welcome” for musicians—a strongly held value throughout our entire community. I hope those of you not already doing so will add this possibility to your dances.

Discuss Back Row Bands further on the List-Serv musicians@lists.sharedweight.net and on Facebook at Contra/ECD/traditional dance musicians.

*Sue Songer has been playing for contra dances in Back Row and Front Row bands since the early 1990s. She directs the 75-member Portland Megaband and, along with Clyde Curley, is the editor of The Portland Collection tune books.**

**available from the CDSS Store, <http://store.cdss.org>*

Dancing Lad

by Marge Bruchac

She's thinking of a dancing lad
who caught her eye with soulful glance
when she was young, and wild, and free
and nothing loved more than to dance.

Perhaps it was his steady gaze
that caught her heart and held it fast
perhaps it was his artful steps
or was it when he made her laugh?

While all around them swirled the crowd
in that small space, the world stood still
apart from cares of work and time,
no anger, sorrow, love or loss
in that old wooden dancing hall
the music paused, they held their breath.

Two strangers met, and danced, and then
the music called them off again
to other lives.

It matters not, the name, the time,
the places where we solace find
betwixt where we would like to be
and where we are.

Outside the bounds of dancing halls
none can predict the steps we'll take
or mark what notes will sound the tune,
what voice will rise to call the dance
how to progress.

The music moves her, slower now
she ponders all that life has dealt.
And though her memory fades at times,
she still can spot that dancing lad,
she sees him now, across the hall.

His eyes meet hers.
She laughs.

© Marge Bruchac 2007



A Salesman Amidst Scholars—Ozarks Song Collector Max Hunter

by Sarah Jane Nelson

One evening back in August of 2014, I was combing the Internet for *new* traditional song material when I stumbled upon *The Max Hunter Folk Song Collection*. The very first song I listened to was a 1975 recording of Kris Ann Parker of Springfield, MO singing “Careless Love.” But this was no ordinary rendition; there was an emotional urgency in the singer’s voice that—combined with the seamless but metrically *crooked* guitar accompaniment—reached out over four decades of time and grabbed me by the throat.

I probably listened to that recording about a dozen times that night, and stayed up well past midnight, listening to other singers and songs in the collection. Not all of them were so easy on the ear: Aunt Ollie Gilbert (who contributed literally hundreds of songs to Hunter), had a voice like gravel. But the depth and breadth of Hunter’s material was so astonishing that I immediately endeavored to find out as much as possible about both the collector and his “informants.” Before I knew it, I was at work on his biography. Ironically, the singer about whom I am most curious—Ms. Parker herself—remains elusive. It is my hope that when I finally travel to Max’s hometown of Springfield, MO, I will stumble on some golden nugget of information regarding this vocalist.

When businessman Max Hunter started recording folk songs, he wasn’t thinking about the illustrious line of song catchers who had gone before him. He wasn’t thinking about how copies of his tapes would end up at the Library of Congress, let alone how modern technology would make his field recordings universally accessible to anyone who had access to the Internet. Nor was he thinking about how prominent folk musicians would delight in performing his material. He was only thinking about selling refrigeration parts, bringing home money for his family of six, and doing something that would keep him entertained and less-than-lonely while traveling through Hill Country. In the words of *Springfield News-Leader* contributor Sara J. Bennett (March 7, 1998):



"Max Hunter grew up in a musical Springfield family, but it was the boredom and loneliness of life as a traveling salesman that drove him to start collecting folk tunes. Alone in his motel room every night, Hunter would record himself singing and playing guitar. Then, he met renowned folklorists Vance Randolph and Mary C. Parler, who encouraged him to tape other people. It was the mid-1950s, and most academicians thought there was no folk culture left to collect in the Ozarks. Hunter proved them wrong."

The Max Hunter Folk Song Collection, begun in 1956 and completed in 1976, includes almost 1600 traditional songs from the Ozarks. As Max liked to tell it, his tapes “if glued together and stretched out would run about 18 miles.” (Lucile Morris Upton, Springfield Mo. Daily News, Oct. 14, 1974.) In 1998 Dr. Michael Murray and other staff members at Missouri State University took those miles of acetate and started to digitize them. Many of the songs in the Hunter collection form the core of folk repertoire for today’s traditional artists, and several have links to “variants” (i.e., alternative versions) which makes this

archive a veritable candy shop for browsers. <https://maxhunter.missouristate.edu/indexsongtitle.aspx>

In addition, approximately 200 of the songs Max collected were variants of Child ballads that had made their home in the Ozarks, after having travelled “across the pond” to Appalachia. Max eventually won several awards for his song work, but one of his proudest moments was hearing from a university student named Fern Denise Gregory who was writing a thesis entitled, “Selected Child Ballad Tunes in the Max Hunter Collection of Ozark Folksongs.”

Folk Legacy’s founder Sandy Paton, who recorded Max back in 1963, got it right when he said in the liner notes “Max Hunter almost defies classification.” The fact that Max never went to college but formed deep and lasting collaborations with a number of folkloric scholars, including Arkansas icons Vance Randolph and Mary Celestia Parler; Dolf and Becky Schroeder

of Columbia, MO; and his once-in-a-lifetime singing partner, Joan O'Bryant of Wichita University, only makes his story more compelling.

Gregarious by nature, Max quickly made friends of strangers, and managed to instill trust in otherwise reluctant songsters. He also developed a sixth sense about where to find old "gems"; again to quote Bennett: "He says he could tell simply by the swing of a gate if the people inside would welcome him or if he would have to visit a couple more times before bringing his tape recorder." As documented by Max himself, Cathy Barton, and linguistics professor Donald Lance, Hunter would do just about anything to get a song. He tells of removing wasps nests from well houses, feeding dozens of baby calves from a milk bottle, listening for hours to people's troubles, making repeat visits to reluctant informers, bringing in hay, delivering "stump" whiskey and many other adventures. Max's sense of humor was a valuable asset: "it helped him get his songs... It's what got his foot in the door... Back in those days, if you weren't careful you'd get shot at!"

Whenever he returned from his 150-mile sales circuit through southwestern Missouri, Arkansas and Kansas, Max's family would help him carry the weighty Web-Core recorder into the house. It would then be deposited in a corner of the laundry room (a.k.a. "the office") where he would spend many late-night hours poring through songs, and writing down lyrics—again with the help of wife and family. It was indeed a "labor of love." As his eldest daughter Linda expressed it: "I think he looked at the Hill People as an extended family."

As mentioned earlier, Max Hunter was hardly the first person to do field work in the Ozarks; in addition to the Randolphins, he was preceded by other collectors, most of whom happened to be English professors. While not a collector himself, Henry Marvin Belden—founder of the Missouri Folklore Society—sent his students into the field to gather material. Belden's extensive collection is housed at Harvard University. According to *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, Rhodes College professor "[John Quincy] Wolf began collecting mountain ballads as a college student.... Wolf recorded more than 1,000 songs in the rural Ozarks." Loman Cansler (a contemporary of Hunter) donated his extensive collection of songs and other folkloric materials to the University of Missouri-Columbia in 1987.

Max caught songs that cover the full emotional range of human existence. It is discomfiting to hear some of the darkest murder ballads sung in the sweet soprano voice of Fran Majors of Fayetteville, AR, or to hear the childlike voice of Betty Lou Copeland unflinchingly make its way through the brutal story of "Notchville Girl." I'm partial to songs in which the setting is made palpable—the 1958 recordings of Allie Parker Long, whose singing is accompanied by the squeak of a rocking chair, or recordings of Almeda Riddle, which are accompanied by a shower of acorns falling on the tin roof of her cabin.

Max did not spare his listeners; he took the songs as they were delivered, even when the lyrics didn't make sense. In a 1978 interview with Donald Lance he said, "I will not change a song. And some of the songs that I have, have obvious mistakes in them... I'm going to sing it just like the person sang it to me." In this respect Max stood at opposite poles from poet Robert Graves whose book, *English and Scottish Ballads* (1957), was coming out just as Max began his own collecting work. It is doubtful that Max ever saw this book, but he would undoubtedly have found its sentiments wrong-headed:

Said Graves, "Most ballad anthologies nowadays are 'scholarly', which means that the editors feel obliged to print each ballad exactly as it occurs in one of the many variant versions still surviving. But, unless such a version happens to be superior to all others in every stanza, this seems unjust to the reader, who is entitled to see the best text."

This attachment both to the Hill People and to the ineffable qualities of old "gems" is what drove Max, and it's what lead me to the writing of this book. As Max once told Donald Lance, "I don't think you can compose a folk song...because to me a folk song has to go through something. I don't know what it is. It's got to go through part of an oral tradition to get to be a folk song."

Writer and musical performer Sarah Jane Nelson is still at work on her biography of Max Hunter. She made a trip to Columbia, MO last July and looks forward to visiting Max's hometown of Springfield as soon as she's managed to raise enough funds! She encourages readers to visit her link at <https://www.gofundme.com/hunterbiography>.

Come dance and sing your brains out this summer at one of CDSS's programs
Pinewoods, Plymouth, MA ♦ Ogontz, Lyman, NH ♦ Timber Ridge, HighView, WV ♦ Cavell, Lexington, MI
see www.cdss.org/camps for details



Cooperation and Consensus—Scissortail Traditional Dance Society of Oklahoma

by Louise Siddons and Jill Allen

There's been a surge of dance activity in Oklahoma recently—an advanced English country dance series, Irish set dancing, and a couples' dance series—all under the auspices of our statewide CDSS affiliate organization, Scissortail Traditional Dance Society (www.scissortail.org). Dance communities ebb and flow for a variety of reasons, and I'm not going to pretend that I can fully explain in this article why Scissortail is experiencing such enthusiastic growth. I am, however, going to point to several strengths in our community and several recent events that have contributed to our renewed energy—including a visit from the CDSS Executive Committee in November 2014. I hope, too, that knowing more about Scissortail and traditional dance in Oklahoma will encourage you to include us in your travels!

Thirty years ago, traditional dance in Oklahoma was fairly limited, and individual communities were unconnected. In 1988, international folk dance leader Noel Osborn decided to bring contra dancing to Oklahoma City, and, with the help of Oklahoma City International Folk Dance members and our neighbors in Dallas, TX, organized a Saturday night contra dance that almost instantaneously became a quarterly series—due to clamorous popular demand. Fast forward five years, and Scissortail Traditional Dance Society was born, with an organizing board and regular dances. Over the ensuing decades, Scissortail members helped refurbish several venues, including a charming rural dance barn and an historic urban hall. Carol Barry, international folk and contra dancer, was introduced to English country dance in the early 1990s by the Dallas, TX and Little Rock, AR dance groups and started the Oklahoma City ECD group in 1998. Musician Michelene Cyphers heads up the Scissortail Megaband, which welcomes new and experienced musicians interested in playing for contra dances.

photo by Coleton Gambill

In April 2011, we held the first student-organized community contra dance in Stillwater, on the campus of Oklahoma State University; later that year, University of Oklahoma students and faculty helped create a community dance in Norman. The Stillwater and Norman dances joined Scissortail soon thereafter, starting our shift toward being a statewide organization. In 2012, following the tragic death of caller and dance organizer G. Wesley Brown, the Tulsa community also joined Scissortail. Across the state, we've taken advantage of Scissortail's centralized resources to support emerging dance series, coordinate band and caller bookings, and build a vibrant, close-knit organization. As CDSS Executive Committee member Dorcas Hand observed, at dances in multiple cities, "The whole community seemed to come out!" At the same time, each dance has its own local organizing committee that ensures consensus and responsive programming in each city. I believe that our recent growth is a direct result of the qualitative and material strengths offered by Scissortail as an umbrella organization, in combination with outstanding leadership at the local level.

When the CDSS Exec visited Oklahoma just over a year ago, there were already great things happening—and we were proud to share our community with them. As Exec member Jill Allen relates in the sidebar, Scissortail is more than just dancing!

Although I'm proud of how much we had to show the Exec, I'm also pleased by how much we learned from them, in formal and informal ways. For example, I was utterly fascinated by David Millstone's presentation on the history of traditional dance in the US—which ended up being a jumping-off point for an equally fascinating, extended conversation about racial diversity in traditional dance history on the sharedweight.com callers email list. Less officially, individual conversations between Exec members and students led to some exciting developments in my own local dance, in Stillwater. Two of our student leaders, Alysa Smith and Shea Bailey, were encouraged to step off the dance floor, showcasing their musical talent in "Polka Breaks" that expand our contra dancers' repertoire. We began organizing field trips to regional dance weekends: first to When In Doubt, Swing, in Dallas, TX, and last fall to the CDSS Centennial Tour stop in Lawrence, KS. Student participation in dance weekends enhances skills, inspires ambition for our local dances, and connects them with the dance community as a whole. Students from Norman, Jackson Bockus and Susannah Pyatt, have joined the Scissortail Board as youth representatives.

continued on page 20

Scissortail Is More Than Dancing **by Jill Allen, CDSS Exec**

Flashback to November 2014: the traveling CDSS Executive Committee was in Oklahoma, participating in dances and meeting with organizers to see what was going well in the Scissortail dance and music community, and conversely what challenges they were facing. We found successes on many levels, but most noticeably, they had created a well-functioning governing board of strong and generous individuals who meshed well, were of open mind to supporting new endeavors, and believed in the importance of community. Their umbrella model was working so well despite such diverse affiliate groups and a huge geographic area. The only real challenge they could think of was the imminent loss of a beloved dance hall, which has since been met successfully.

We found active participation and organization by students at two major state universities, spearheaded by Louise Siddons and Miranda Arana, and with the local Boys and Girls Club. According to Mike Morse, board member (and former president), the group recently held two fundraisers: one to support a member in need and another to donate \$1000 to the church where they dance. The community helped one of their members, Mark Cashion, to convert his barn into a dance space. They function with a membership model and yearly individual dues of \$15, which offers a \$2 discount at any dance in the area and a deeper discount for special events. In addition to Flamingo Fling, Scissortail collaborates with Dallas, Houston, and Austin, TX to offer a rotating annual English dance weekend, Set for Spring.

Why do they function so well among themselves and with others? They encourage individuals and affiliates with financial and educational support. If a group needs a little extra for a sign, or to make up for a loss at the door, the Scissortail board offers support. There is a refreshing lack of entitlements, preferences or hierarchies. This group has taken cooperation to another level. Their motto seems to be "Of course we'll help; let's try it!"

This spring, Jill Allen completes her sixth year on the CDSS Board and the Executive Committee. As the Exec's liaison to visited communities, she has enjoyed meeting people all over the US and Canada and discussing their unique issues.



CDSS Goes to New York, New York!

by Pam Paulson, CDSS Executive Committee member,
and Alexandra Deis-Lauby, NYC Dance Community member

Over 100 years ago in New York, Cecil Sharp founded what was to become the Country Dance and Song Society. Today, New York's folk scene encompasses a rich variety of dancing and music that includes CDSS affiliates, inclusive and engaging dances of English, contra, squares, morris, Scottish, and genderfree dancing as well as a plethora of early music and folk song groups. In November 2015 the CDSS Traveling Executive Committee gathered there to celebrate 100 years of song and dance with our host organization, Country Dance New York, and the wider NYC folk community. We spent the weekend meeting as a Committee, dancing, sharing meals, and talking with community members about the dance organizations in and around the city.

Gathering in NYC

On Thursday and Friday, the Exec converged on NYC from across the continent. Thursday evening bought us to the delightful Country Dancers of Westchester English dance, just north of the city proper. Friday night offered a choice of two great dances, English in Greenwich Village with the historic Country Dance New York, and contra in Brooklyn with the younger organizations Brooklyn Contra and Village Contra. Thank you to Susan Amessé for organizing the English dance and to Avia Moore and Carol Geisler for the contra. The Thursday and Friday dances showcased NY's dynamic local talent. One Exec member described the English dances as "divine" and highlights of the weekend. Another Exec member attended the contra and found a "welcoming, inclusive group that danced with energy and enthusiasm."

The Exec Meeting

CDSS's birthplace was the perfect spot to take stock of the organization in its centennial year. On Saturday, the Exec Committee gathered to do just that. CDSS continues to evolve to meet the ever-changing needs of song and dance communities around the country and our discussion was wide-ranging—we want to offer advice, resources, and support to members and affiliates, reach out to the broader community and increase membership, promote the 2016 Year of Song, increase monetary support for the organization, help with community building, run and support successful camps, and much more.

photo by Jill Allen

Our Centennial Year was packed with outreach and initiatives. Much of our discussion was about how we can continue to reach our goals on a modest budget.

As always, budgets and funding generated ongoing discussions. How can we best use our funds so that we will continue to thrive and support the local communities in coming years? We are always seeking new and growing funding avenues. Membership is a vital part of our organization, comprising both affiliates and individuals and is a major component of our budget. This strong and growing membership base allows us to continue to support doing the things that we love, including:

- offering grant advice or hard-to-find materials related to song and dance;
- running and supporting camps (did you hear about the new camp in Michigan?);
- presenting classes and workshops that bring in and support a new generation of dancers, callers, singers and musicians; and,
- building an extensive set of publications.

Financial discussions can be uncomfortable, and they are crucial to a fiscally healthy organization.

We discussed ways that CDSS supports the affiliates, such as offering insurance. IndepDance is one of many weekends and dances that gets its essential liability insurance coverage through CDSS. The local organizers have said: "This is a great benefit that CDSS provides because it gives us an easy way to have insurance coverage that otherwise may be difficult to find and expensive to acquire." Is your local dance or weekend covered by insurance? If not, check out this CDSS benefit.

Planning our Future

We used the reports from our committees and working groups to look to the future and plan our next steps. How will camps grow and evolve? How can CDSS strengthen our relationship with and increase the number of local affiliates? What other relationships can we strengthen? How can CDSS continue to fulfill our Strategic Plan and mission and to ensure advocacy for the vitality and sustainability of song and dance for the next 100 years? With these big-picture questions, we rounded off our meeting and were ready to start connecting with the local dance communities. We set out to our CDNY hosts to enjoy community and contra dance.

Delightful Dancing

The Exec headed over to the advanced contra dance that was already in progress and jumped right in. Saturday's dances brought in talent from across the Atlantic. King Kontra, a rockin' band from the UK, made our feet fly. The first dance session ended all too soon for us, but our

dancing jitters were calmed by the promise of more dancing after dinner.

Community Discussion

During the dinner break the Exec Committee heard from members of the local dance communities. The enormity of the greater NYC area presents huge challenges, such as how to get sound equipment to a dance venue on public transportation, and on the flip side, great pleasures such as a wealth of musicians and callers. We learned about the rich tradition of song, dance and music in this area; Cecil Sharp would be so proud! Traditional dance forms are alive and well and newer forms such as gender free dances are taking root.

Some of the topics that came up in our discussion with the community were:

- NYC dances have a wide variety in dancers: all ages, genders, and experience levels, and are all working toward increasing the diversity, broadening the community, and enriching the dances.
- Intergenerational dancing has many benefits. We must remember that many of us like to partner with someone similar. Branching out, to dance with different partners, can bring up issues while also building respect and broadening the community. We need to be sensitive to each other's needs including our partner's agility, interest in flourishing, and any injuries we might have.
- How can we retain new dancers when the dances compete with a lively city's infinite creative, leisure-time offerings.
- How can we create a safe dance environment?
- How can we encourage each other to attend the other dances in our area?
- NYC has a wealth of talent and history, paired with youthful energy, a recipe for success!

Thanks to Jeff Bary as the overall weekend coordinator. A special thank you to Beverly Francis for her CDNY/CDSS history display posted at the Church of the Village dance hall and for her eloquent history presentation.

It's always good to know where your roots are: strong roots grow a mighty tree. New York is part of CDSS's mighty tree. It's where we started and it's a community that is continuing to thrive to be a part of the success of the next one hundred years. Thank you, New York, for your hospitality and warm welcome!

(CDSS Sings, continued from page 8)

Jean died this past June, surrounded by family who sang by her bedside. Her last performance came at a concert in Kentucky just one year ago, when Susie Glaze, John McCutcheon and Kathy Mattea came to sing for Jean one more time at the Union Church in Berea. Jean spent the entire evening singing along from her front row seat. At the end of the evening, Jean turned around in her wheelchair and directed us all in “The Peace Round.” Then, with Jean’s family gathered around her, the room stilled and then echoed with the beauty of the Ritchie family goodnight song, “Twilight A-Stealing.” Thinking on it now, it was a fitting close to a life of love and music.

*Twilight a-stealing over the sea
Shadows are falling dark on the lea
Borne on the night wind, voices of yore
Come from the far off shore.*

Thinking on it now, it was a fitting close to a life of love and music.

These things are important—honoring friendship, listening to elders, reclaiming our heritage, protecting the land. Music is important, and afternoons spent enjoying good company. Life deserves to be celebrated, and Jean Ritchie taught generations to celebrate life.

Dan Schatz is a Grammy® nominated folksinger, songwriter, multi-instrumentalist and producer. His most recent album, The Promise of the Sowing, was released on Folk-Legacy Records in August 2015.

WEB EXTRA: <https://soundcloud.com/dan-schatz/now-is-the-cool-of-the-day>.



(Scissortail, continued from page 17)

More recent developments might not be directly traceable to conversations held that weekend, but they were surely inspired by the energy and enthusiasm it engendered. Carol Barry’s Advanced ECD series has encouraged callers and dancers alike to challenge themselves anew. Eager dancers prompted Noel Osborn to launch a couples’ dance series this fall with a series of progressive lessons in Scandinavian dance (schottische and hambo). Last August, I started an Irish set dancing series in Stillwater which draws dancers and musicians from around the state. Tulsa organizers are targeting recruitment at their contra dance, having taken advantage of the organizers’ workshop at the Tour stop in Lawrence to build strategies based on other communities’ successes.

If I could point to one thing that has enhanced our state’s dance communities more than any other, it would be travel. Almost all of the callers, dancers, musicians and other volunteers who are involved in organizing our events travel regularly to dance weekends and workshops throughout the South- and Midwest, and some go much farther afield—including abroad. We all bring new knowledge and ideas back with us, enriching Scissortail. Nowhere was this proactive approach to travel more visible than in Lawrence last autumn—Oklahomans were in workshops organized for callers, organizers and musicians, and participated as dancers in English country dancing, morris dancing, contra, waltz and more.

If you’d like to include Oklahoma in your travel plans, consider joining us this spring for the Flamingo Fling, with Great Bear Trio and caller Mary Wesley. More information about Scissortail can be found at <http://www.scissortail.org/> or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/scissortail/>.

Louise Siddons is a dance caller and organizer in Stillwater, OK—and elsewhere—and Vice President of Scissortail Traditional Dance. She’s particularly interested in youth recruitment, to which end she is running a workshop for the Next Generation of English country dance leaders at CDSS’s English Dance Week at Pinewoods this summer. In her spare time, she’s a professor of art history at Oklahoma State University. She is grateful to Noel Osborn and Carol Barry for information about the early history of Scissortail.

photo by Marcelle Lipke

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2016 is CDSS's Year of Song!



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