

CDSS NEWS

SPRING 2019



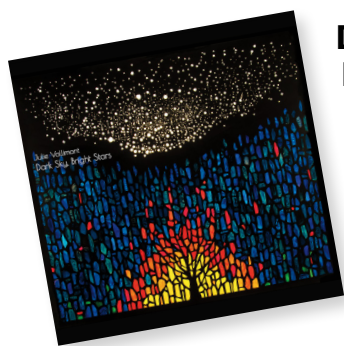
COUNTRY DANCE AND SONG SOCIETY

founded in 1915

BALANCE AND SING

Store Update ~ Spring 2019

New year, new music, new dances, new tunes! Check out our selection from authors and musicians new and old — more books and CDs are coming in every week so make sure to look out for even more great new music coming soon!

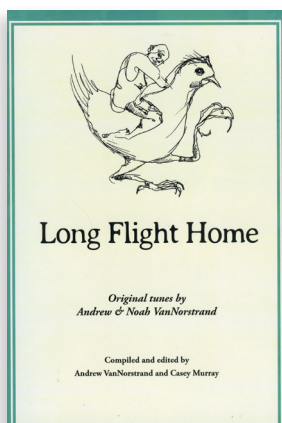


Dark Night, Bright Stars by Julie Vallimont

Julie Vallimont's extraordinary new CD of 15 original instrumental tunes. Her piano and accordion are

accompanied by some of New England's finest traditional musicians. The album features producer Yann Falquet (guitar), Anna Patton (clarinet), Becky Tracy (fiddle), Katie McNally (fiddle), Andrew VanNorstrand (fiddle), Noah VanNorstrand (fiddle), Rachel Bell (accordion), Mark Roberts (banjo), Kirsten Lamb (upright bass), Mairi Chaimbeul (harp), Daniel Hawkins (cello), and Mia Bertelli (vocals).

Long Flight Home: Original Tunes by Andrew and Noah VanNorstrand



The much-anticipated collection of tunes from Andrew and Noah VanNorstrand of Great Bear Trio and other fabulous groups! This book is a collection of 100 original tunes by Andrew and Noah spanning twenty years of composition. Primarily dance music — reels, jigs and waltzes. Also includes essays, artwork and appendices. Spiral bound for easy use!

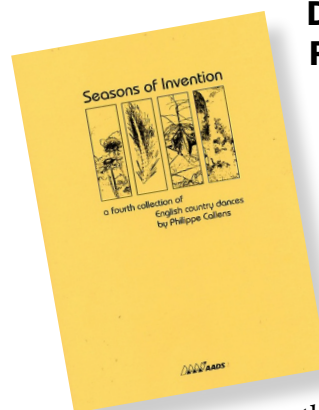
An Evening at Dan's Hall by The Dancehall Players

The 4th album from the beloved Dancehall Players — Gregory Brown (flute, guitar), Aaron Ellingsen (violin, mandolin), Susan Larkin (Violin, recorder, vocals), Ann Schau (piano), and Lael Whitehead (recorder, percussion, guitar, vocals). They're joined by guests Barry Webster on cello and banjo as well as Patrica Schott on clarinet. The 17 tracks include music for easy, intermediate, and complex dances as well as waltzes perfect for listening and dancing.



Dances by Philippe Callens

We've got all of Philippe Callens' much-loved ECD books back in stock — *Continental Capers*, *Belgian Boutades*, *Antwerp Antics*, and *Seasons of Invention*.



These lovely books by the Belgian choreographer include music notation for tunes to accompany each of the approximately 15 dances in each volume. Companion CDs are also available for some of the books.

413•203•5467 x 106

store@cdss.org

store.cdss.org

CDSS NEWS

ISSN 1070-8251 Spring 2019

Editor—Lynn Nichols
Tune Editor—Kate Barnes
Dance Editors—Bob Dalsemer, Joanna Reiner
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 413-203-5471, office@cdss.org, cdss.org
Monday-Friday, 9 am-5 pm

STAFF

Executive Director, Kathryn Tarter German, x 100, katy@cdss.org
Acting Business Manager, Bob Blondin, x 111, bob@cdss.org
Accounting Manager, Anna Mach, x 113, anna@cdss.org
Database & Membership Assistant, Nicole Perez, x 104, nicki@cdss.org
Director of Camp Programs, Steve Howe, x 102, camp@cdss.org
Director of Development, Robin Hayden, x 107, robin@cdss.org
Community Resources Manager, Linda Henry, x 105, linda@cdss.org
Operations Manager, Sarah Pilzer, x 103, sarah@cdss.org
Sales & Insurance Manager, Ben Williams, x106, ben@cdss.org
Marketing & Design Manager, Lynn Nichols, x 101, lynn@cdss.org

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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 connects and supports people in building and sustaining vibrant communities through participatory dance, music, and song traditions that have roots in English and North American culture. Membership is open to all; benefits include the printed newsletter, 10% discount from the store, early registration for our summer programs, and more. 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, cdss.org.

This newsletter is published quarterly by the Country Dance and Song Society. Some of the views expressed within represent the authors and are not necessarily those of CDSS. All material is published by permission.

front cover: A scene from the Celebration of Life for Tom Siess. Tom's image is projected on the screen. Photo by Nikki Herbst.

Letters and Announcements

SUBMITTING ARTICLES, PHOTOS & ADS

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: 1,100 words, 600 words for essays and event reviews). We may edit for length and clarity. Photos should be 300-600 dpi (print resolution).

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

DISPLAY 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. Rates are slightly lower for the Summer digital issue.

SENDING ADS

Ads must be black and white or grayscale and in PDF format. To reserve, fill out and submit the form at cdss.org/cdss-news-insertion-order.

DEADLINES

Spring—February 1st (issue mailed early March)
Summer—May 1st (issue online only in June 2019)
Fall—August 1st (issue mailed early September)
Winter—November 1st (issue mailed early December)

The **EVENTS CALENDAR** is online at cdss.org/events. To include an event, navigate to the bottom of that page and click on the words "Add an Event" in the blue box. You can also email events@cdss.org.

BE SOCIAL WITH US!



<http://www.facebook.com/cdss.org>
@CDSSorg
<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 cdss.org/join-renew#ways-to-give. Your help is much appreciated.

LEGACY OF JOY SOCIETY

Does your will include the Country Dance and Song Society? Please consider ensuring that the programs, publications, and services that matter to you continue in the future with a bequest. Read more about the CDSS Legacy of Joy Society and sign up at cdss.org/legacy.

CDSS Member Directory Returns!

The much-missed CDSS Member Directory is back!

The searchable Online Directory is now LIVE on The Commons. If you are a CDSS member, you should have received an email from us with your Commons username and instructions for how to log in. If you did not get that email, you can go here to reset your password: cdss.force.com/commons/s/login/ForgotPassword.

Members logged in to The Commons can view the Online Directory.

We realize, however, that many of you want to have a Directory you can *hold in your hands*, so we are currently preparing a print edition, which will be available for sale to members in March. Stay tuned for details about how to get your copy.

Questions? Contact us at commons@cdss.org or 413-203-5467 x103.

Larks and Ravens

I very much appreciate Les Addison's letter "Contra and Consent," in the Winter *CDSS News*. Les says, "In dances that call 'larks and ravens,' I expect dancers of any gender may be dancing any role, and I'm agreeing to swing or be swung by anyone of any gender."



I would take this a step farther, with Les's permission.

The principal of "dance with who's coming at you" should apply regardless of the role terms being used. Those who are not willing to do that should find some other sort of community.

~ Liz Sturgen, Easthampton, MA

Summer Issue Will be Digital Only

In order to lessen our environmental impact (and also decrease postage costs), CDSS has committed to having one issue of the *CDSS News* each year be **digital only**. In 2019, that will be the Summer issue.

Here's how it will work: If you are a CDSS member, and we have a correct email address for you, we will email you a link to the issue as an online flipbook in early June. The digital issue will be in full color and has the added advantage of allowing you to click through from the event ads directly to the organizers' websites.

We are making arrangements for on-demand printing for the issue so if you would prefer to have a copy mailed to you, please email news@cdss.org by May 1st and let us know. We'll send you a link to a section of the CDSS Commons where you can purchase a printed copy for a modest fee.

The Fall and Winter issues of the *News* will be mailed to all members as usual. Thanks for your support and understanding.

Lifetime Contribution Award Celebration for Sue Songer

Folks from all over the country are coming to Portland, OR, in late March to celebrate and honor 2018 CDSS Lifetime Contribution Award recipient Sue Songer's contributions to the dance and music community across the nation. Your presence is requested to help make this a celebration of the ages, worthy of songs, poems and stories told through the generations 'till the end of time.



The event will be held from 4 - 11 pm March 30th, at the Multnomah Arts Center, 7688 SW Capitol Hwy in Portland, OR. Aside from the presentation of the Lifetime Contribution Award, there will be a potluck and tons of space for jamming and singing throughout the evening.

An open band will be led and managed by Betsy Branch (fiddlefrau@gmail.com) and tunes will be selected from the *Portland Collection* volumes. Please contact Betsy if you'd like to participate. Open calling will be managed by Erik Weberg (erik@erikweberg.com), so contact him if you'd like to call a dance and what dance/type of dance you have in mind. Please contact Betsy and/or Erik by March 15th about playing/calling so that plans and programs can be created. Sound engineering will be provided by John Oorthuys.

Admission is free, but donations will be gladly accepted to offset costs of the event. For answers to questions (or to let them know you're coming), write to: Betsy (fiddlefrau@gmail.com), Erik (erik@erikweberg.com) or Marfa (zebra@peak.org).

Next CDSS Web Chat: Family/Community Dance Organizers Unite! APRIL 4, 2019



Do you know any organizers of dances that include young children and all ages? If so, please share this announcement about our next web chat on **Thursday, April 4 from 8:30-9:30 pm EDT**. Organizers of thriving family and community dances from far and wide will share their stories and advice, including time for Q&A.

To join the web chat (by computer or phone), go to <https://goo.gl/Yo25Bu> to submit an online RSVP form by March 28. Several days prior to the web chat we'll send instructions via email about how to join the call on April 4th. Even if you can't join us on this date, send an RSVP to receive announcements about future web chats.

For recordings of previous web chats, check out cdss.org/resources/how-to/organizers#cdss-web-chats to hear tried-and-true stories about Boosting Attendance, Creating a Thriving Open Band, and Increasing Youth Involvement. Questions? Contact Linda Henry at linda@cdss.org.

Here are a couple of "take-aways" from previous web chat participants:

From the Increasing Youth Involvement web chat:

"I'm going to see if I can invite college professors and high school teachers to our dances and perhaps they will tell their students about the dances." ~ Catie Condran Geist, Palm Bay, Florida

"The Creating a Thriving Open Band web chat

reinforced what I really already knew: We need to have a spearheading person to start it and keep it going. I am more inspired to try and form an open band here now." ~ Linda Nieman, Phoenix, Arizona

CDSS Sings — Lucy Picco Simpson's "What's in a Song"

by Peter Amidon

What's in a song that helps me to heal? And why can a song allow me to heal? Oh, I can't explain the joy or the tears though I've been a singer for years.

~ Lucy Picco Simpson, from "What's in a Song"

Mary Alice and I first sang with Lucy Simpson on top of the wooded hill between the Dining Hall and Camphouse at the 1976 CDSS-sponsored Pinewoods Folk Music Week.

The year before, I had traded in my viola da gamba for a fiddle as I leapt from my early music studies to the world of traditional music and dance in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I had gone to the 1975 CDSS Pinewoods Folk Music Week with hopes of becoming a fiddler, but after a week with John Roberts, Tony Barrand, Tony Saletan, Michael Cooney, Jeff Davis, Jeff Warner, Jerry Epstein, Jean Redpath, Edna Ritchie, Almeda Riddle, Margaret MacArthur and more, I left Folk Music Week a singer.

I returned to Folk Music Week in 1976 (Tony Saletan again, plus Jean Ritchie, Gale Huntington, Louis (later Louisa Jo) Killen, Lorraine Lee (now Lorraine Hammond), Richard Moss, Tommy Thompson, and more) with my new girlfriend (now wife) Mary Alice. That is where we first met Lucy Simpson, and where Lucy, Judy Drabkin, Mary Alice and I got together on that wooded hill every day at noon to sing gospel songs by ear: "This May Be the Last Time," "Woke Up This Morning," "Little David," and more. After that, Mary Alice and I sang with Lucy whenever we could.

Lucy Picco Simpson lived in New York City with her husband Barry Simpson and their daughter Shelley. Lucy was deeply involved in the Pinewoods Folk Music Club of New York. Google "Lucy Picco Simpson obituary" (she died in 2006 at the age of 65) to find out more about her.

Mary Alice and I were honored to be invited to sing with Lucy on her classic 1980 Folk Legacy album *Sharon Mountain Harmony: A Golden Ring of Gospel* (which you can order directly from the Folk Legacy website and iTunes. You can hear many of the cuts on YouTube). To get a sense of Lucy's extraordinary singing I suggest listening to her "Done Found My Lost Sheep" from that album.

Lucy collected 19th century and early 20th century American hymnals and gleaned great old hymns from them (many of which had fallen out of common usage), most famously, "Angels Hovering Round," but also "Prodigal's Return," "Blessed Quietness," "Climbing High Mountains," and many more.

In 2015 I got a call from Wendy Ritger of the First Congregational Church in Blue Hill Maine where Lucy lived the last 20 years of her life. The church had inherited Lucy's collection of four hundred hymnals and wondered whether Mary Alice and I would like to have them. Of course we said yes, and soon we received four big boxes filled with all of Lucy's hymnals, no two the same. Later I saved out about thirty, the ones that had any notations or notes from Lucy; the rest we donated to the Drew University Cramer (hymnal) Collection which Mary Alice's mother Alice had helped maintain when she had been a Drew University librarian. Lucy was always apologetic about inadvertent changes she had made from some of these hymns' original notation. I noticed, however, that her changes were always improvements.

Around 1993, Lucy made a cassette tape for us that was like a letter: Lucy talking to us and singing songs she thought we might like, including "What's in a Song." Here is what Lucy told us on that tape about writing the song:

"I was in my car in 1991, the day of Hurricane Bob, driving home from a little Adirondack gospel folk festival, after having a wonderful weekend there with some really nice people and staying overnight with Margaret MacArthur. I headed off on Monday morning, all the way across and up the coast. Hurricane Bob was coming behind me; chased me up the coast, but this song just came out line by line out of that feeling, that glow of having had such a nice weekend of singing."

Lucy was a gifted singer, a quintessential singer. Lucy particularly loved group singing and harmonizing by ear. She had exquisite taste in choosing songs; much of her repertoire became and remains an important part of the foundation of Mary Alice's and my singing. When I think about what I might write about what singing means to me, I realize I don't have to; Lucy Picco Simpson's "What's In A Song" says it all.

Peter Amidon, a founding member of New England Dancing Masters, is a nationally recognized leader of traditional dance for children. He is co-Music Director of the Hallowell Hospice Choir and the Guilford (VT) Community Church Choir. His choral arrangements are being sung by hundreds of choirs across the US and the UK.

words & music by Lucy Picco Simpson © 1992 Lucy Picco Simpson
 Harmonization transcribed by Peter Amidon from the performance of Mary Alice & Peter Amidon, Emily Miller and Jesse Milnes at their 2016 Brattleboro Last Night performance:
<http://amidonmusic.com/images/mp3s/WhatsInASongmp3>

What's In A Song

melody in alto – Chorus

What's in a song that helps me to heal? why can a song al -

low me to feel? Oh, I can't ex - plain the

joy or the tears, Though I've been a sing - er for years.

Verse

There are times when the folks are hav-ing a ball, and the drinks and the jokes could fill up a

hall; but give me a song, a cho - rus, or more, and that's when I'm like - ly to

soar. Oh they say that there's no-thing like hav - ing a feast to bring

folks close to - ge-ther from north, south, west, east, but give us a song when the

feas - ting is done, and that's when the ma-ny are one.

2) There's a time and a place for sorrow and woe
 When the pain and the tears are expected to flow,
 But give me a song and voices close by
 And that's when I'm likely to cry

There've been times when my heart has wanted to weep
 But the pain and the tears were buried too deep.
 Then out of the blue in a roomful of song
 The locked-inside feeling was gone.

3. There are places where pleasure is wrapped up and sold
 And you purchase a moment with silver and gold;
 But the pleasure of singing's a blessing to me
 'Cause I know it by heart and it's free

Oh, the times I remember and cherish so much
 When we reach with our voices – it's almost like touch,
 And we pull in the circle and banish our fears
 And we try to keep singing for years.

WEB EXTRAS:

PDF of the tune above; Links to recordings/YouTube videos for “What’s in a Song,” “Done Found My Lost Sheep,” “Angels Hovering Round,” “Blessed Quietness,” “Climbing High Mountains,” and “Prodigal’s Return.” cdss.org/news

Stories from the CDSS LEGACY OF JOY SOCIETY

BEVERLY FRANCIS & DAVID CHANDLER

We've been dancing for a combined total of about 88 years. We met at a weekly dance in New York City, and five years later morris and country dance were key elements in our wedding. We've gone to (at least one) CDSS week at camp every year since 1973. Clearly dancing has been a dear part of our lives for decades.

Although CDSS may not be the immediate sponsor of our local dances, it underlies our dance lives in significant ways. Camp, of course, has been a wonderful vacation that also provides a source of new dances, a chance to feel part of the larger community of dancers, and inspiration by seeing others do things very well. Under the CDSS umbrella, our local dance groups have had the vital support of tax exemption and liability insurance. The CDSS News and social media keep us abreast of what is happening across the continent. CDSS is the network that has kept us connected to dance and dancers beyond our local groups. It's the link, sometimes unseen but always there, that brings people, tradition, and creativity together. For us, these connections have given us fellowship and community and decades of fun.

Given all this, we have provided substantial contributions to CDSS over the years and both of us have served on the CDSS Board.



Naturally we want to include in our final bequests the organization that has contributed to our health and happiness all these years. We recently moved



"CDSS is... the link, sometimes unseen but always there, that brings people, tradition, and creativity together."

from New Jersey to Ohio to be close to family. Our son grew up dancing and sings songs from Pinewoods to his children. We have the happy obligation to help provide for their futures. So we'll do what we can – CDSS really is important and has a place in our hearts. We want to contribute to insuring a thriving dance and music community for future generations.

If you'd like to join the CDSS LEGACY OF JOY SOCIETY, fill out the online **Request to Join form** at cdss.org/legacy or call Robin Hayden at 413-203-5467 x107. CDSS will work with you to contribute a joyous photo, a zippy quote, and your own legacy story. Considering including CDSS in your estate plans but don't know where to begin or what your options are? Fill out the **Expression of Interest form** on the website.

Celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the CDSS Grants Program

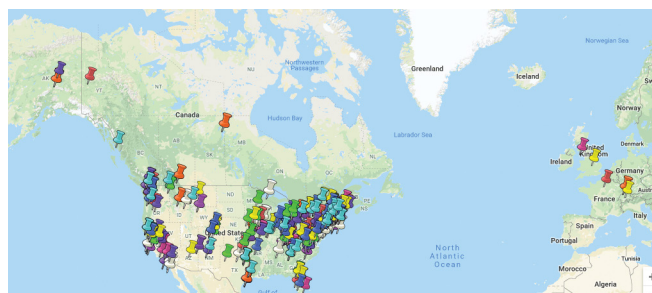
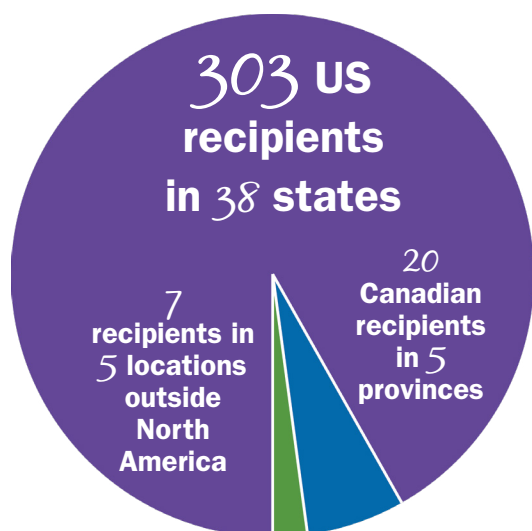
by Linda Henry, CDSS Community Resources Manager, and Executive Director Katy German

Over the past decade, CDSS has granted more than \$134,000 to 330 recipients across the continent and beyond (see map). These funds have supported a wide variety of programs and projects to foster the growth of traditional dance, music, and song including:

- workshops to train callers, musicians, song leaders, organizers, and dancers
- new dance, music, and song events (weekends, conferences, festivals, etc.)
- events that foster youth involvement
- scholarships for non-CDSS programs related to music, dance, and song
- instruction materials (print, web, audio, video)
- related endeavors that will have a lasting effect on dance, music, and song communities.

Last December we sent a survey to all previous grant recipients and learned that 72% reported long-term benefits and 24% reported short-term benefits in their communities and regions. Here are a few responses...

"I received funding for my Dancing in the Curriculum project. In December 2018 (four and a half years after the conclusion of the project), a



Push pins mark locations given grants over the past decade (Google maps)

classroom teacher is regularly using these songs, dances, and movement activities in her classroom."

~ Chrissy Fowler, Belfast, Maine

"Many people knew very little about Max Hunter and the impact his 20 years of collecting had on the survival of traditional song into the 21st Century. My CDSS-funded research is changing the conversation amidst scholars and highlighting the treasure trove of ballad material in the Hunter collection."

~ Sarah Jane Nelson, Springfield, Missouri

"In 2013 and 2017 we received grants for two workshops for callers. Each workshop resulted in 'graduating' several callers who are still calling today. Though some of them have moved from our area, they received their training at a workshop that was made possible by a CDSS grant. Thank YOU."

~ Donna Hunt, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

"Knowing CDSS can help financially has given us the courage to mount new initiatives. When the initiative has been a financial success, we have been able to return the 'seed money' grant to CDSS, 'paying it forward' to be available for others."

~ Jane Srivastava, Vancouver, British Columbia

If you have ideas about an event or project to enliven your music, dance, or song community, a CDSS grant is waiting for **YOU!** Visit **cdss.org/outreach** and apply by the quarterly deadlines: **Feb 1, June 1, and Oct 1**. Priority is given to CDSS Affiliates and members.

Larks and Ravens: A Report from the Field

by Dela and Dugan Murphy

NOTE from Executive Director Katy German: *One of the most common requests I received last year is for CDSS to make a determination about which role terms will be used on the dance floor — ladies and gents, jets and rubies, men and women, lead and follow, larks and ravens, etc. However, I don't think it's CDSS's job to dictate what language is used in local communities. These are living, breathing traditions, and regional differences have always been present in our fold. I believe CDSS's role is to keep track of what is going on in the broader country dance scene on this continent, and to help people stay informed and connected. The article that follows was submitted by two organizers from a CDSS affiliate group in Portland, ME. I hope that you find this glimpse into their work interesting and thought-provoking.*

As the contra dance tradition continues to evolve, many communities and organizers in North America who hadn't considered offering gender-free role terms in the past are now trying them on or choosing them as the norm. Conversation about ideal role term language isn't new, but typically mainstream, predominantly straight dance communities have defaulted to gendered language, which in the recent past have been either "ladies" and "gents" or "men" and "women." Now, a growing trend indicates more interest in gender-free dancing, and the terms "larks" and "ravens" have become popular among these organizers. "Larks" end swings on the left, "ravens" on the right.

Why organizers choose gender-free terms

Noting that this conversation is much more complex, nuanced, and community-specific than is allowable in a short article, some of the primary reasons some organizers prefer gender-free language include:

- Feedback from dancers at gendered dances indicates a pattern of gender-norming pressure (or "gender-policing") the organizers are hoping to alleviate. This pressure occurs across the sexual-preference and gender-identity spectrums. Examples from dancers include, but are not limited to:
 - dance role choice shaming when gender-presentation doesn't "match" the role term chosen
 - neighbors attempting to 'fix' same gender-presentation dancers when they choose to dance together by attempting to match the partners with differently gendered people
 - gender power dynamics that affect who can safely ask or say no to dances.
- Organizers have noticed that that uncoupling

gender from the dance roles can allow more freedom for everyone to dance with whomever they wish in any role. Feedback indicates that freedom of role choice positively impacts many groups, including, but not limited to:

- people who wish to dance with a person of the same gender-identity
- people who need to dance a certain role due to a physical requirement (injury, disability, strength, etc.)
- families who wish to dance with one another, and most specifically children
- people whose gender identity does not fit the gender-binary
- people who dance in communities with more people in attendance of one gender or another, and thus are not "gender-balanced."
- Younger dancers are more frequently requesting gender-free language from dance series and special events.
- Many proponents state that in order for contra dance to continue being a thriving traditional art form, we must become more inclusive by identifying and deconstructing barriers that people of differing identities experience when they attend. Many of these barriers are invisible to mainstream white straight people, making them hard for those typically in the majority to identify. One identified barrier is gendered language.

As more communities advocate switching roles to "larks" and "ravens," it's important to note that gender-free organizers are not saying that every community should switch role terms, nor are they demonizing people who prefer gendered role terms. Rather, they suggest there is room for gender-free dances and gendered dances in the same ecosystem.

What transitioning to gender-free terms looks like

As callers, we have been asked to introduce the gender-free role terms "larks" and "ravens" in a number of communities in which gendered terms have long been the norm. In most cases, these introductions occurred without prior announcement or marketing. Communities included Burlington, VT; Rochester, NY; Lewiston and

Bangor, ME; and Amherst and Greenfield, MA. Each dance community's demographics were slightly different. In Rochester and Greenfield, for instance, the overall level of experience was high. In Burlington, Lewiston, and Bangor, the majority of participants were less experienced. Amherst, Greenfield, and Lewiston had more people who had danced to "larks" and "ravens" in the past while Rochester and Burlington had fewer.

We made no extraordinary effort to clarify role expectations. With a beginner's lesson and gentle reminders during teaching, every community caught on very quickly and no breakdowns occurred. The level of confusion demonstrated by new dancers was no higher than at any other dance at which we call. And, perhaps because our choreographic choices are the same at gendered and gender-free dances, experienced dancers had little-to-no trouble understanding which role term applied to them.

The roles that people chose and the partners people chose appeared not to change dramatically based on the role term change on these evenings. However, we noted that there was overall a slightly greater number of people dancing the role not typically assigned to their gender and/or choosing partners of the same gender presentation.

Feedback from dancers dancing to the terms for the first time, both new and experienced, indicated that they appreciated that the environment created more freedom for role flexibility. Feedback from dancers who were hesitant about the role term change ranged from neutral (e.g. "that was like any other dance," etc.) to positive (e.g. "I think the dance terms made it easier for that family," etc.). Effusively positive feedback typically came from younger regular dancers and LGBTQ+ dancers of all skill levels.

Most of these communities continue to explore whether transitioning to gender-free language is a good fit for them in the long term. One has already switched.

Long-term impacts for communities

Though each community's culture is different, as a case study of a dance that is not explicitly a queer contra dance and is gender-free, Portland, ME's model could be informative. Portland Intown Contra Dance was founded as a weekly gender-free contra dance in 2016 and seamlessly transitioned from the role terms "jets" and "rubies" to "larks" and "ravens" in 2018.

Having gender-free role terms and advertising as a gender-

free dance has influenced the dance audience, attracting and retaining dancers of many identities. Notably, the community is intergenerational, skewing younger, and people of many identities (straight, cisgender, queer, gay, gender nonconforming, transgender, conservative, liberal, etc.) are regulars. Like most North American contra communities, the majority of dancers identify as white. Attendance average at the time of this writing is about 92 dancers every week, a number that is steadily rising.

Feedback from dancers of varying backgrounds indicates that the gender-free environment in Portland, along with continual work to cultivate a culture of consent, bodily autonomy, integrity of communication, and safety, have resulted in outcomes that include, but are not limited to:

- A higher level of safety felt by all, but especially female-identifying, younger, non-straight, gender non-conforming, and transgender peoples
- Popularity amongst single dancers who feel more freedom to attend without bringing friends;
- Dancers bringing not just their romantic partner, but larger groups of friends because "anyone can dance with anyone"
- No gender-policing among regular dancers and a significantly lower level of gender-policing by new dancers
- A higher level of safety for individuals with injuries or disabled people, as they can freely choose the role that will ensure the most comfort.

Respectful and thoughtful inclusivity is viewed as Portland's biggest asset as a dance series, and foundational to practicing that value is inclusive dance-role term choices.

If you are interested in exploring gender-free dance role term usage in your community, we're happy to share more about our experience. You can reach us at delamurphy@portlandintowncontradance.com and duganmurphy@portlandintowncontradance.com.

Dela and Dugan Murphy are callers, dancers, and co-founders/organizers of Portland Intown Contra Dance in Portland, Maine. Dela is also a co-founder/organizer of Form the Ocean, a North American dance weekend for women started in 2018.

**What terms are YOUR community using?
Email us at news@cdss.org and let us know.**

Celebrating the Life of Tom Siess

by Anne Siess and Brad Foster



Tom in his morris kit (photo by Anne Siess)

With a heavy heart, we report that Tom Siess, former CDSS Board member and Board President, lost his four year battle with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis on September 4, 2018, at the age of 83. We share two remembrances about the life of this remarkable man.

From Tom's wife Anne Siess:

Tom died at home, as was hoped for, with me at his side and our family nearby.

A local friend said at his October Celebration of Life, "Tom was a Renaissance man whether exploring interests in academia, politics, music, theatre, woodworking, community building, volunteering and/or just living life fully. May we all learn from Tom to laugh and love and sing and dance with wild abandon for as long as we possibly can." AMEN!

Tom began Morris dancing in the late 1970's, eventually becoming the musician for Forest City Morris, writing tunes and dances, many based on the tradition of Kirtlington, UK. His first Pinewoods experience was in 1981; I joined him in '82, and our three kids joined us in '83. It was quite a year. In 1984, we hosted the first all camp Canada Party; the dances, contests, games, food, drink continued until 2009. Some of our greatest joys came from our Pinewoods days: the friends, the talent, the dancing, singing, the pure joy of community. We cherished being invited to lead the singing both at Pinewoods and at Mendocino Camps, making our CA journeys exciting new experiences, and broadening our awareness of the valuable CDSS! Whether sitting on the Hunsden House porch (later the Pinecones porch), greeting friends, or listening to music, hosting late night parties warmed our hearts.

Tom had many talents; he organized dance and folk song events. He played piano for country dancing, wrote tunes ("Randolph Farewell" after Genny Shimer's death), and wrote Christmas Wassail productions produced in London for over 30 years.

Many of these strengths are the result of his (our) involvement with the amazing folks at CDSS and Pinewoods. During his Board tenure, Tom is credited with the first (and later second) necessary, valuable and productive long range planning sessions for CDSS. The support and encouragement from CDSS for all of these activities was impressive.

In his memoirs, I found a statement: "Even though there have been changes of friends, location, interests and career plans, the real constants in my life have been music and its inseparable partner, dance, along with their second cousin performance. Whatever changes I have made in my plans and circumstances over 70 plus years, music has always been there. Dance came later, but also had early roots. And performing both of them has been a constant driving force and desire. While my family has been my clearest joy and pride, music and dance place a close second in bringing joy and meaning to my life." ~AS

From Brad Foster, CDSS Emeritus Executive & Artistic Director, and a personal friend:

I first met Tom in 1981 at one of the CDSS programs at Pinewoods Camp. I would have been a lanky, long haired dancer from California back when we first met.

Tom had many talents, but he was also self-effacing, for the most part. I didn't learn of his talents until I eventually saw them in action. The first talent I saw was in the joy of country and morris dancing; indeed, that was what brought us both to Pinewoods. The next was community building. Tom and Anne, and friends, some from Canada and some just honorary Canadians, put together the first of the annual Canada parties in 1984. It was a combination of music, singing, wacky contests, food, drink, and good company. In an era of many private little parties at camp, the Canada party was the first All Camp Party, an event that helped remake camp as a more inclusive place. Tom and Anne saw a need, and they quietly filled that need.

The third talent was singing. At some point in each week they were in attendance, Tom and Anne would stand up and sing a song, a duet in beautiful harmony, a traditional folk song, or a modern song in that style. I remember thinking, when I first heard them sing, that there was obviously more to these two than I then knew. That sense, of learning of more and more talents, kept striking me for one reason or another over the rest of Tom's life.

In 1983, before that first Canada Party, I took over the helm of CDSS and moved to New England. At that time we had huge waiting lists for our camp weeks, and it was hard to get in. We had a strict lottery process for most registrant slots, plus a very small number of 'Director's Choice' slots under my control. In 1984 Tom and Anne applied not as a couple but instead as a family of five with their three adult children, Mim, Paul, and Debbie, and somehow they beat the long odds and all got in! I confess now, even though I liked them a lot, it wasn't due to Tom and Anne alone that they got Director's Choice. It was really for the novelty — in those days, almost no-one came with their adult children, and I couldn't pass up this rare opportunity.

Almost ten years later, Tom joined the CDSS Board. He served for six years as a member at large and then continued for six more as President, traveling at least twice a year to some new location in the U.S. or Canada for our Exec meetings, and coming down to Northampton, Mass., for our annual Board meeting. Tom was a wonderful Board member and president, and he brought more previously unknown talents to these roles.

Tom spearheaded the first (and later the second) long-range plans for CDSS in modern times. He began the first of regular annual reviews of me, the chief executive. He had a talent for listening to people and hearing what they meant, something sometimes well hidden behind what



A scrapbook and samples of Tom's woodworking prowess on display at Tom's Celebration of Life (photo by Nikki Herbst)

they said. And he brought us new governance models, bringing the ideas of John Carver's system of Policy Governance, translating what was a governance system designed for enterprises down in size to fit our small but international nonprofit. He talked of decision making as being like a series of nesting bowls of policies and said the Board should start with the biggest, broadest policy first, just like the outer bowl in a nest, and reach inside to take control only as far as necessary, never skipping a bowl, and leaving the rest for the chief executive's own decisions. He said the Board should state what it did not want, and leave the chief executive to decide among the possibilities of what could be done. He clarified Board - Chief Executive and staff roles, and said if a Board member was hired or volunteered for a job or task that they took on a new hat, separate from their Board hat, and came under my or my staff's direct supervision. And, my favorite, he quoted Carver and said the board speaks with one voice or not at all. The board speaks through its deliberative decision-making process, through the passing of motions, not as individuals each independently acting like they were the boss of the chief exec. This was a new concept at CDSS!

Tom's twelve years on our board were some of my favorite times of my 28-year tenure at CDSS. After his last term ended, we tried hard to make further steps into Carver's model

and to complete another long-range plan, making several attempts on each that went nowhere. Full-bore Carver was too complex and structured for our still somewhat grassroots sized organization; I missed Tom's skill in translating and modifying the concepts to fit us better.

In particular for Tom's 12 years on our board, I love that man. But that isn't all he was or what he meant to me. Here are some more of his hidden talents, things that only became clear when I ran into them. He organized local dance and folk song events. He played piano for country dancing, and wrote tunes, including "Randolph Farewell," written for Genny Shimer and later used by Fried Herman for her dance composition of the same name. He was a cabinetmaker and woodworker — I proudly have one of his beautiful cheese boards at home, a fundraising auction item for CDSS at camp, and I love seeing all the cabinetry and trim work he built for their home. He served other organizations, including that of the Aeolian Hall where the celebration of his life was held. He danced and played for Morris, drank beer and whiskey, and told and perpetuated many jokes. He was a family man, husband, father, uncle, brother. He made many friends, and touched many people.

Tom was a marvelous and multi-talented man. I'm so glad to have known him. ~BF



Tom's Celebration of Life (photo by Nikki Herbst)

English Country Dance — Ties of Love

by Jenny Beer

Longways duple minor

- A1** 1st corners turn by the R for 2 bars, to form a diagonal wavy line of 4 (giving L hand to neighbor). Balance forward and back, turn L hand about three quarters, letting go in time for 1st corners to pass around each other L shoulders as they dance back to original places and stay facing CCW. The other dancers can continue the path of the turn for 2 bars. All end in original place.
- A2** 2nd corners turn by the R for 2 bars, to a diagonal line (L hand to partner). Finish as in A1, all in original place.
- B1** Circle R once round.
1s cast into the center of a line of 4 facing up, while 2s lead up and cast to the ends of the line.
- B2** Line of 4 dance up for two full waltz steps, back for two waltz steps.
All set in line. 2s gate the 1s to new place.

Germantown Country Dancers (Philadelphia, PA) loved dancing with Carolyn and David Tilove. This dance was written as a fond farewell when they moved to Pittsburgh.

Teaching notes: The As are in 2 bar bits. The balance-in-line should be a slight forward and back, not shoulder wrenching. A2: 2nd corners have a change of direction between A1 and A2 as in *Quite Carried Away* – this is on purpose and feels good when you do it deliberately. B2: 2nd woman has to release from the gate in time to face new corner.

The Rose By The Door

for the dance *Ties of Love* by Jenny Beer

Play about 117 bpm

© 1985 Andrea Hoag

D A Bm G D(F#m) F#m(Bm) G(A) A

9 D A Bm(D) G D A 1. D 2. D

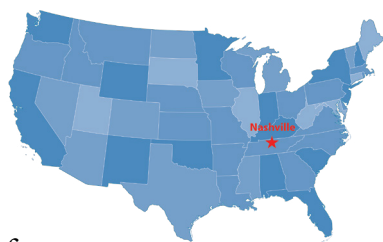
19 G D(F#m) A D Em F#m G A

27 D A G(Bm) F#m G A 1. D 2. D

CDSS Executive Committee Kicks Off New Strategic Direction in Nashville, Tennessee

by Pam Paulson, CDSS Board Member

In January the CDSS Executive Committee gathered in Nashville, TN, to kick off our first year of the CDSS Strategic Direction (our five-year strategic plan). Nashville is a busy, growing city with a vibrant music scene and thriving dance communities! Hosted by the Nashville Country Dancers (NCD), we can assure you that Southern hospitality is alive and well in this community; both in their homes and on the dance floor!



Getting Down to Business

The members of the committee and two guest Board members arrived on Thursday and were warmly welcomed in our local hosts' homes. On Friday and Saturday, we met to conduct business at the café in the 2nd Presbyterian Church, the location of the weekly contra dance. Executive Director Katy German and Treasurer Joel Bluestein presented a review of 2018, looking at both the financial state of the organization and an overview of the last year's new initiatives to increase support for organizers and group Affiliates. The CDSS budget for 2019 was discussed and approved. Katy also presented for discussion the staff work plan developed from the new Strategic Direction. The annual work plan is a framework that allows the staff and the board to stay in sync and share responsibility for keeping the mission, vision, values, and priority focus areas central to our work.

Exec Meetings are also a time to hear what our task groups are doing. The Archives Task Group has been very active as we move forward with our relationship with UNH, University of New Hampshire, and collaborate with them to help digitize UNH's Library of Traditional Music & Dance. The CDSS archives are a part of this collection, and this work relates to documenting and stewarding our living traditions. A new Marketing Advisory Group has been created to assist the CDSS Staff in revitalizing their marketing efforts, which is directly related to the Expand Our Impact focus area. Robust Camp Programs is

another focus area. Lively discussion was held on how to best tap into the Camp Advisory Committee, so that we can continue to have quality camp programs and utilize them to carry out our mission and vision. Katy also talked about ways that the staff is working on providing value and service to our members and Affiliates. The Board was also updated on the training that is being provided to the new Board members who will be starting their service in April. Both days we were well fed, with a delicious and healthy lunch being provided by local group Affiliate, the Nashville Country Dancers. A big thank you to Melissa Wilkinson, Joyce Eyler and Juliette Webb for preparing meals, rounding up snacks, having coffee, tea and water readily available and cleaning up afterwards. We felt well cared for!

Dancing in Nashville

The Nashville Country Dancers have one board for both the English and contra dances; this allows for easy cooperation between the two dance traditions. NCD took the visit by the Traveling Exec as a chance to promote the weekend as a special event, with activities to welcome regular dancers, dancers that had been inactive for a while, as well as new dancers. On Friday evening, there was a "homecoming" dance. This included a potluck supper and contra dance, with calling by CDSS Board members Dorcas Hand, Gaye Fifer, and Frannie Marr and music by Brian Christianson and Friends. The Friends include an ever changing slate of professional musicians who record, tour, and play at venues around Nashville. This time the Friends were Alan O'Bryant, Mike Compton, David Grier, and Dennis Crouch. There were three enthusiastic lines in the hall with lots of smiles. A backdrop for photos was set up, complete with props! Several people took advantage of the opportunity to have fun and snap a Polaroid!

After the regular dance, there was a unique offering: a DJ contra complete with lights, calling and music by Rachel Bergin. NCD regularly holds DJ contras in connection with special dance events, such as their Playford Ball weekend and their contra weekend, Music City Masquerade. On Saturday, NCD held their annual

Midwinter Day of English Dance, with an afternoon dance with CDSS Board member Beverly Francis calling and music by the Volponies (Anne Hoos, Susan Kevra, Jeff Rohrbough, and Bill Verdier). This was followed by a potluck supper and an evening dance, with calling by CDSS Board member Brooke Friendly and music again by the Volponies.

Hearing from the Community

At each travelling Exec Meeting, we make it a point to have a community meeting. These meetings give the CDSS Board members a chance to understand what is happening in the local dance and song community. In Nashville this happened on Sunday, and was preceded by an impressive potluck brunch organized and hosted by Juliette and John Webb. After brunch we had a lovely singing session led by Cathy Hollister, who provided printed lyrics and accompanied the singing on her small harp. Twenty one members of the local community were in attendance, representing contra and English dancers, singers, and musicians. There were long time dancers, newer dancers, and many in between.



Community meeting during the Exec (photo by Avia Moore)

There are typically three questions asked of the participants to help initiate conversation and discussion: what are you proud of, what are the challenges, and how CDSS can help. Things NCD is proud of include how the group is engaging with younger dancers, encouraging them to attend and mentoring them into leadership roles. Several people mentioned the supportive nature of the NCD Board: they say YES to new ideas and then ask how can they be of help. Positive and appropriate interactions with new dancers are modeled, and the culture of the community is positive and welcoming. The attendees valued the culture that exists, wanting it to grow and continue. Challenges brought forward included covering costs of the hall, caller, and bands. There are many

talented and willing professional musicians in Nashville, and this is definitely positive for the community. The challenge of paying the caller and the musicians appropriately, along with how to charge the dancers brought out many ideas including discussion related to sliding fees and season passes. There was also a lively discussion around barriers to access for underrepresented populations. This is one of the wonderful things that happens at the community meetings — topics come up, there is discussion, and notes are taken. It gets people thinking about and discussing things that sometimes aren't typically accessible. Notes taken at the meeting will be transcribed and sent to the NCD Board for future reference and use so that the conversations can continue.

Our time in Nashville was short and we packed a lot into it. Our hosts were warm and welcoming; the community was open and inviting. We were certainly well cared for while we were in town. The discussions and interactions with the community are exactly why we do the Traveling Exec meetings, and in many ways it's one of the best parts of being on the Executive Committee. Find out more about the Nashville Country Dancers and their upcoming events by going to nashvillecountrydancers.org.

Fall 2019 Travelling Exec Meeting: Lake Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

Our next stop will be in a bit different for us; we'll be going to Lady of the Lake Fall Dance and Music Weekend, October 4th-6th, on the shores of Coeur d'Alene Lake in Idaho. This is a weekend opportunity that will include representatives from communities across the region. CDSS is working with Lady of the Lake organizers to provide scholarships to regional organizers and affiliate leaders who would like to join the event and be a part of the regional community meeting. For details on the event, go to: ladyofthelake.org/fallwend.

The full Board gathers in person each April in Massachusetts. The Executive Committee meets in person twice throughout the year in different communities across the continent. All other meetings during the year are held via teleconference. The Executive Committee is charged with conducting the business of CDSS between Annual Meetings. For more information about your CDSS Board, go to cdss.org/about-us/governing-board.

Web Extra: Downloadable PDF of the CDSS Strategic Direction

Tips on Becoming a Better Intermediate-Level Dancer

by Laura Brodian Freas Beraha

English country dance and the modern interpretation of English Regency dance are stylistically different. English Regency is not folk dance, but rather is interpreted as a form of early 19th-century aristocratic ballroom dance. Even so, some constants apply to both styles.

I offer you my perspective as a teacher of country dance as it would have been practiced in the ballrooms of the great houses and assembly rooms in the time of Jane Austen. When I teach at my English Regency ‘drums’ (‘drum’ is the Regency word for ‘party’, as in some event that one “drummed” up) I must necessarily address the needs of everyone present. There are, all in the same room and all at the same time, all levels of experience from absolute beginners to long-time seasoned dancers.

Admittedly, I have a patient penchant for beginners. I strive to give newcomers a sense of comfort and ease, and to impart to them the rudiments and period style of the dances so that they can be confident of, participate in, and enjoy the dance.

That said, at the same time I must not ignore the needs of the more experienced dancers. I observe that seasoned (i.e., advanced) dancers, for the most part, are already familiar with style points; they effortlessly and gracefully move in synchronization with the phrasing of the music. They also are efficient helpers to the lesser experienced dancers. Their “feet on the floor” makes the teaching go all the more smoothly.

We now come to those who have stagnated somewhere between beginner and advanced. There are, indeed, some people who suffer from a syndrome I like to call “*Intermediate-itis*”. This condition manifests itself when dancers, having mastered the figures of a dance, believe they are done with learning and growing. They are impatient to just get on with the dance, and do not realize that their job is just beginning. They do, in point of fact, have a lot to learn if they want to experience the flavor of Regency dancing and become truly good dancers.

1. Posture: Early 19th-century ballroom dancers probably did not slouch, stoop, or make unnecessarily florid gestures. Relaxed, erect postures with hands at sides was the call of the day.

2. Marrying the dance to the music: Dance figures have starting and ending points and are tied to musical phrases. Experienced dancers do not start figures early, nor do they rush through them.
3. Figures have places: “Go to some specific place — not just anywhere.” When you exchange places with a partner or with a diagonal, go to the exact place from whence that person came.
4. Starting and ending a figure: Engage in start and stop figure points rather than morphing from one figure to another.
5. If an instruction is unclear, ask for a clarification.
6. Remember that Regency dances were social mixers: Be aware of your surroundings.
 - a. If the longways set develops a large gap, move to close that gap.
 - b. If there’s a circle of couples be aware of uneven spacing between couples and pace yourselves to even it out. Angle in to shorten a space.
 - c. In a longways set if you’re an inactive couple (aka a “second couple”, or “B” couple] you should always be doing something, such as looking down the set to prevent “set creep.”
7. Lead with your eyes: Guide inexperienced dancers by tethering their attention with your smile and gaze.
8. Gentlemen: When the ladies exchange places by the right hand (aka “Ladies Chain” in other dance forms) they are moving on a diagonal; do not make them late by forcing the oncoming ladies to take extra counts by going over to you with their left hand extended. Move to the right into the vacated lady’s position to take the oncoming lady’s left hand as you put your right hand at the back of her waist to escort her around to face the other couple.
9. “Sloppy” Circling: Get out of the habit of circling in an unnecessarily laborious fashion. Circling does not mean “stand still, reach out, take hands, hands pointing down, and then start walking”. Doing so only makes dancers so late that they have to rush (not very elegant) to get all the way around by the end of the phrase. On the very first beat of the phrase start walking, angling in to keep the circle small, taking hands as you go, with hands up and elbows down, and giving weight.
10. Get off the bench and onto the dance floor: The teacher cannot be everywhere at once

and truly appreciates experienced “angels” dancing with newcomers. Just because you’ve already learned the figures, kindly do not sit out during the walk-throughs. Beginners benefit greatly from your movements and eye contact as supplementary prompts. The Regency period had a grace and an elegance that has never been surpassed. Aristocrats of the time believed in “nobless oblige”: the inferred responsibility of the privileged (in our case, more experienced) to act with generosity and nobility toward those less privileged (less experienced newcomer).

If you recognize yourself as a sufferer of Intermediate-itis ask yourself this: Why be a mediocre dancer when you could become a superlative one? All it takes is a willingness to improve, to grow, and to apply oneself. If you challenge yourself, not only will you become a better dancer, you shall certainly savor the flavor of English Regency dancing.

Laura Brodian Freas Beraha has been teaching English Regency Dancing since 1984, and is the founder of the Bay Area and Valley Area English Regency Societies. She hosts a mostly monthly Regency dance party and social tea on third Sunday afternoons in Pasadena, California.



Taking Someone Aside

by Jeff Kaufman

Many dance organizations act as if they have two options in the face of bad behavior: “do nothing” and “full ban.” With a choice between ignoring it and overreacting, it’s not surprising that we often end up implicitly allowing behavior we shouldn’t let continue. If you can become comfortable taking someone aside to talk you can handle small problems before they become large ones.

When I go into one of these conversations, at a surface level my goal is for them to stop doing the thing. The deeper goal, though, is that we can end the conversation with them understanding and accepting the reasoning behind why they need to not do it, as opposed to just feeling capriciously limited. Not only is that more likely to stick, they’re also more likely to stop doing other more subtle things we didn’t directly discuss.

Now, there are cases where I really think a good outcome is unlikely. Maybe they’ve been doing this thing for a long time and seem very set in their ways. Maybe they’re really solidly convinced this is an ok thing to be doing. Still, a general principle of giving people a chance to improve has a lot going for it. One aspect is that you may not have as good a read on them as you think you do, and perhaps they’ll change. Another is that it’s really important to have a fair process you consistently follow: banning someone without warning isn’t going to feel fair to the banned person or your other dancers, however sure you are that a warning won’t change anything. So I find it useful to approach all of these conversations as if the person is going to understand and stop. That way I’m leaving things open, with the opportunity to be pleasantly surprised.

The first consideration in talking to them is deciding who should be the one to do it. Ideally you have someone who can be calm, patient, and firm. It helps if they’re demographically similar (men talking to men, older people talking to older people). I also think one on one conversations tend to work better, because the person feels less set upon, but if none of the organizers are up for that then talking to them as a pair is still worth doing. Another consideration is picking a good place to talk. Ideally there’s somewhere out of the way a bit, where you won’t be overheard and where it won’t be embarrassing to the person to be seen getting a talking to. You don’t want them to be feeling defensive or humiliated. On the other hand, especially if you’re worried about physical violence, you don’t want to be fully secluded. A good place can be somewhere where if you raised your voice you would immediately be heard, and where the other person won’t be between you and an exit.

Then you want to think about a good time to talk. At dances the break is generally good, though if it’s more urgent you can come up to someone immediately as a dance is ending. I’ll tell them I need to speak with them, motioning in the direction I’d like to move. If they don’t want to, I’ll tell them I need to talk to them before they can do any more dancing. I don’t try to get into things while walking over to where I wanted to talk, though I’ll do some small talk if that feels like it will work.

Jeff Kaufman is a Boston-area contra dance organizer and musician. He helps organize the BIDA dance and co-founded its safety committee. He also plays with Kingfisher and the Free Raisins.

they feel like they've been wronged, maybe they think it's unfair that you're talking to them about this, maybe they're confused why things keep going poorly. I let them talk, trying to understand their perspective as well as I can. People like to be listened to and get their side out, and they're going to be most receptive to guidance on improving if they feel like they've been heard out.

Listening is also useful for figuring out what you can say that is most likely to get them to stop doing the thing you need them to stop. Maybe there's something they don't understand about how their actions are perceived by others. Maybe they have one set of preferences on something and don't know what it's like to have different ones. When you're lucky this gives you what you need to help them improve.

(Another reason listening can be good is that occasionally people will talk at length in a way that just makes it really clear they shouldn't be at your dance. Giving people plenty of rope can go that way.)

After they start to wind down, I'll try to give a memorable summary of what they need to not do ("When someone asks you to stop asking them, I need you to stop asking them"). As much as I can, I'll follow up by connecting this to what they've said and addressing their concerns. They often want to talk more, and I try to still give space for that, but I keep bringing us back to the change we need them to make and the reasoning behind it.

These conversations can be awkward, and aren't especially fun for anyone, but you really need to have them in your range of responses. If your only options are "do nothing" and "full ban" then you often end up implicitly allowing behavior you shouldn't let continue.

Jeff Kaufman is a Boston-area contra dance organizer and musician. He helps organize the BIDA dance and co-founded its safety committee. He also plays with Kingfisher and the Free Raisins.

All Join Hands

Dispatches from the world of community dancing

• Shindig • Sit Squares • Solstice Swing • Urban Barn Dance • Barn Dance • Ceilidh • Chicken and Egg Dance • Community Dance • Downtown Dancin' • Contra Dance • Dances for Every Body • Dancin' in the Seats • Dancing Well • Family Dance • Farmer's Frolic • Folk Dance • Friday Fling • Hip to be Square • Hoedown • Hoolyann • International • Old Time Country Dancing • Old Time

Community Dance in Utah by Laraine Miner and Marian Rose

At a time in the not-so-distant past, community dancing was a valued and integral part of community life, not a relic to be revived or promoted as it is often seen today. Before widespread urbanization and the onslaught of consumer culture, people in smaller communities around the world danced as a form of recreation, celebration and connection. The waves of immigrants who populated North America brought with them their dancing traditions which, when combined and nurtured, created distinct regional traditions as can be found in New England, Louisiana, the American Midwest, Quebec, the maritime provinces and the Canadian prairies.

One such unique and fascinating dance tradition exists in Utah, where the Mormon pioneers (largely British and Scandinavian) brought their dances with them and, through the encouragement of Brigham Young and other church leaders made community dancing a vital component of everyday life.

Laraine Miner, a long-time CDSS member and Pourparler contributor, knows this culture intimately from the inside. She grew up in the tradition and has also been a performer, dance psychotherapist and academic researcher of Mormon pioneer dances. She is an effervescent presence on the dance floor and has a depth of knowledge of the dance form that most of us can only hope to acquire.

Here is her story:

I come from a musical and dancing family and grew up in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon) at a time when dancing was a regular part of church life. My parents went to regular dances at church, and we danced a lot as teenagers – weekly dances at “Mutual,” monthly stake dances, yearly Gold and Green Balls and

dance festivals, etc. Sometimes we would get a key to the church and hold our own a private dance party.

I attended Brigham Young University where I performed and toured with the BYU International Folk Dancers a world-renowned performing group. During this time, I began to wonder why we weren't performing the

dances of my ancestors, the Mormon pioneers, since dancing was such a huge part of their lives. When I asked my grandfather about this early dance tradition, he reminisced fondly about the Varsouvienne and Waltz Quadrilles. At his suggestion, I contacted Ruth Partridge, who had played piano for those dances. As we talked, she became so excited that she jumped up, pounded out a tune on her piano, then grabbed me and whirled me around in a schottische, showing me how at one point the “whole floor would go down on one knee and up again.”

This was the beginning of my life-long passion for researching the community social dancing of my ancestors, and teaching and presenting these dances. As part of my master's research project on early Utah dances, I perused libraries and museum archives across the country and collaborated with folklorists and folk



Laraine Miner

musicians on the same path. I interviewed old-timers, musicians and callers, and, along the way, trained as a Dance/Movement therapist, which informs my day job as a social worker. In collaboration with Michael Hamblin and Utah State Folklorist Craig Miller, I collected more than 40 dances and published materials including music recordings, scores, and dance descriptions.

History of Mormon Pioneer Dances

During the pioneer era of the mid-19th century, Utah was alive with community dancing. Everyone learned to dance, every third person was a fiddler, and you could dance almost every night of the week in the Salt Lake Valley. As colonies were being settled throughout the contiguous states of Idaho, Nevada, Wyoming, Arizona and Colorado, Brigham Young always sent a fiddler along with the craftsmen and homemakers. Community dancing served to lift the settlers' spirits and bond them together in a joyful way, easing the burden of the hard work of establishing a town.

In the 1980s when we were doing our research, community dances were still going strong in small rural towns like Oak City and Koosharem. We filmed a wedding and several festivals in small, rural hold-out communities where these dances are still a living tradition. However, even then we saw dances starting to disappear into the hearts and memories of the hometown musicians we met.

The Old-Time Utah dances that we found were mostly couple dances: Pattycake Polka, Varsouvienne, Two-steps and many different Schottisches, like the Heel-toe schottische and the Seven-step. Some of the round dances, like the Baltimore and Spat Waltz, were a combination of a waltz and a walking step. We found only two longways sets – Virginia Reel and Haste to the Wedding (aka Pop Goes the Weasel) – and one square, the Oak City Quadrille. Round dances in couples seemed the most widespread, since they require only two people and don't need a caller. We found no circle dances, except for Oh Johnny Oh and a version of Paul Jones called the Circle Two-Step.

Today there is still an amazing amount of dancing in Utah, but it is mainly performance and competition-oriented. Dance is no longer participatory or accessible to the average person. Craig Miller and I have had hopes that our field research into Old Time Utah Dances would

result in a revival of these wonderful old community dances. This revival has been happening in some parts of Utah, which is very gratifying. In the past years, I have held an Old Time Utah Dance Party series in various venues (barns, an historic church, a living history museum) and I have taught the dances to children in Utah schools and to various church groups. During this process, I've been most impressed by the way in which these dances bring people together in a celebration of collective joy. My purpose has become to create community and connection with dance, music and song—something that I feel has dropped out of our mainstream culture, where we have become so solitary and isolated. Yet, I believe that deep down inside we hunger for the “tribe”—a place where we are seen, heard, touched and cared for, a place where we can feel the oneness of moving, singing and laughing together, a place where talented musicians lift us right off our feet to express our joy. I have heard musicians say that the greatest compliment you can give them is to dance to their music.

In my day-job as a psychotherapist for children and families, I have learned that 60 percent of all children are insecurely attached to their parents. For this reason, I love seeing multi-generational families dancing together—moms dancing as one unit with their toddler; dads with a baby on their shoulders; older children dancing with their parents or grandparents. What better way for families and communities to bond than to play together by moving in synchrony to good music with good friends and family, creating a joyous sense of belonging and camaraderie.

That said, there are still barriers to creating a community dance in our modern culture. Venues are expensive, musicians expect to be paid, and dancers attend the occasional event where they dress up as a cowboy, hoot, holler for an evening and then go back to real life. Also, there is the wide-spread myth that real men don't dance.



However, there are times when that magical collective effervescence of community dancing happens, and it is these peak experiences that motivate me to keep on trying. The ideal situation is when folks in a group know each other and the musicians with a resulting exchange of energy. It helps to have a venue that is conducive for dancing and a goodly sprinkling of more experienced dancers who are willing to nurture the less experienced along. With all ages present, smaller children are more likely to join in and I've often seen older children taking the lead, pulling adults out on the floor. An intermission talent show helps too, and of course an array of yummy snacks to fuel the dancers.

I continue to feel hopeful that, under the right circumstances, through the efforts of people such as those in the Pourparler group and organizations such as CDSS and the National Folk Organization, community dancing will flourish and spread, bringing back into our mainstream culture that spirit of community that was once so vital, healthy and joyful.

Laraine Miner has been nominated for the National Folk Organization Heritage Award to be presented in 2019 April Conference at Brigham Young University. Her publications Mormon Pioneer Dances is available through the CDSS online store at cdss.org/vm-store/store-home/books/mormon-pioneer-dances-book-and-dvd-detail



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Improving the ECD Open Band Experience

by Robert Reichert, Asheville, NC

Pop quiz: Why is it easier to put together a successful open band for a contra dance, than an open band for an English country dance? Because contra dances are not danced to specific tunes — unlike English country dance. In my opinion, contra dance musicians in an open band play the standard contra repertoire known to all the musicians; consequently, a contra open band has only to come together as an ensemble, without the complexity of learning new contra tunes. In an open band, familiarity with the tunes matters a lot to amateur musicians of various skills who have never played together.

I recently attended a dance camp that included an evening of English country dance for open-mic callers and an open band. That is, the callers and the band members were amateurs getting together for a single dance, and the band members had never played together. The open-mic callers chose about a dozen tunes and provided the sheet music to each unique English dance a few days before the dance. The open-mic callers understand that they are learning their craft, but they are less aware of the identical situation among the open band musicians. It is a challenge for amateur musicians to learn so many new pieces to be played at dance tempo in such a short time.

I played the violin for 10 years with Marshall Barron's English band in New Haven, so I have played a lot of English tunes, but the open mic callers chose tunes that I had never played (with two exceptions). In order to play these new tunes at dance tempo with some degree of musicality, I would need to practice solo two hours a day, plus daily ensemble practice. When? I would have to miss the dance classes that I came to the dance camp to enjoy.

A successful English open band plays common "core" tunes, so the challenge for the musicians is to play together with musicality, and does not include the challenge of learning all new tunes. We amateur musicians want to be successful, and I could tell the situation was a recipe for disappointment, so one practice session with the open band was enough for me. Later, I learned another musician left the open band for the same reasons.

That open-mic callers assume English open bands are composed of musicians who can, with very limited

practice time, play new tunes at dance tempo with unfamiliar musicians, is not limited to this recent



experience, and motivated me to write this article. I attended a dance week in Kentucky a few years ago, and the same thing happened at the English open-mic, open band. The open-mic callers were unaware of the difficulties for the musicians of both learning new tunes and playing with unfamiliar musicians. The musicians were asked to play all new tunes; very quickly, the open band dwindled from over twenty musicians to just five. After the few of us remaining musicians insisted that the open-mic dances be familiar "core" tunes, one of the dancers approached me and asked, "Why is the band so much better today?" I didn't answer her question.

Here is my suggestion to improve the English open-mic, open band experience: Ask that the open-mic callers choose all (or almost all) traditional "core" English dance standards from *The Barnes Book of English Country Dance Tunes, Volume 1* (available at cdss.org/store). While I don't think that my concern over dance/tune selection occurs with every open band among musicians who have never played together, I do think that open-mic callers should be sensitive to this concern, and select their dances with greater consideration for the musicians' available time and skill. The open mic callers will, at some point in their calling, need to learn to call the core tunes, and the open band could devote limited practice time to learning to play as an ensemble instead of learning unfamiliar tunes. Better sounding music from happy musicians for traditional English dances is a good thing. Save the hottest new tunes and dances for "real" bands that can devote practice time to your new favorites, and learn your calling skills at open-mic/open band events with traditional, "core" English dances.

Robert Reichert has been playing fiddle for contra dances and English dances for many years, and hopes to get better at both. He recently moved from Hartford, CT, to Asheville, NC.

CDSS Archives Receive New Collection, New Energy

by Susan Creighton and Katy German

The CDSS Archives is an impressive collection of dance books and recordings, photographs, organization financial records, program and camp records, and items of historical significance that were placed in our care. The physical CDSS Archives includes materials from 1915-1994 and are currently housed at the University of New Hampshire Library of Traditional Music and Dance (LTMD) in Durham, NH. The CDSS collection is one of 8 organizations that have materials in the LTMD, along with CDS Boston Centre, New England Folk Festival Association (NEFFA), Ralph Page Dance Legacy Weekend, Downeast Folk Festival Association (DEFFA), Pinewoods Camp, the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, Boston Branch, and the Square Dance Foundation of New England (SDFNE).

In 2015 CDSS's Executive Director and President at the time, Rima Dael and David Millstone, began discussing with UNH the prospect of digitizing the CDSS archives. Digitizing the archives would increase the accessibility and findability of our materials, opening them up to researchers, academics, and historians across the country. Head of the UNH Special Collections and Archives Division, Bill Ross, was already digitizing the whole LTMD. But digitization of archival materials is an expensive endeavor, involving large amounts of staff time to organize materials, scan, develop searchable "metadata" (information) for each scanned item, and create and store appropriate electronic formats for archival storage and public use. And because university archivists have many other responsibilities, digitization happens slowly unless there are dedicated funds to support these efforts. The challenge to secure the funding was daunting, but both UNH and CDSS believed in the goal. CDSS designated and successfully raised \$50,000 in funding for archive digitization in the 2015 Centennial Capital Campaign. UNH continued reaching out to the other organizations for support of the project, as well as explore additional funding sources. In 2016 and 2017, progress was hindered by leadership changes at both UNH and CDSS, and the funds raised by CDSS sat in waiting.

2018 brought a wave of new energy to the project. CDSS developed a new strategic plan, with an emphasis on stewardship, and new CDSS Executive Director Katy German met with Bill Ross to rekindle the flame



(l to r) Katy German, Graham Christian, TG member, Ben Williams, Bob Keller, Margaret Keller Dimock, Bill Ross, Head Archivist, UNH Special Collections and Archives, Susan Creighton, TG Co-Chair

for digitization work. The CDSS board formed a new Archives Task Group to support Katy's need for archiving expertise and guidance. UNH applied for federal funding, but was unfortunately not selected. Although disheartening, the application included a detailed 2-year work plan for the project — a path forward! In December of 2018, CDSS was saddened to learn of the death of noted dance historian Kate (Kitty) Van Winkle Keller. Keller, who made enormous academic contributions to dance reconstruction, over her lifetime created a collection of copied and original English country dance source materials and notations that is unparalleled on this continent. It was immaculately organized and catalogued, and she was bequeathing it to CDSS.

In January of this year, Katy was joined by task group members Susan Creighton, Graham Christian, and CDSS staff member Ben Williams on a visit to Durham, NH, to talk with Bill Ross and Archivist Emeline Dehn-Reynolds. Kate Van Winkle Keller's husband and daughter Bob Keller and Margaret K. Dimock joined the morning discussions, which focused on next steps for the donation of the Keller collection and were sprinkled with fond memories of Kitty. The rest of day's meeting focused on updating the digitization project scope of work and developing a funding plan for the LTMD digitization efforts.

In the next 6 months, UNH and CDSS will be working together to raise additional funds, which will determine the volume of materials digitized during the project period. Digitization efforts on the CDSS materials are slated to begin this fall.

CDSS is proud to lead the way in the effort to digitize the LTMD! It is our hope that the generosity, vision, and

commitment of our members will serve as an inspiration to other organizations that stand to benefit from the digitization project.

Meet the CDSS Archives Task Group

The CDSS Archives Task group currently consists of seven members from across the U.S. and Canada: Dorcas Hand (TX, co-chair), Susan Janssen Creighton (MA, co-chair), Avia Moore (Ontario), Juliette King (TN), Sharon McKinley (MD), Barbara DeFelice (VT) and Graham Christian (MA). Almost all members of the task group have library or archive training and collectively represent a variety of specialties within the library field.

The mission of the Task Group is to:

- Provide guidance to the CDSS Board and staff about how archives in general — and the archives at UNH's Library of Traditional Music and Dance in particular — work; understanding issues related to archival donations and holdings; delineating questions for the board to decide; and how to respond to community members who inquire about how to contribute materials
- Establish stronger collaboration and communication with UNH archivist, in order to participate in decisions about process and access
- Create and/or clarify a list of questions, issues, and action items in regard to accepting and managing existing materials and new donations
- Recommend collaborative endeavors with other groups who are part of the LTMD (e.g. Pinewoods, New England Folk Festival Association, etc.).

To date, the task group has been working on:

- Educating the task group members, Executive Director and Board about what an archivist does and how both traditional and digital archives work, with the goal of developing a clearer sense of the relationship with the UNH archives and a better understanding of their process
- Working with the archivists at UNH to develop plans and priorities for digitizing materials in the collection
- Developing recommendations around internal (office and Board) archiving practices and records management plans in a digital world.

Remembering Kate Van Winkle Keller

by Graham Christian

Kate Van Winkle Keller, known to many as Kitty, was best known as the co-author of *The Playford Ball* (1990), a publication that revolutionized the way modern English country dancers understood their own tradition. Yet that was only one of her achievements. Working outside the privileges and the restraints of the academy, she was as a profoundly collaborative and generous scholar, partnering with many dance leaders from the 1970s forward to make many dances from Colonial America available to modern dancers, including *A Choice Selection of American Country Dances* (1976), *Social Dances from 18th Century Virginia* (2003), and the innovative *George Washington: A Biography in Social Dance* (1998). Her solo ventures were immensely important too, including the exhaustive *Dance and Its Music in America, 1528-1789* (2007), and *If the Company Can Do It!: Technique in Eighteenth-Century American Social Dance* (1989; 2007), her personal favorite.



Kitty was a major force behind the treasured databases of Playford editions and American and English dance tunes, titles, and figures amassed under the title *Early American Secular Music and its European Resources*, now hosted by CDSS. She was the recipient of CDSS' Lifetime Achievement Award in 1993. She shared her resources, insight, and wit without hesitation with scholars and friends from every corner of the country dance community. Her death in December of 2018 was a sad loss for the country dance community; she will be sorely missed.

Kitty's collection of historical dance publications and reconstructions is an incredible gift to CDSS and to the dance community as a whole. Later this spring, UNH will organize transfer of the collection to the archive facility, at which time the contents of the collection will be listed on the New Hampshire Library of Traditional Music and Dance. Scholars, researchers, and visitors are welcome to visit the CDSS archives at UNH at any time, preferably by appointment. For more information, visit library.unh.edu/find/special/subject/new-hampshire-library-of-traditional-music-%26-dance.

News from Canada — Remembering Cameron Stewart, Patriarch of Country Dance in Vancouver, BC

June 30, 1946 – April 21, 2018

by Jane Srivastava

Cameron Stewart and his wife Susan came to love old time musical traditions while living in Cape Breton in their hippy traveling years. They loved the playing, and they loved the dancing. When they came out west, Cameron attended the Festival of American Fiddle Tunes in Port Townsend, WA where he learned to call dances. Cameron's calling, playing, stage presence, and dance organization was inspired and mentored in those early years by Sandy Bradley and Greg and Jere Canote, (The Small Wonder String Band), Penn Fix, Frederick Park, and Sherry Nevins. Susan remembers: "The Pacific Bluegrass and Heritage Society put on contra dances in Vancouver from time to time; 1982 was the beginning of our own contra/square dances which we called Old Time Country Dances — they soon became a monthly event."

The dance always started with Penn Fix's circle mixer; children joined in for the first two dances. The sociability, the music, the sheer fun appealed to Vancouverites, a good thing as neither Cameron nor Susan was employed at the time, and music and dance provided a large part of their income.

By 1991 Marian Rose had started a second monthly Vancouver dance series at the Wise Hall, and Cameron and Susan stepped back from their organizing role to focus on their young family. Vancouver dancers continued the Stewart's dance series, and by 1995 up to 200 people attended bimonthly dances at the Capri Hall, which had a balcony where children played while parents took turns supervising. The *Vancouver Echo* quoted Cameron "It's amazing to see someone come and say 'I can't do it.' And then just try to hold them back at 11 o'clock." Cameron and Susan continued to call and play, accompanied to dances by their sons Duncan and Rory, who sold juice, Susan's butter tarts, and oatmeal cookies at each dance.

Always inclusive and encouraging, Cameron arranged 5-10-minute performances or demonstrations at the break to recognize local talent and provide a forum for other dance styles. In a bid to encourage new callers, Cameron wrote a series of essays, *Caller's Guide*, for "fledgling callers and interested others" in *Contra Comments*, the

Vancouver dance newsletter edited by June Harman. In one of these essays he shared the philosophy he clearly embodied: "Let's face it, everything we have learned we have learned from someone else. So, let's pass it on." Then Cameron expanded his community even further, calling a dance on national radio (CBC)

when, during an interview on Peter Gzwoski's morning show, Peter arranged for a dance tune to be played and said "OK, Cameron, call us a dance." – and he did.



Photo of Camerson Stewart
by Susan Stewart

In 1988 Cameron and Susan, with the help of dedicated members of the growing dance community, organized Country Dance Camp, which morphed into Chehalis Contra Dance Camp, named for its location on the territory of the aboriginal Chehalis band. This too they passed on to others once it was established, though Susan stayed involved, memorably giving recipes to cook staff to provide good, strength-sustaining food to fuel dancers.

Over time, other dance events and series were established in Vancouver: the Sybaritic String Band monthly dance, and an English country dance 2-3 times a month. Summer dances at Robson Square in downtown Vancouver (organized by Nigel Peck) and Raincoast Ruckus (a February dance weekend first envisioned by Leona Axbey and initially supported by a CDSS grant) were popular in the 90's and 00's but no longer occur.

Now, 37 years after Cameron and Susan began organizing dances in Vancouver, attendance has dropped by half, but the joy factor is still high. The welcoming community Cameron established early on continues: experienced dancers dance with newcomers, all ages are welcome, there's no gender bias, and, as one young single mother recently commented "It's a safe place where I can bring my son and we can both have fun."

In addition to organizing dances, playing, and calling, Cameron had great talents as a singer /songwriter and a storyteller, performing at local storytelling events, and the Jericho Folk Club and Tipper series, often with his band Erratica. Erratica's album *We Sail on a Notion* includes Cameron singing his song "Regular Gas," which ends with the line "... I'm an average guy as you can see, there ain't much difference between you and me, we're just plain folk." Would that we could all be as "plain" as Cameron!

Cameron worked for 17 years designing signs for North and West Vancouver Municipalities and his wit garnered national attention. My favorite of his signs: "In a world where everyone is looking out for number one, who's taking care of number two? Pick up after your dogs. Thank You." He also designed a perpetual calendar, each page featuring a dance-themed woodcut.

In the past few years Cameron had successfully dealt with several health issues and a disastrous fall off his roof, applying the same dedication and hard work to returning to good health as he had to his dance, day, and side jobs. Therefore, it was a surprise to all that on April 21, 2018, after a short illness, and surrounded by friends and family, Cameron left us. At his memorial service on May 4, 2018, Cameron continued to build community: a standing-room-only crowd squeezed into a large church to say goodbye, Cameron's many instruments mute on the stage, family and friends speaking, singing, and playing tribute. Afterwards an impromptu jam began under a tree in the warm sunshine, and dancers absent from the dance halls for years reconnected with old friends and vowed to come dancing again, soon and often.

At the annual June dance/potluck, held in White Rock, BC, close to the US border to include dancers from Bellingham, WA (Vancouver's cross-border extended dance community), the band is always No Mean Feet (Bob McNevin, Michael Gix, Susan on keyboard, and Cameron on fiddle, banjo, or stand up bass). In June 2018 one chair was empty — but Cameron was in our hearts, and his memory continued to move our feet with the joy of dance.

Many thanks to June Harman and Michael Dyck who produced 13 issues of "Contra Comment," which provided much of the content of this article, to Dave Marshall and to Susan Stewart.

Jane Srivastava is a former CDSS Board member and worldwide dance gypsy who helps to organize dances in her home community of Vancouver, BC, Canada.

Contra Dance: Rainbows Over Ogontz

by Don Veino

This composition was inspired by an experience at CDSS Family Week at Ogontz. One day we had a quick passing storm come through the area which ended with a multi-rainbow arc crowning Ogontz Hall and the lake.

Formation: Becket, clockwise progression

A1 Left hand star once around, end facing neighbor across (8)

Join both hands with neighbor and half-pousette counter clockwise (ladies pushing to start), changing places with the other couple and going a little bit more, to face promenade direction (counter clockwise) in an oval around the whole set (8).

A2 Promenade with neighbor around the set (6). Ladies turn back over right shoulder WHILE gents continue forward (2) to swing next neighbor (8)

B1 Promenade back (clockwise) until all are opposite partner (8).

In long lines go forward and back. (8)

B2 Gents cross the set passing left shoulders, partner swing (16).

Alternative B parts for smoother flow and a longer partner swing:

B1 Promenade back (clockwise) until opposite partner (8),

Circle left once around (8)

B2 ... and a quarter more, partner swing

At the ends:

Wait out crossed over, and join the promenade in A2.

Style suggestion:

Depending on their preferred promenade hold, dancers could choose to facilitate the transition from the pousette in A1 to the promenade in A2 by taking crossed hands (right over left) in the pousette.

The Experience of a Lifetime: Contra Dance at Burning Man

by Mark Mathis

Burning Man has the reputation for being a crazy week-long rave in the Nevada desert. It's not that, it is so much more. It is a radical lifestyle-as-art experimental community governed by 10 principles. Key among them are radical self expression and radical inclusion, which means that not only are you allowed to live your fancies but others celebrate and thank you for doing so, for bringing your personal art, your fantasy, to the Playa. Imagine a world where you can be who you want to be (as long as it isn't hurting others); where you don't have to dress or do things in certain ways, because those rules simply don't exist. That is Burning Man.

Burning Man is a world where nobody tries to be normal, because nobody is even pretending that there might be such thing as normal.

Everybody who comes to Burning Man is changed by the experience. Nearly everybody discovers new things about themselves: superpowers they didn't know they had, new interests and new perspectives that change their point of view forever.

Most contra dancers are aware of the "endorphin buzz" often experienced at the end of a particularly intense dance evening. The Playa (aka beach or desert) has a buzz all of its own. Brain researchers tell us that on the Playa nearly everybody's brain activity resembles being on Prozac. Everybody is seriously high on life, no artificial help required.

Another Burning Man principle is "Leave no trace." People start building Black Rock City (another name for the Playa) in the middle of an empty desert sometime mid summer. The main event opens Sunday August 25th, but



A dance at the 2018 contra dance camp (photo by Dave Pokorney)

by Tuesday after Labor Day (Sept 3rd) it will be nearly completely erased.

Mark Stowe and I run a contra dance camp at Burning Man. We have an experienced, well functioning team, supporting a dance floor and soundstage under a 30'x60' shade tent (from Pinewoods, by the way). Camp includes a meal plan, produced by an efficient shared kitchen, and shade for camping. Last year we were nearly 100% solar powered. It has taken a number of years to work the kinks out but, knock on wood, every year we only make new and smaller mistakes.

Why do we do this? Well, for one thing, there is a huge overlap between the sensibilities of the contra dance community and Burning Man. Contra dancers think about the communal common good and are leading the way in such areas as inclusiveness nonbinary genders. Our mission is to cross fertilize these communities: to bring a little Burning Man to every dance in the default world, and to bring as many Burners to contra dance as we possibly can.

Most people on the Playa are special in some way. Although I was perhaps a bit tongue-in-cheek about discovering our own super powers, my favorite tale from



The 2018 campers (photo by Dave Pokorney)

camp suggests that it is true. One year, a returning dance visitor told us that our camp was their favorite experience on the entire Playa the previous year; that they had so much fun that they resolved to find a contra dance in their hometown. But doom and gloom, there were none. So our intrepid dancer then STARTED ONE FROM SCRATCH, where there had been none before.

We are looking for additional contra dancers, musicians and callers. If you (or somebody you know) wants

the adventure of a lifetime, send them our way. The hardest part is getting Burning Man event tickets. **Start NOW.** If you are at all interested, please visit contraburners.org and we can help to guide you through the process. To participate in the main ticket sale (lottery) you must apply before March 23rd. There are low income options for both camp and the event itself. Camp also has very limited budget to help needy campers.

How better to ease into Burning Man than in the company of a flock of contra dancers?

To learn more about Burning Man, search YouTube for "Burning Man", and maps for "Black Rock City NV". Add words "people", "art", "art cars," and "installations" to see additional perspectives.

Matt Mathis is a long term contra dancer and dance organizer who migrated from Pittsburgh, PA, to the the San Francisco Bay area in 2011. During the day he helps Google make the Internet faster for everyone.

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