COUNTRY DANCE AND SONG SOCIETY
Continuing the traditions. Linking those who love them.
CDSS NEWS
ISSN 1070-8251

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Society. Views expressed in letters and articles represent those of
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NOTE: The CDSS News will become an online periodical in
the spring, available to members and nonmembers alike; we
expect this to be our last paper issue.

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

Founded in 1975, CDSS continues to celebrate and preserve
traditional English and Anglo-American dance, music, and
song, promoting their new expression, connecting people who
enjoy them, and supporting communities where they can thrive.
Membership is open to all and includes the members list,
with ten percent discount from the store/mail order, and first crack
at registering for our summer programs. CDSS is a 501(c)3
nonprofit organization; membership dues and donations are
tax deductible.

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visit our website www.cdss.org

Cover: Toronto Women's Sword, Half Moon Sword Alm, NYC, February 2010, photo by Janet Zeln; see article on page 11.

ADS & SUBMISSIONS—news@cdss.org

Articles, letters, poems and photographs about recent and
traditional square dance, English country dance, Morris
and sword dance, dances tunes, folklore, and the dance
and music community are welcome. Newly composed
dances and tunes also are welcome, so are new looks at
historical dances and tunes. Please contact the editor for
guidelines or send submissions to news@cdss.org. We may
edit for length and clarity.

UPCOMING EVENTS (balls, workshops, weekends, etc.)
are published on our website, www.cdss.org/upcoming-events.html. There is no charge for a simple listing (date, name of event, town/state, sponsoring group, website or phone number).

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

DISPLAY AD SIZES & RATES
Sizes and rates may change with the online issue; that
info will be on our website in January 2011.

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

EMAIL from us to you—Now that we have monthly
sales and quarterly news blasts going out to friends
and members, we want to make sure they're getting to you.
Please “white list” us, www.cdss.org, office@cdss.org,
or news@cdss.org. If you’ve not received an email yet, let
us know—we may have an old address.

EMAIL from you to us—we get a lot of email. Despite
our precautions, your very legitimate message may go
straight or be grabbed by our spam filters. If you've sent
an address change and mail continues to go to your old
address, or if you've sent a note needing a reply and
haven't heard back from us within two weeks, please
call 413-265-7479, Monday-Friday, 9:30 am-5 pm.

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2011 WINTER

CDSS NEWS

WINTER 2011
Hands Four and Dust

In early June, our local dance organization volunteered to do a thorough cleaning of our rented dance hall, the American Legion Hall in Wethersfield, Connecticut. We rent the hall, but we care both about the hall and maintaining our fine relationship with the veterans who are responsible for it. At the end of a five-hour cleanup, the hall sparkled. We dusted ceiling vents, washed walls and lights with a∈Eipped, and vacuumed the dance floor. Photographs of veterans, framed trophys, scrubbed all three bathrooms, and removed decades of dust and grime from just about everywhere.

We did some things right. It was wise to ask for ninety minute shifts during our five hours (10 am–3 pm); even so, most workers stayed about three hours. Of course, it was BYOB, Bring Your Own Bucket. We had tape and a marker to label buckets and other supplies that volunteers brought to the hall. We used nametags, which proved very helpful. Rubber gloves and dust masks were also available. Sponges, rags, and paper towels all proved useful. “Before” and “After” photos helped to show the results of our efforts. All our ladders proved useful. As advertised on our flyer, we started and ended on time.

We could have done some things better. We should have used an attendance sheet, so we could have been sure to thank every volunteer after the event. We only had one vacuum, and could have used it two. Earlier attention to the entrance area would have insured we completed cleaning every part of the entranceway. We could have used one-edged razor blades; weighed against the risks, I decided against it.

The cleaning supplies cost about $150, and we bought pizza for lunch. We used the huge kitchen table for supplies, and were able to return all unopened supplies, which allowed us to overbuy our cleaning supplies instead of guessing exactly right.

My co-leader, Nancy Dunn, and I inspected the hall months before this event to examine what areas needed special attention and to identify the necessary supplies. We later walked through the hall with the American Legion president to discuss our plans and identify things that could be discarded from storage areas (most of the ancient, unused stuff). Our simple flyer and email appeals for help got us about twenty-five volunteers. We estimate almost a hundred man-hours went into cleaning our dance hall that Sunday. It showed. We hope that others will consider a “dance hall cleanup” and that sharing our experiences will make yours even better.

Robert Reichert, Hartford Community Dance

www.HCDance.org

Letter and Announcements

Word to Callers

Sometimes the old expression, “The squeaky wheel gets the grease,” has a lot going for it. I have been a room, square-bound, and contra dancer for a long time (I am now eighty-two), so I think there is a “bit of experience” to back up my comments. I also taught contra for several years.

I would like to direct my comments to contra dance callers. Please keep a close eye tuned to your floor, your dancers on the floor in lines. Recently I was at a dance where there were two lines. The caller’s attention was in one direction most of the time, focused on only that line. In the meantime, the other line was breaking up quite severely to two beginner couples. The caller had actually stopped calling music too soon. Had he been watching both lines and started calling again, the line started to break up, he may have been able to save the dance for those people.

All of this has a progressive effect on the whole dance, or can have. Now, put yourself in the position of an experienced dancer. We try to save the situation, but are so distracted by it all, and cannot hear a caller who has stopped, then we have to figure out the dance in addition to helping out the beginners, so that we too get out of step, and lose it.

So, please, please, please, all you callers, keep your eyes on all the dancers and lines and keep calling until even some experienced dancers can “fix it.” Thank you.

Eo Cassagneres, Cheshire, CT

Canadian News Sought

We’re spacing out a new section in the CDSS News, featuring news about an event or a group in Canada, describing what we all know and love—dance and song. These stories will bring you Canadian perspectives that continue the traditions linking all of us together. We plan to approach the Canadian members and affiliate groups to find out what’s going on and what interests you. Submit your articles to Roberta Rosemarylach@yahoo.com, marked CDSS Canadian content. Or contact us with your questions or ideas. We’d love to hear from you.

Bec Bernbaum, Toronto, ON

Laura Light, Bay Area CDS

BACDS American Week: The Tradition Continues

Long ago and far away, in the summer of 1981 was born the Mendocino American Dance and Music Camp. Started by Brad and Jenny Foster and many others, it was based on CDSS’s Pinewoods Camp, but quite dramatically adapted to its California environment in the redwood forest. Adaptation to changing conditions is necessary for all living things, and Mendocino American Week, living thing that is, must change.

Change is hard, but it’s also a grand opportunity. And so it is for American Dance and Music Week as we depart our beloved Mendocino Woodlands for a new location, closer to Palo Alto and San Francisco (just forty-five minutes drive from SFO and the airport!), yet still in the coastal redwoods.

Last year the camp organizers took a leap of faith and opened doors for young dance organizers from around the country to come and share in the quality dances and music that has always marked Mendocino American Week. The results were superb. We had an energized and very, very fun weekend with a great mix of old and young, traditional and neo-traditional dance and events. This year we’re going to do it all again, taking into careful consideration that as some of us (yes, me!) are graciously aging, we need to nourish and protect our younger dancers and also be sensitive to those who might be struggling with the adverse economic conditions we are currently experiencing nationwide.

We have a wonderful staff; see our ad in this issue for some of their names and check out our website (noted below) for more details. In addition to exciting music and excellent callers, there will be traditional old time arts and crafts, picnics, camper band night, feast, late night stories and campfires and jams, and all of the other traditions we have always enjoyed at Mendocino Camp. Won’t invent a few more—how about a square dance in a round yurt?

With our change of venue come reduced costs and more opportunities for scholarships for those who need it. The week begins on Sunday and ends on Friday, a slightly shorter camp, but even that has good news attached. The revised schedule will help campers from out-of-town make more convenient travel arrangements. Begin with our traditional bands playing around the Bay Area on the preceding weekend, with some workshops offered, and continue with an all camp plus community dance in Palo Alto. A period is marked on CDSS’s Calendar for events, followed by workshops, concerts and the Palo Alto Saturday night dance.

We hope you will join us for some or all of it! It is not to be missed! For more information see www.bacds.org/aw2011

Laura Light, Bay Area CDS

Thanks, CDSS!

Both the AsShown Foundation and the AsShown Center have received their own letters of determination from the IRS and are now tax exempt under 501(c)(3) in their own right. Our CDSS group exemptions were an enormous help while we were forming the organizations, obtaining the physical property and beginning to run the operations. I don’t think we could have acted (quickly and as been successful) without your support.

As of mid-September our construction project is slowly gearing up with the completion of our new workshop, and also from Denmark, England, Scotland, Argentina, and Swaziland. International Night was the opening event for a ten-day Girl Scout/Girl Guide program. Each troop was to present something that represented their home. Our troop (being from eastern Massachusetts) wanted to showcase Helen Storrow’s influence in our lives because of her work in both Girl Scouting and country dance.

At the event, we first talked about Helen Storrow and how she was so active in the early Girl Scout movement and donated land in Plymouth for what became one of the most famous Girl Scout camps in the northeast (and which we have used extensively). Then we talked about her role in bringing English country dance to America and how we had had a lot of fun learning country dance. Next we brought everyone outside and had them make a big (BIG) circle and demonstrated a dance, the Black Rag. One of us played the music on a recorder and the rest of us danced. Then we demonstrated a two-person morris jig, Shepherd’s Hey. Finally we taught everyone Sellenger’s Round. They caught on after awhile and seemed to have a lot of fun.

We also shared materials from CDSS News, Japan and were able to place them in the teardrop where they will be available to everyone who passes through Our Chalet.

Jay Ungar and Molly Mason
Asshown Center, www.asshowncenter.org
Asshown Foundation, www.asshownfoundation.org
Notes from the Office

Sharing the Vision: Thematics and Practical Ideas for Vibrant Dance Communities (Part 2) by Max Newman, Youth Projects Intern

Traveling and talking with folks, I've learned more about what makes vibrant music and dance communities. I've shared some insights and ideas in this column, directed primarily at organizers of dances but useful, I suspect, to many roles in many communities.

The Vision: It's the least technical, most overlooked, and perhaps most important aspect of any dance. A vision is the frame through which organizers, performers, and dancers alike make their decisions, the ideal for which they strive, the source from which they draw inspiration. But for that to work, people have to know what it is.

You must have a vision to share a vision. Organizers, performers, and dancers all have (at least) one, whether or not they have articulated it. Having a vision that is articulated gives organizers and the community as a whole valuable guidance and inspiration.

Avoid the Vision Void. While not without merit, an unarticulated vision—sometimes expressed as the "so long as it's fun for the dancers" attitude—is often a dodge. After all, what is "fun," who are "the dancers," and how do you determine what they want? Organizer Larry Jennings noted, "If there is no objective, you cannot achieve it." An organizer's vision should be engaged with the community, but this doesn't mean showing away from presenting a vision that will inspire ideas and attitudes dancers may not even know they shared.

You must communicate the vision for people to know the vision. Make sure people know what your vision is by sharing it in both passive ways, e.g., in writing, and active ways, e.g., person-to-person.

Write it out. How else do you know what it is? It might be a few sentences or a few pages, but it should define what you care about.

Make it accessible. Put a public version of your vision prominently on your website. Email newcomers a link to it. Have it on fliers at the door. Put up posters with your values, e.g., "Anyone can ask anyone to dance!"

Each individual in the community is an asset for communicating a vision, both through their words and through their actions. Most central are:

- The organizers. If you are able to communicate the vision, you benefit from being visible. Some ideas to consider: make announcements, wear name badges, and have posters with your pictures.
- The performers. Share the vision with performers. Maybe this means explaining how to treat sit-ins to the band or suggesting to the caller how much time for socializing between dances is appropriate. Callers have authority and visibility and they can assist sharing (and crafting) a dance's vision so be sure they know what it is.
- The leaders on the floor. Share the vision with those charismatic and wonderful people on the floor, especially leaders of peer groups, e.g., a homeschool group. You may find this to be an informative two-way street.

State your vision in positive terms. Presumably you like your vision because there is something fun and wonderful about it. Although there's a place for "no" and "don't," presenting the joy behind your vision is the most compelling way.

Crafting and sharing a vision has many rewards and I hope organizers and others continue to share techniques to make this happen.

* For an excellent articulated vision, see "10 Things About BIDA" which will post on our website in early January as an addendum to this column.

Group Corner by Jeff Martell, Group Services Manager

We can't tell you enough how grateful we are for the remarkable work you do at the local level to support and promote English and American dance and song. You are the ones out there making your dance and song events happen: you are the leaders, the musicians, the dancers, the sound system haulers, hall-renters, web site maintainers, mailing list compilers, and brownie-bakers. Your events are happening in hundreds of large and small venues all across the continent.

Those of you directly involved in organizing dance and song activities are probably aware of at least part of what CDSS is doing to support you, but there may be some things you are unaware of.

Some of your local dance leaders may have
attended our summer programs or camps, where they learned new dances, shared insights and ideas with other dance leaders, became better dancers, strengthened their commitment to the dance community, and made lasting connections learned from some of the finest leaders and musicians in the world. Your leaders and musicians may even have taken one of our master classes, or received or offered scholarship assistance from us in order to attend any of the above. Your local leaders have the opportunity to use your Group Priority form to gain some advantage in our camp lottery.

Your group may get tax exempt status or liability insurance through CDSS. This is the kind of nuts and bolts support that allows the music and dance to happen, but that folks in front of the house never see. Your group might have received a grant from New Leaders for leadership training, youth activities or mentorship programs. You may have purchased hard to find dance and sonic materials from the CDSS Store! You may have received outreach grants for dance organizer training, or to produce an event, book or CD. (What? You have not applied for one? Go check it out at www.cdsas.org/outreach. html). You may have gotten business advice or made connections with other groups through the CDSS staff or board, or had our Youth Intern host a discussion at one of your events.

CDSS has a lot to offer groups, and we are just getting started! We hope you see what is coming down the pipe for the CDSS Centennial in 2010! This will be the last print version of the newsletter, but rest assured, the Group Corner will continue on in the new online version and on the website. Our Group Affiliates are what keeps the music going!

More About the Online News by Caroline Hanson, Editor

Thanks to those who sent their congratulations or concerns about the plan, announced in the last issue, for our one-only newsletter. Two concerns in particular cropped up: receiving large attachments in people’s email and a dislike of reading long articles on a computer screen. For the first, as soon as each issue is ready, we will send an email announcing the posting, with a link to the issue (i.e., no inboxing attachments); for the second, posting the newsletter online only, while not the ideal solution, is the most affordable option to us these days. A four-page highlights version of each issue will be mailed to those members without Internet access or for whom we don’t have email addresses.

We expect to keep the quarterly publication schedule although some deadlines may change. If you haven’t given us your email address yet to get our quarterly eblasts and, beginning in the spring, the online newsletter, go to the site Login section on our website, www.cdsas.org.

Support CDSS by Robin Hayden, Development

Our annual fund appeal is underway! As always, we depend on your support for everything we do. Your gift will enable us to continue providing outreach, scholarships, advice, group services, camp programs, print, media, and online resources, and so much more, to the traditional dance, music, and song community.

If you’ve already contributed, thanks so much. If you haven’t gotten around to it yet—no time like the present! You can mail your credit card info or check, made out to CDSS, to PO Box 338, Haydenville, MA 01038 (be sure to specify “fund appeal!”) or make your gift online at www.cdsas.org/general-donation.html. It’s easy, tax deductible, and so important. As Max Newman writes in this year’s appeal, “Your support changes lives.” So true!

Publications Desk by Pat MacPherson, Education

As part of our library, we are excited to announce that the dances and reconstructions of Charles Bolton are now available on our website. Sincere thanks to Charles for granting CDSS permission to publish his life’s work in such a way as to make it available to the widest possible audience, and to Trevor Monson, who was the editor of the project and who tirelessly scanned every page of every book. As you explore this vast collection, you will find both well-known dances and hidden gems.

Retreads is a collection of interpretations of ninety-two English country dances from seventeenth and eighteenth century sources, the majority from volumes of Playford’s Dancing Master, plus selections from Johnson, Thompson, Walsh, Burbank, Griffiths, and Kynaston. The collection is in Volumes 1-9, and includes two previously unpublished dances. Each dance appears with music, the original dance instructions, Charles’s interpretations, and notes on interpretative decisions. You may search by dance title, volume and page number.

Charles is also a prolific composer and choreographer for English country dancing. His nine booklets of original music, with original or traditional music, plus more reconstructions, are also online and are searchable by dance title, volume title, volume and page number. Booklet titles include: The Optimist, More Optimistic Dances, Not All My Own Work, More of the Same, Courtesy Turns, Occasions, People and Places, What’s New, and Round Robin.

Camp Notes by Steve Howe, Programs

We’ve added some special mini-courses to our 2011 summer programs. At OGGONTZ, Teachers Training Course, taught by Jane Miller, will run concurrently with Family Week, July 30-August 6. At PINEWOODS, Singing Squares Callers Course, taught by Ralph Sweet and Nils Fredland, will be held during American Week, July 30-August 6. English Dance Musicians Course, taught by Jacqueline Schwab, and a Viol Intensive, taught by Mary Springfolds, will be held during Early Music Week, August 13-20. At American Dance Musicians Course, taught by Eden MacAdam-Somer and Larry Unger, will be held during English & American Dance Week, August 27-September 3.

CAMP JOBS—Each year we need help running our summer dance and music camps. If one of the following appeals to you, write to me c/o CDSS, PO Box 338, Haydenville, MA 01038, or campdirector.org. Sound system operators are needed at all weeks, with compensation ranging from full scholarship to paid staff, depending on the session. Office positions are available at Pinewoods, from July 16-September 3, at Timber Ridge from August 13-21, and at Ongon from July 30-August 6. In exchange for full scholarships, we need lifeguards with First Aid certificates for all sessions, dining hall managers for all sessions, and a doctor or nurse for Family and Campers’ weeks. Some full scholarships are also available at Ongon for kitchen and/or grounds crew. We also need some evening monitoring of sleeping children. In exchange for partial scholarships, we need assistant lifeguards and evening monitors for all Family and Campers’ weeks.

SCHOLARSHIPS—One of the finest things about dance and music camps is the monetary assistance given by current and former campers through scholarship donations. Many of us have been lucky recipients of those gifts so we know firsthand its benefits. When registering for camp this year—or even if you can’t attend—we urge you to help someone else attend. We are happy to accept large or small donations to our general scholarship fund or to one of many special funds. There’s a list on our website identifying them—www.cdsas.org/special-funds.html.

Catch Up On Your Reading

You may have seen Larry Edelman’s review of our book, On the Beat with Ralph Sweet, in the last issue of the newsletter. Bill Litchman, long-time archivist and librarian for Lloyd Shaw Foundation thinks well of the book too; see his review at www. cdssas.org_files/cdsas/documents/reviews/on_the_ beat_litchman.pdf. (Or go to www.edlweb.com and click on Newsletter, then E-blatt, then scroll down to Publications.)


From Bruce Hamilton: “Our Scottish country dance group’s newsletter is at www.necds-st.org/newsletters/pdf/2010.01.pdf. The lead article is about an incident at our weekend where a dancer had a heart attack, and what the group did to respond.”

From David Millstone, passing on a message he received: “The British Columbia Square and Round Dance Federation commissioned a fitness expert to evaluate the health benefits of square dancing. You can find the report at sqdancebc.ae/articles/ Fitness_Evaluation.pdf.”

And from Nancy, a link to the recent New York Times article on Country Dance New York: www.nytimes.com/2010/12/03/mag/region/03ocitillion. html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=yuletidexC0ctillion&ts=4.”

Lifetime Contribution Award 2011

As always, we look forward to hearing from you for this year’s award are being accepted through the end of January. For guidelines, see www.cdsas.org/cdsas-lifetime-contribution-award-2010.html.
Revitalization: How Do You Make a Dance Come Back to Life?

by Joyce Fortune

In the 1990s, the Palo Alto Contra Dance was the place to be. The dance (so I have heard) regularly pulled in over a hundred fifty dancers, with parents trading off child-watching and tone of people having a fabulous time. By the time I joined the community in 2005, it was a smallish local dance with fifty or so people. I happily danced there and at weekend camps for several years before noticing that there was any problem. I did notice that my personal motivation to get up off my butt on a Saturday night was sort of flagging about two years ago, but chalked it up to tiredness and a career that I thought about it, though, part of the problem was that the dance was getting smaller and smaller and it was less and less fun. It started to feel more like an obligation than a party.

Last summer, I started going to a series of local dances to do a survey about our spring weekend, which was also dying for lack of attendance. At that time, I started to see other local dances and, as they say, the scales fell from my eyes. Those other dances were packed—more than a hundred dancers—and a lot of the dancers were the same people I saw at weekend. I also noticed that whereas our local dance sold cookies for fifty cents and bottles of water for a dollar at the break, every other dance I went to had a table of free potluck food. I also noticed that there were often several people making things happen, putting away chairs, putting out food and so forth. I went back to Palo Alto and decided something had to be done. I wanted people to come to my dance and dance with me!

Many new dances were now competing with our local Saturday night dance and we had gotten a reputation for being boring and slow. The dance suffered from the “used to” syndrome—people regularly said how great it used to be, on focusing on what was lost and that it no longer was great. The dance was on a downward spiral. I have a theory; the dancers go where the dancers are. If you start to decline, it is almost sure that you will continue to decline. Dances are really just parties. No one wants to go to a party when people aren’t having fun. Walking into a dance hall and seeing that there aren’t really many people there is sad. People don’t feel jazzed and excited to be there.

In a conversation with Alan Winston and Jim Saxo, two longtime dancers and organize types, after a dance, we started to formulate a plan. I felt strongly that the dance needed to go from being run by one couple to being a community event. Erin Black and Diane Zingale, who had been running it for literally decades were burnt out and frustrated by the lack of help from others. So, with the assistance of Alan and Jim, I scheduled a meeting to get people together to make a plan. We gave out invitations to scores of people and had about twenty over to my house for a potluck and meeting in September 2009. We had a good, honest discussion about what the dance needed and credos and shared information. Most important, six committees with eighteen people on them were created and a plan was set in motion.

First and foremost, we changed the food situation. We now have a potluck table at each dance, where people bring snacks or donate a few dollars. Another dancer stepped up to be “food diva” and keeps track of our supplies and supplements the potluck offerings by shopping for chips, fruit and other snacks.

The next really important change was to mix up the faces at the front desk. We did away with the old practice of having people sit out two duties for half price entry. Since we have a “pay as you can” policy, this really made no sense and it was hard to get people to sit at the door. Therefore, the manager didn’t really get to dance and no one wanted to manage. By asking for multiple people to sit out only one dance, we get a variety of people helping out and managing is not so onerous. We now have seven managers and each manage once every three months, which is not that big a burden for anyone to carry. Further, door-sitting is an easy volunteer job that people can do and feel like they are contributing to the dance community, which they are.

We started aggressively working on programming, limiting the “local” caller to once a quarter to bring in more variety and actively pursuing special talent for special events. Multiple people working on this process (a committee of six) has really brought in fresh talent and energy. I also started working on getting a variety of sound people in to share the load and have a variety of faces on the dance floor.

We always had fairly good external publicity, continued on page 12

On Sunday, with New Moon and Orion, we shared our dancing in Brooklyn. Notably, in an educational component of these family-friendly performances, dancers helped audience members create a lock. Such audience participation can contribute to increasing awareness and interest in traditional dance—one of the commitments of Toronto Women’s Sword. To conclude the week’s performances, the teams took turns on stage at the Brooklyn Museum. However, the dancing continued informally at the “after-party” where teams continued to share rapper, conga, and singing.

Benefits and Recommendations

Stronger dancing, with other sword dancers, and inspiration for the future of our team comprise the primary benefits of our attendance at this event. Although our inclusion in numerous English and morris-focused events has been very positive, our participation at the Sword Ale represented a unique opportunity. For instance, through watching a wide variety of partner and longsword dances, our members noted ideas for new dances. Since our return, we have started the choreography of a new dance to perform at upcoming events. We are also able to refer to specific dance steps or techniques in discussing our own work. At the Half Moon Sword Ale, some of us also enjoyed exchanging ideas and techniques for steps (e.g., rapper figures) or a dance (i.e., Papa Stour) that we share in common with other teams. In the future, we could explore the opportunity to workshop some of these figures with other teams to enrich such exchange of techniques.
Youth Dance Weekend 2010
by Dave Eisenstuder and Lauren Breuning

DAVE SAYS: I was skeptical.
A Youth Dance Weekend seemed counter to what a contra dance should be about. I started dancing in Nelson for the explanation, where people do all ages dance together, and the most popular dance is Chorus Jig, an old chestnut from more than two hundred years ago. But the late September festival surprised me when I attended. I assumed the point was to exclude older dancers, but what it did was invite the younger ones more fully into the tradition.
The stereotype of the young, modern dancer is, to my understanding, as follows: they dance wildly, they don’t finish moves on time, they only dance with partners AND neighborhood swings, they will unrestrainedly join squares, and will die before English. Whether consciously or unconsciously, Youth Dance Weekend works to teach young dancers to break these stereotypes. There were several sessions of English dance during the weekend, and a Master Class aimed at keeping dancers aware of timing, safety and other aspects of dancing, but in a fun way.

One of the most memorable examples for me was on Sunday morning when organizers announced that the next dance would be Money Musk. I assume most reading this newsletter are familiar with Money Musk, but for those who aren’t, it is a three hundred year old dance with an unusual formation (groups of six rather than groups of four) and absolutely no swings. Among dancers of earlier generations, this was the pinnacle of contra dance. “Bring Back Money Musk” is a t-shirt I have seen across the country.

Chestnuts like Money Musk simply are not danced often, likely because callers are afraid of inciting the wrath of young dancers who did not grow up with them. But when Rebecca Lay said “hands six from the top” and Nor’easter got ready to play the accompanying tune, there was a notable buzz among the young dancers around the Toronto area. Over the last two decades, TWS has had the privilege of performing their dances throughout Canada, the eastern United States, and England.

A Final Gift
Does a weekend include the Country Dance and Song Society? If not, please consider helping to ensure that the programs, workshops and people that make our programs so enjoyable are not lost forever.

CDSS NEWS
12 WINTER 2011

(continued from page 11)

Members of Toronto Women’s Sword have returned to our practice schedule with inspiration, creativity, and commitment. We welcomed the opportunity to showcase our dancing, learn through watching and interacting with other dancers, and develop ideas for future development.

Formed in 1988, Toronto Women’s Sword performs traditional English hill-and-point dances such as longsword and rapper sword. TWS is the first Canadian group dedicated to the preservation and promotion of English traditional sword dance. The team is committed to increasing awareness through regular performances and encourages accessibility by making it open to interested members of the Toronto community.

Over the last two decades, TWS has had the privilege of performing their dances throughout Canada, the eastern United States, and England.

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but we decided to focus a little on the material we were sending out. My husband found club cards in local cafes—small (two inch by three inch) cards that are laminated and full color and he started making a club card for our local dance that is appealing and concise, can fit in a pocket and is easy to pass out to dancers. These are a great visual cue and calendar of our dances. A Facebook invite also goes out for each dance and gets quickly disseminated to a great number of people. For the younger generation, Facebook is a central way of keeping their calendar.

One of the big turning points was when I started creating an email for the dance itself. Each week I asked people directly if they want to be on our local email list and I put together an email detailing the next dance and send it out on the Monday or Tuesday before the next Saturday dance. We are competing with lots of other events in people’s lives and need to be in the front of their minds. I also have made a point of talking to newcomers and getting their email address to send a follow-up email to them as well as adding them to our regular list. I also hand them each a club card and a sheet with our Facebook page, email address, website and my phone number. This contact seems to keep them coming back.

I have made a very conscious effort lately to really work with newcomers too. We always did have lots of newcomers, thanks to Dianne’s publicity work, but although they would come once, they wouldn’t come back. Now I make sure that they all get partnerships, that the regulars are aware of who’s sitting down, that we really notice the gender balance so that if we are short of men, the experienced women dance together or ask the newcomers to dance with us. We actively help them to learn how to ask people to dance and make sure they are only sitting out voluntarily.

Now, one year later, the dance is on a serious upward spiral. We have a regular “normal” attendance from thirty-five to forty-five a year ago to fifty to sixty now. We can pull in a hundred people at a special dance. The load is being shared around and the dancers feel a lot more engaged and interested in running and staying involved in the program matter to you continue in the future with a bequest. It’s practical and tax deductible. For information about bequests and other ways to support CDSS, see our website at www.cdds.org/support-us.html.
Finding My Way Out of the Woods

by Bev Bernbaum

I remember the day that my friend and contra dancer musician Kate Murphy emailed me to ask if I'd consider being "the staff caller and dance teacher" at "The Woods Music and Dance Camp up in Muskoka, Ontario, it was October 9, 2008. I was flattered, excited, very nervous and unsure. I'd never been to this camp before.

In that email, she warned me that only one of the campers would really be interested in dancing. The primary interest was in singing and playing music. She said it would be a challenge to find dancers that wouldn't bore the experienced or lose the novices. I would be responsible for calling the evening dances, only an hour or so long, but would also have to come up with a non-contest based dance class for the morning too. It was that morning class that was making me nervous. I'd never taught other dance forms.

I decided to go with an idea I'd been thinking about for a while, Singing Waltzes for Dancers. I would teach basic waltz to dancers who wanted to learn. And the music would be song waltzes played and sung by campers. I figured that would be all inclusive. Singers could sing. Dancers could sing and dance. Musicians could sing and play. And the supremely talented could sing, play and dance! I envisioned the musicians and singers sitting in a circle in the middle of the floor and the dancers walking around them. My only request was that they not put the class in the first period of the morning.

When I received the performer letter in February I got panic. Kate had mentioned that she and Shane Cook, a Canadian Grand Master and US Grand National fiddle champion, would anchor the dance hand. I knew Shane so I had no worries there. But what Kate hadn't told me in the fall, and she may not have known then, was that Peggy Seeger and David Ragsdale, the tag-along—the incomparable Peggy Seeger, and I'd been blown away by David Roth the first year I went to the Summerfolk Festival (Owen Sound, Ontario) in 1988. These were HUGE names in my folk music world. I didn't know anything about Norah Rendell, Brian Miller and Steve Baughman. But the more I googled, the more panic I got! The campers were going to come with expectations. Could I deliver at the same level as the rest of the staff?

The camp is held at Lake Rosseau College in the village of Bala, Ontario, halfway between Parry Sound and Huntsville. It’s a gorgeous location, too and a half hours north of Toronto, right on Lake Rosseau.

But because I’d never been there before, it all felt very foreign. As Kate and I were unpacking, she warned me again that I’d have a hard time satisfying everyone with dances. Some would say we were too easy, others would say we were too hard. She warned me again that no one would be happy. My anxiety was mounting.

The camp runs from Wednesday at about 6:30 pm to the following Monday at 4 pm. Staff members were expected at a meeting at 5 am on the Wednesday. Although I knew all about him, it was my first time actually meeting Git Laskin. This national craft award winning luthier and Friend of Fiddler’s Groen member, his wife Judith, Eve Goldberg, another wonderful local musician, and Kate were most of the committee that ran the camp. The talent in that staff meeting was rather mind blowing.

Later that evening, at an orientation session for the campers, I made my pitch to describe my classes. I was scheduled to speak last so that my “demo” would be that evening's contra dance. I told everyone that I brought my fiddle but was hoping people would come to the class and share a waltz or two with me. And then I talked about contra dancing, how I felt that they all had the necessary skills required. They’d all walked into the room, were tapping their toes to the beat of the music in the other staff demos, and were quick to laugh. They were all naturals in my book and we started the dance.

That first dance was a challenge for me. First, I called a very easy circle dance that didn’t progress. Then an easy Sicilian circle dance so no one had to deal with ends of sets. Then a conra formation dance that I hadn’t called before. It turned out to be nothing of a challenge for the dancers than anticipated. But we all managed through it. Thankfully, the music was blissful.

The next morning I headed to “Big Brown,” the room for my class. It has a great wood floor and was big enough to have a circle of chairs in the middle of the room for musicians and singers, and leave space for dancers around them. I waited for campers to come. And waited.

My class was up against Peggy teaching traditional folk dancing, David teaching performance skills, Steve teaching guitar, Shane teaching fiddle, and Norah teaching tin whistle and fiddle. With all the other classes, it was an amazing week for all, but was too easy, or for some, too hard. Some would say we were too easy, others would say we were too hard. She warned me again that no one would be happy. My anxiety was mounting.

A dancer, caller and writer, Dave Eisenstodler wrote a blog in 2007 called “All the Way Around: Contra Dance Across America,” about a four-month road trip he took (excerpted in the CDSS News, July-August 2007; he now lives in Burlington, Vermont, where he is a reporter for the Keene Sentinel. Lauren Breuning currently lives in Brattleboro, Vermont, where she is attending circus school and singing with the Windhaven Trio.)
sang. They both shared waltz songs with me that they'd written. Even though it was a very small and intimate group, my objectives had already been met! In the end, only one of the two women stuck with me for the duration.

Just before the staff concert and dance that night, I had a chance to say some of the things about contra dancing that, in my nervousness, I'd forgotten to say in the orientation. I encouraged people who were thinking about dancing, to start that night instead of waiting another few dances. I mentioned my intent was to build skills through the week and that they might find it more challenging if they waited. And then I pulled out my ace in the hole. Glow bracelets! These cool things that glowed in the dark. You got a present for being a dancer. Nothing like a little bribery. Best move I ever made!

That second contra dance went really well. The band, made up of some staff musicians and some campers, was having a blast, including me. I had decided to re-engineer my morning class by singing waltzes at the end of the contra dances. That actually worked very well as I had a captive audience of dancers and singers, and a band to help play the tunes. We sang "The Log Driver's Waltz" that night. The glow bracelets were a big hit. I found out the next day that they worked really well for synchronized skinny dipping in the lake after the dance!

After the dance that night, I met up with the two people working on sound at The Woods. We headed to the dining room to find a quiet place to play some tunes. She'd written the most gorgeous singing waltz and has a fabulous voice; he's an incredible Dobro player, not to mention the fact that he also sings harmony with her. That singing waltz made me cry. I asked them to play it after a dance, which they did, if I'd dance to it. They played it at the party on the last night of camp. Over the course of the week, many campers brought me incredible singing waltzes they'd written or found. My theme at The Woods got even better. I'd finally settled in. That one woman who'd stuck with my singing waltz class was also a banjo player. We used some of the time to practice what we learned in Steve's banjo class. That was wonderful. We got to talking about what the waltz should be at the end of the dance that night. I had no idea when I suggested it, that "Didn't I Dance" for the first time at Augusta and really liked it. When I suggested it, I was told to talk to one participant about it. She told me about the camp founder that had loved to sing that song, but had passed away due to cancer some years before. This woman had taken over the torch to continue singing this song, and was delighted that I'd chosen it, really quite by accident. She and her husband joined me on the stage that night to sing it. Everyone knew the words and sang along.

Interestingly, my third dance was a milestone for me, and also the camp, I think. I had trouble teaching the first dance of the night. I'd walked it through twice. But I couldn't seem to teach it without confusing the dancers. I was ready to bail on it. In fact, I told them that and threw the card down into my box of dances. They all shouted "NO!!" That took me by surprise. I determined to get it right. And, gosh, love 'em, I walked it again, and they did it! I had four squares on the dance floor that night, which was just about half the camp. People kept telling me over and over again how they'd never seen such great dancing at The Woods before. I think that when it finally began to sink in that I was, in fact, delivering at the same level as the other staff. Two campers have since written "Waltz Across Texas" at the end of the dance that night.

On the fourth day, the community time theme was "If Music be the Food of Life, Sing On!" A great friend and caller buddy from Vermont had sent me "The Hot Dog Song," a singing waltz tune by the very funny Arrogant Worms. For whatever reason, we started singing the Oscar Meyersong. And it seemed like there was a natural fit between bologna and hot dogs. I jumped up, taught the chorus and sang the song! Wow! I think they liked it. I don't really remember.

Some of my most favourite moments of the week happened on the fifth day, Sunday. The theme for community time that day was the staff cildish. I had no idea what that meant and it hadn't even occurred to me to ask. I just assumed that it was specifically for the musical staff as I sat down with the campers. Next thing I knew, Grit is asking where I am. I said, "I'm sitting right here." He said, "No, you need to be sitting right there!" pointing to the empty chair. Then realized that I was supposed to be sitting in front of all of the campers. Between Paul and David no less! It was a showcase for the staff. I was completely and totally unprepared and verging, yet again, on panic!

They started at the end of the line to my left. Shane played a terrific, swingy Middle tune and I got terrible. We both up and danced around with another camper. I figured I'd done my duty. I was the dance caller after all. What could I do? David sang yet another incredible song. Then it was my turn. I said I'd already danced. Not enough! I was literally completely blank. So I passed to Peggy in order to have time to think. Thankfully, someone had a Rose Up Singing book with them, the large print edition! Peggy finished up her song and it was back continued on page 14

Do you really need a reason to stretch your hamstrings? When your hamstrings receive regular lengthening, your pelvis has a better chance of correct alignment, which helps optimal abdominal action, which protects your low back. When you practice poses that allow you to feel where your abdomen is supposed to be (toward the back body?), you can more easily access that optimal action. Confirmed? If you practised the poses in the last issue, you have an idea of your hamstring capability. Can you lie down with one leg straight on the floor and one leg straight up at ninety degrees? (NR: Straight legs! Quadriceps engaged!) If not, continue to practice "leg up the wall" from the previous issue, and skip to the next section on abdominal action.

Reclining hamstrings stretch teaches correct abdominal action (NR: not to be practiced when menstruating.)

For this pose, you'll need a strap at least four feet long. Lie on the floor with your quadriceps engaged and your feet pressed against the wall.

If you have a yoga mat, lie on it; the traction will help you keep your feet pressing into the wall. Roll your inner thighs to the floor and take your big toes slightly toward each other. This helps spread and release the low back. Keep the right foot actively pressed into the wall and catch the widest part of your left foot with the strap. Both legs are fully straight and engaged. Don't let the left knee bow! Draw the kneecap toward the hip, open the back of the thigh, stretch through the inner heel, and press the ball of the big toe into the wall. Hold the strap with both hands, elbows bent and wide. (See photo for correct position of hands.) Keep the front tips of the shoulders rolling toward the floor. Let the back of the neck be long and the chin soften toward the throat. If you see that your chin points toward the ceiling, put a blanket under your head to make the back of the neck soft and long.

All actions: Press the right foot—especially the inner edge—into the wall and the whole right leg into the floor. Fully engage the left quadriceps, press the big toe ball point of the left foot into the strap, and open the back of the thigh. With the elbows bent and wide, pull on the strap. For optimal action, press the back of the left thigh away from the left waist as you pull on the strap. See if you can get the back of the leg to open more without pulling your leg closer to your face. You're working correctly when your leg is straight, fully stretched; and not when your leg is close to your face.

W i t h a grand assist from gravity, this pose teaches correct abdominal action: no gripping, no forcing, no clenching! When the pose is done precisely, the abdominal muscles are aligned, active, and drawn toward the back body. As you engage your legs fully and open the back of the raised thigh completely, notice your abdomen. This is how you want your abdomen to feel all the time: long, gently engaged, hugging the back body.

See that your breath is smooth and even, and be in the pose for a minute or two. Bring the left leg down, rest with both legs on the floor, then do the other side. (This is fun: when you're done with the first side, the leg that was up feels a couple of inches longer than the leg that was on the floor.)

Abs Back, Chest Up!!
(NR: not to be practiced when menstruating.)

This pose correctly engages the abdominal muscles toward the back body. It helps if you’ve experienced feeling in the reclining hamstrings stretch, but you can work the right quadriceps even if your hamstrings are longitudinally-challenged.
Interview: Rodney Miller, Violin Maker and Fiddler (Part 1)

Rodney Miller was born in Syracuse, New York in 1951 and has for many years lived, worked and played music in Antrim, New Hampshire. Musician and former CDSS Youth Intern Ethan Hazzard-Watkins spoke with Rodney there last year.

How did you get started playing the fiddle?

It was a family thing. I inherited my grandfather’s violin (in 1908 he bought a Knopf fiddle made in NYC for $25 bux) and my father played violin and played for square dances in New York State. My mother was a professional pianist, so in the process of growing up in this family kids were sort of expected to play in some way.

When I started playing I was probably seven or eight years old, and I began on my grandfather’s violin.

What kind of music was being played?

I took lessons in elementary school for a few years, enough to get the notes under my fingers. The thing was that I was playing a full size violin at age eight (laughs) not knowing, at that time, that there were probably half sizes and three-quarter sizes. It wasn’t like I was a tall kid. I mean, I’m tall now, but... Of course, I am left-handed and there wasn’t any consideration as to handedness. So, I was playing right-handed, just because that was what you were supposed to do. There were tune books, like Allen’s Irish Collection, on the piano, when I was growing up and I ended up, because I was able to sightread from taking lessons, just pouring through the fiddle tune books with my mom playing piano.

And, at that point, you didn’t necessarily connect that fiddle music with being for dancing? Or were there dances going on?

No, it was a pure fiddle tradition of playing.

New Year’s Resolutions

Dance more. Sing more. Practice more. Take up an instrument.

Learn a new dance. Learn a new song.

Compose a song. Or a dance tune. Or a dance. Volunteer at an event.

Dance even more. And sing even more.

And keep on practicing.
to Pinewoods Camp and she was organizing some dances for the student body. She knew that I played fiddle because I was in fact recruited by Oberlin to play fiddle specifically. When I visited Oberlin as a prospective senior in high school, there was an old-time band there that knew I played fiddle and they said "You have to come here. We need fiddlers." I played for a mix of contra and square dances in the freshman hall the whole time I was at Oberlin.

Where did you end up after college?

Actually, I was hired to teach fiddle at Folk Music Week at Pinewoods in '72. I attended Pinewoods at the request of Jane, my Oberlin classmate. She said, "You just have to go to Pinewoods—YOU!" So I was at Folk Music Week and one of the dance weeks in '71 and while I was there I think I met Dudley (Laufman), Dudley and other callers, like Jack Perron, who hired me for gigs from there.

What was the scene like at that time?

It was pretty energetic and vital. There was a lot of interest in it and a lot of folks from the back to the land movement were dancing. I mean, of course, the whole dance scene had been kept alive by Ralph Page and so I played for Ralph up in Keene, on Washington Street and did a whole lot of gigs with kim and Bob McGillen.

I was a member of the Canterbury Country Dance Orchestra, doing contra dances in Durham and Nelson, New Hampshire, and Nadaline McClure hired me as a regular for the Nelson dance every month for a few years.

Were you playing your own instruments at that time?

The first one that I played was in 1981. Every instrument that I would finish I would take on my fiddling trips because I was able to sell instruments on the road. I wasδ playing the fiddle at that time I was doing a lot of work with Boston caller Tod Whitemore. Tod was very much into organizing dances and was running the Peterborough contra dance, which we played for on a regular basis. I was hired at Pinewoods every summer from '72 on in some capacity of playing fiddle and teaching fiddle and remembering getting hired at the Centrum Fiddle International Dance Week around 1980, in Port Townsend, Washington. Tod went, I think Ralph Page was hired as well, and we represented New England contra stuff during the international dance week. Tod wanted to do a crosscountry tour in the summer of '82 so it started off at Jay Unger and Molly Mason's camp, Ashokan. Tod set up contra dances all across the country with Andy Davis and I playing. We got a lot more interest for our own recording. There was a whole lot of interest in what was happening in New England, as a part of music workshops, teaching the basic repertoire of popular stuff from the 1970s—the chestnuts: Chorus Jig, Opera Reel, Moneysumk, all those tunes.

I'm curious what other influences you had early on in your fiddling career.

I never took lessons. It was purely developmental, I knew how to fiddle and playing for dances is sort of a special adaptation of fiddling. So I was reflecting the experience of playing for hours for moving dancers, the sounds and the feel of the rhythmical aspect of them, which is so important for contra dancing. The first album we (with brother Randy) did was Castles in the Air, and that was really reflection of the music we were playing for the dance in 1976. And when I have listened to it now, I was doing just about everything that I do now, back then. So, did that happen? I developed a style just based on the whole dance experience, coming from where I was coming from.

Were you listening to other fiddle styles?

I still do. I listen to a lot of different kinds of fiddle music. But a few other things influenced me as well. I remember playing for the Nelson dance time after time and wanting to be able to make it more interesting for myself. So you're playing fifteen minutes per dance and I'm only playing one or two tunes, perhaps a standard tune of the time, like President's Garfield's Hornpipe, one of the American-based tunes that were popular in the 1800's that remained as repertoire in New England in the 1960's and '70s; people still knew these tunes. If you listen to Cape Cod, they play the tunes where you play it twice through the tune and then you're on to the next tune. But that was not the protocol for contra dance playing. You'd play one, maybe two tunes in a medley at the point, so you'd stick playing seven or eight times through the same tune. My sense was "Well, I need to do something with this music" and change it a little bit. I think Gene Gregoire was just so interested and hopefully for the dancers as well. So, my goal back then was to try to improvise on the basic traditional fiddle stuff. I have to admit that I was influenced by the dance because I was doing Boston dances at the time. And there's quite a difference between playing in the city and playing in the country. So we would play happily in Nelson and then go to Boston and the dancers were much more marked—"playing too slowly," as a criticism. And we were "Really? Do you know how to contra dance?" So there was an expectation; we were supposed to bump the speed up when playing in the city.

What else about that Boston scene influenced you?

There was bluegrass happening, there was jazz, and I got to mix with some of those musicians because Russ Barenberg, who lived in Jamaica Plain at the time, really was bitten by the New England Chestnuts and Castles in the Air albums, which was a little surprising, but he expressed interest in playing guitar for the contra that we were playing for. He was playing with Matt Glazer and Evan Stover, and those guys, Jay Unger, Fiddle Fever kind of stuff. And I was a little jealous of the freedom that I heard in those audiences as a contra musician. Traditionally, I was definitely influenced by them and their roots, whatever they were listening to. Like Matt was into Steppen Grappelli and Andy Davis definitely had a personal interest in jazz. So I'd get together with Andy and we'd try to play some of the early jazz pieces for fun.

One of the things that I noticed listening to Castles in the Air and then some of your later recordings, is that there's a point at which you definitely went from playing variations on tunes to really improvising like a jazz player. What brought you over the edge, so to speak, to feel like you could do that with New England tunes?

The hours that I put in playing for dances. Grinding it out. Being able to take leaps of faith, so to speak, in the tunes during a dance. It's not like a concert situation so there's a certain amount of freedom you experience as a dance musician. I just made it a personal focus. I had the hours of playing consistently all the time, and it just sort of evolved. It's not like I studied it; I tried learning note for note some of the Grappelli tunes off recordings and that gave me a frame of mind of things never repeating themselves. Plus there was the whole influence from Ralph Page and Bob McGillen. I remember meeting Ralph at his house in Keene and driving to the dance with him and he was into the French—Canadian fiddling. Gene Gregoire just was so interesting and he would say, "You know I was with Jean—" and last summer at my Main Fiddle Camp and he played Moneysumk seven times through for our dance and he never played it the same." He was boosting what you could do—you can do the same thing? Come on! And egging me on, in a way. And I was like, "Yeah! Sure!" And then of course, Bob McGillen was writing tunes early on within the traditional framework, which was awe-inspiring. He'd write something like "Ralph Page's Hornpipe" and we'd play it at the dance with Ralph calling and Bob would call out "Heh, Ralph, how do you like that tune?"

One of the things I think about when I'm playing and improvising is it being dance music. When you improvise are you thinking of it as propelling the dance or as more for your own interest, or both?

A couple of things come to mind. First, I think there's a danger in improvising with the tunes if you're not rooted in the dance tradition. You have to totally understand where you're coming from and what the dancers are expecting you as a dance musician before you can successfully improvise and keep the whole feeling of the beat and the phrasing, and something like the two phrases will learn back off of B1, B2 is. It has to be really obvious to be successful dance music. But as long as you understand it fully and know what the tradition is, then you can keep your roots and still do it. On the pro side, when you get into improvisation as a musician, everything takes on a fresh attitude. You might be saying "Oh my aching body, my fingers are killing me," I've been playing this piece of music of "Wow, this is really interesting and I'm excited." And I think that excitement and freshness carries through to the dancers.

At the same time, let's say you're playing traditionally and you're not improvising. Then I think there's a certain respect for the music that the dancers will respond to and it can be very successful.

Did you ever make a study of music theory?

No. This is all from a fiddler's point of view. It's
very unSophisticated. It’s dabbling. And the dabbling comes from trying to create a style of playing that is true to yourself and that’s what I’ve always done. Maybe the benefit of having grown up in a musical family is that the influence of different kinds of music has always been there. And so to be true to myself is to be one hundred percent who I am, to assimilate different parts of different kinds of music and try to filter it into the style that I play.

What else have you dabbled in, in search of that?

Some of the traditional American music from the South, the old-time stuff, or bluegrass, and early jazz which is very connected to dance fiddling. It’s not modern jazz which is more listening or more club music but early Grappelli and Stuff Smith, which people used to jitterbug and swing to, really gussied down-to-earth fiddling. And I think what I gleaned off that is the attention on the bow and the way this swingy feel to it. That's one of things of that I've hopefully incorporated.

One of the things that I've heard you do in concerts and on recordings, and to a certain extent at dances, is play almost like a contest fiddler. The really impressive hard sounding tunes. Did you ever play in fiddle contests?

I did two. I won one and the other one I didn't. I really don't enjoy competition fiddling but I do enjoy tackling pieces that are musically interesting to my ear and challenging technique-wise. I really try to dissect the playing of Jean Carignan on some of his recordings and back then there weren't the tools we have now—you know, the amazing slow down. It was just off LPs. I actually met Carignan, up in Hanover, New Hampshire at the Northeast Festival that was held there. I've actually admired the guy and his technique. So I try to imitate his technique and some of the bouncing bow stuff and the attack. It's just a pure imitation thing.

Are there other musicians whose playing you've dissected in that way?

Lots. A lot of the Irish and Scottish and Cape Breton fiddlers. I now listen to a particular cut on a recording yesterday of this French-Canadian fiddler, Yvon Mimeault, and I noticed that he was, to my ear, doing an imitation of Joseph Bouchard, a fiddler in the 1930s and 40s who did a shake, like an extreme vibrato on the end of a short musical phrase within a fiddle tune. So, I'm hearing this again with Mimon, who's eighty now.

Are there ways that you've noticed the dance scene changing over the years and do you think that your music has changed to reflect that?

Yes, the dance scene has changed a lot. When I came into it, there were a whole lot of the chestnuts danced on a regular basis, plus an occasional New England square with rhythm players who come from a jazz background, that are playing contra dance stuff. I like it. I like the flexibility. Like one dance can be very traditional with a single guitar playing maybe, and that puts you in a whole different situation of playing more of a basic repertoire, straight ahead, with less improvis, which I enjoy as much I do the improvisational, maybe more jazzy feel.

Are there innovations that you've seen or heard or experienced over the years that you don't like?

Not offhand. I've been in an experience, in my travels, when I've been down south, playing the New England style in North Carolina or Georgia, and then have moved up to the Northwest, like playing at an evening or the weekend be an old-time band, and they're playing for contra and they're playing old-time southern stuff which has a very different feel to it. Wow, this so works for the contra dance but it is so different phrasing-wise and everything. This can be handled in different ways successfully. It's an education.

You mentioned being around folks like Bob McQuillen who are composing a lot of tunes. When did you start composing tunes yourself?

I think one of the first tunes I wrote came out directly from a session with Andy Davis, when we were playing some early jazz things, just for fun. I remember coming home and this tune, “Contrarz,” popped out as a direct result of that session. The A part was kind of like contra dance, straight ahead, traditional sounding and the B part is bluesy, jazzy, what a different feel to it. And it was a mix of the two immediately.

Sometimes when I'm composing I feel like there are so many traditional tunes what's the point of writing new ones?

Ah yes, but there's an art to it. That's the challenge isn't it? Sitting down and writing a tune in the key of D or A (laughed).

And try not to make it sound like... The traditional mode is like—hasn't it all been composed of playing with rhythm players because you always encounter tunes somebody else has written that are in D or A and they are totally fun to play. Wow, nobody thought of that before?

What's the process for you of composing a tune? Do you decide to compose a tune or does it just happen or come to you?

All different manners. I find in a perfect world you would get up at 5 a.m....

Not in my world (laughter) and tunes would just spill out of you.

Maybe I should try that (laughter)...

How often does this happen a few times, but it's happened. Other times it will be just the middle of the day, it doesn't matter the time, and all of a sudden there's an interesting fingering, melodic progression, or phrase that becomes the nugget for a bigger tune. So you take that phrase and try to form something around it and oftentimes that will work. Some tunes begin one day and will end up being a tune four days later after it's morphed through all these different weird things. Other ones I've sat down and written the whole tune, within half an hour and it's just happened. Sometimes when you have an instrument, just driving somewhere, like the napkin tune I wrote was purely a head thing. In the last few years, I've been playing mandolin some. It's set up the same way as a fiddle and sometimes just playing on a different instrument will inspire a different thought process. So I've written tunes on the mandolin. The thinking about the mandolin is that it has the frets so you have an idea of chords, so that's different and inspiring. And somehow it just makes more sense to play on the neck of a mandolin and it's not the big deal it is on the fiddle so that sometimes you get different finger intervals.

We were talking about the composing tune process and one of the things that has influenced tune composing has been the birth of our first grandchild. That whole feeling of warmth and lovingness created a waltz for her, immediately. So that was pretty neat. Another inspiration was when I was on a fiddle trip to Boulder, Colorado and went into a music store and found this bright apple-red electric guitar; when I got home with it a tune just popped out from that, called The Harmony Rocket. Other times just evolve from sort of a non-musical important phrase, or you can say, I really want to write a French-Canadian tune in flavor.

Are there other musical goals that you've set for yourself?

Well, I still would like to play more like Willy Hunter Jr., so I'm working on that. Like the slow airs stuff, I really want to absorb the essence of that musical stuff. You know with the phrase stuff, it's there, it is what it is and that's what I'm doing and I'm getting older so I'm not trying to change any of my technique at this point.
Little Ingrid's Waltz

Duet

Traditional Swedish Val
arranged by Kathleen Everingham

Formation: Circle waltz mixer
Tune: Little Ingrid's Waltz with no repeats, or any other 32 measure waltz

A 1-4  Couples promenade counterclockwise.
    5-8  Ladies take two steps to center, two steps back to the circle.
    9-12 Gents take two steps to center, turn over right shoulders and take two waltz steps towards partners.
    13-16 Partners dance back-to-back once and a little bit more, to form a big wavy circle with the gents facing out and the ladies facing in. Take right hands with your partner and left hands with the next person in the circle.

B 1-4  Balance right toward your partner one step, left toward the left-hand person one step, then slide to the right in front of your partner with two waltz steps to trade places and remake the circle by taking left hands with your partner and right hands with the next person to the right in the circle, gents still facing out and ladies facing in.
    5-8  Balance left toward your partner, and right toward the righthand person, then slide to the left in front of partner to meet a new partner coming toward you.
    9-12 Dance back-to-back with this new partner.
    13-16 Swing this new partner “Jane Austen” style.

Author's notes:
* A Jane Austen-style swing is the author’s name for an eighteenth-century allemande right. This figure is started by having partners hold with right shoulders together and extending their right hands toward each other. Both partners also place their left hands behind their own backs. They act as if they are going to shake hands, but miss, and instead hook right elbows and with their right hands grasp their partner’s left hand behind their partner’s back. From this position, they look and smile at each other while taking four waltz steps around a common center axis.
* Each waltz step is a complete one-two-three.
* This dance is adapted from the author’s contra circle mixer “Rhubarb Go Round.”

© 2008 Tom Anderson
Is there anything else that you want to add while the recorder is still running?

The only thing that I would add is that I just go back to people like Bob McQuillen and Ralph Page and Dudley Leufman as being mentors, people who were so important in my own personal development. So, total respect and big thank you to all of them, for being there, and carrying on this particular tradition, which I think has a major importance in terms of community and enjoying traditions based on real music and real interaction, as opposed to the pop culture which is corporation-driven. This is for real and it means a lot and it gives the whole sense of who we are as community and a country.

And at the time that you made Castles were people doing two potatoes at a dance?

Yeah, I think we were—bump, bump...

Your most recent recording is the Waltzes CD with Elvie, which I love, and you've done a bunch of gigs with her in recent years. What's been like, as a parent, to work with your daughter?

Incredibly rich, I know Elvie has moved on, she's developing a whole music therapy career with a master's degree in Ireland but there's always a connection with her musically. She was just telling me that someone has made a documentary in Ireland about this particular traditional singer from County Clare. She said, "Well, he's kind of like Bob McQuillen. He's made a certain song (and she said it in Irish, so I don't know what the name of it is) and his singing has brought it to the fore, so that this song is sung all over the world now." But there is a connection with Elvie's partner, Dennis Liddy, in this documentary. The filmmaker wanted things recorded live in the studio for the documentary. So Dennis on fiddle and Elvie on piano played this Waltz that I wrote for my granddaughter Jadyn, and they ended up closing the documentary with this Waltz. So, that was kind of cool. It's very neat.

Well, thank you so much Rodney. (bug sounds)

Part 2 of the interview—about Rodney's violin making—will be posted on our website as an addendum to this article in January 2011.

Ethan Hazzard-Watkins is a fiddler based in Brattleboro, Vermont, who tours extensively, playing for contra and English country dancing with bands such as Elixer and The Pigments. Ethan also helps to organize dance events around New England, including Youth Dance Weekend, the Brattleboro Dance Dance, and dance series in Brattleboro and in Greenfield, Massachusetts.

Photos of Rodney in the 1980s (page 20) and the 1990s (this page courtesy Rodney Miller.)

CDSS Store Update Winter 2011

The Ball is the highlight of the year for an English dance community—an opportunity for a grand dance party, elegant dressing, favorite dances, and dancing to the finest music available. Volume 6 of the CDSS Boston Centre English country dance series, At the Ball, commemorates the over 20 years which Bare Necessities has played for the Philadelphia Ball. The booklet includes 15 classic longways English country dances—nine are from different editions of Playford’s The Dancing Master, 13 dance are double jigs with one of them a double progression and one other improper, and the other two dances are triple minors. A number of the dances will be easily recognized by those who frequent balls, as they are popular with dance communities across the country and make it onto programs regularly. All of the dances will fit into a ball program. Included are: Amariasil, Anna Maria, Bar a Bar, Custody’s Maggot, King of Poland, Leather Lake House, Mount Hills, Mullberry Garden, Never Love Thou More, The Northward Waltz, Prince George’s Birthday, The Permolt, Red House, Sadler’s Wells, and Young Widow. BOOK, $9.00.

Elixir Rampant

Elixir’s brand new recording features 12 tracks of daring acoustic music as the band stretches out to develop a unique sound and tackle some bold repertoire. From blazing French Canadian reels to beautiful waltzes, from spicy originals to classic songs, Rampant is a wild ride of musical goodness. Elixir is Nile Freeland (fiddle/vocals), Ethan Hazzard-Watkins (fiddle), Jesse Hazzard-Watkins (trumpet/flugelhorn), Anna Patton (clarinet/vocals), Owen Morrison (guitar/foot percussion). The band is joined by Will Patton and Garrett Sawyer on bass. CD, $15.00

Notorious Road to Damascus

The third cheerily eclectic outing from the four-piece Notorious: lots of Larry Unger originals plus tunes from Quebec, Romania, the Balkan Gypsy tradition, the southern Appalachians, Blind Willie Johnson and more. Notorious is Larry Unger and Eden MacAdam-Somer with Sam Bartlett and Mark Heilken. CD, $15.00

Revels

Welcome Yule: An English Christmas Revels

This joyous new holiday CD highlights the best of Revels' most popular English-themed Christmas productions and features stunning music, songs and holiday carols from Medieval, Renaissance and Victorian periods. The Christmas Revels Chorus and Children's Chorus are joined by a host of wind, string and brass instruments in a wide array of festive music for the season. Particularly moving in the thrilling live sound of 1,000 audience members filing
Sander's Theatre in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with their voices on the peace round, Dona Nobis Pacem, one of several events found on this new recording. Other live events include The Satanic Masses' Carol and the Christmas Songs' iconic signature piece, The Lord of the Dance. CD, $13

Garland Films
The Morris Films of Lionel Bacon
Lionel Bacon, a keen dancer, joined the Cambridge Morris Men in 1932. With that club, known when touring as the Travelling Morris Men, he directed, met, and, unusual for that time, filmed both traditional dancers and revival of the inter-war years. He later joined the London Pride Morris Men in London, and was instrumental in the formation of the Whitchurch and Winchester teams.

This DVD shows clips of the following occasions and teas: Travelling Morris in the Welsh Marches 1932; Travelling Morris in the Cotswolds 1933; Cambridge Morris Men at Ringstead, Northants; Thaxted Morris Weekend 1934; Travelling Morris in Devon 1934; Travelling Morris in Suffolk 1935; Dance tour to Somerset 1935; Thaxted Ring Meeting 1936; Warengro Ring Meeting 1936; Thaxted Ring Meeting 1937; Travelling Morris in Devon 1937; Cotswold Whit Monday 1935; Collecting at Bampton 1936; and Whitchurch and Dance Day 1935. A closely argued thesis is provided. Originally shot on 9.5mm film and although every effort has been made to enhance the material, the quality often remains poor. (Warning: This DVD is coded for European USE DVD players, it will not play; computer DVD drives should) DVD, $22.50

Brenda Godrich (ed.)
Pat Shaw 1917-1997
Patrick Shulcham-Shaw was a man of many talents and an authority on the folk music song, music and dance of many countries. He played the bodhran, the bodhran, the bodhran, and the bodhran. He was indeed, it said that there were none he could not just pick up and play. He also was a fine singer and musician.

Pat collected traditional tunes, most notably in Shetland where he noted down tunes that had previously been passed on orally. He edited the Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection, which was published in eight volumes and a second volume. He was a "romantic" for the Sing for Pleasure movement. Most of all he was an authority on and composer of English country dances. It was his professional output in all styles and levels of complexity which has led him to be labelled the Twentieth Century Dancing Master. He took his dances to Wales, Scotland, Holland, and the USA as well as all over England. But Pat was also full of charm and enthusiasm and had a charisma which led to him being loved and well remembered by all who knew him. This book has attempted to keep alive his memories and the varying strands of his life. BOOK, $24.00

Allan M. Winkler
To Everything There is a Season: Pete Seeger and the Power of Song
"As author or co-author of such legendary songs as "If I Had a Hammer," "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" and "Turn, Turn, Turn," Pete Seeger is the most influential folk singer in the history of the United States. Allan M. Winkler describes how Seeger applied his musical talents to improve conditions for less fortunate people over the course of his 60 years. This book uses Seeger's long life and wonderful songs to reflect on the important role folk music played in various social movements of the twentieth century. BOOK, $24.00

Daniel J. Walkowitz
City Folks: English Country Dance and the Politics of the Folk in Modern Britain
This is the story of English country dance, from its 18th century roots in the English cities and countryside, to its transatlantic leap to the US in the 20th century, told by a renowned historian and folk dancer who has immersed himself in the rich history of the folk tradition and researched its steps. In City Folks, Walkowitz shows that the history of country and folk dancing in America is deeply intertwined with that of political liberalism and the "old left." He states dancing folk within surprisingly diverse contexts, from progressive-era reform, and playground and school movements, to changes in consumer culture, and the project of a modernizing, cosmopolitan middle class society. Tracing the spread of folk dancing, with particular emphasis on English country dance, immigration folk dance, and contra, Walkowitz connects his history of dance and its politics in Britain, and international political influences in America. Through archival research and interviews, and ethnography of dance communities, City Folk shows dancers and dancing bodies to speak. BOOK, $35.00

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Upcoming Events

These are the bare bones—date, event title, town/sponsor, group contact, information. The next deadline is November 1 for events on or after August 30. Send to info@tds.org or CDSS, PO Box 528, Haydenville, MA 01039. These events and others are posted on our website (www.cdss.org). For information on regular events for the Group Affiliate, see www.cdss.org/group affiliates.html

Jan 1
Black & White Contra Ball. New York City address

Jan 1

Jan 1
Gala Holiday Party, Concord, MA, CDSS Boston. www.cdss.org

Jan 9-10
Appalachian Developing Weekend. Bentonville, NC, Appalachian Dance School, BOOLE-ICHC

Jan 14-15
Charlotte Dance Conference. Charlotte, NC, Charlotte Dance Conference, BOOLE-ICHC

Jan 16-18

Jan 16-18
Georgia Gubernatorial, Atlanta, GA, American Folklore Society, BOOLE-ICHC

Jan 16-18
Ralph Page Dance Legacy Weekend. Durham, NH, SEF

Jan 16-18

Jan 16-18
New Year's Ball. St. Charles, IL, Lamanda BCD, www.lambdasong.com

Jan 16-18

Jan 21-22

Jan 22
Eloy City Assembly, New River, CT, New Haven CD, www.nec.org

Jan 29
FolkFest. New Haven, CT, www.folkfest.org

Jan 30
 cease<br>Feb 1-2

Feb 1-8

Feb 11-15
Tropical Dance Vacation: Contra & Square Week. St. Croix, Virgin Islands TDV, tropicaladdursions.com

Feb 12
Handmade Footwear. Nashville, TN, The American Folklore Society, BOOLE-ICHC

Feb 12

Feb 19

Feb 20-21

Feb 20-21
Seacoast Folk Festival. Seacoast Folk Festival, www.esf.org

Feb 25-26
Dance All Night. Sprague, PA, www.spraguefolk.org

Feb 25-26

Mar 4-5

Mar 4-5
Playbill Bay. Downtown, MA, CDSS Boston. www.cdss.org
Special Notes
Lifetime Contribution Award on April 2—see page 6
The CDSS News will go online in 2011, replacing the paper copy—see page 8
The CDSS Members List is now online!
If you’re a member, go to www.cdss.org and go to the Login section at the lower right corner.
Happy New Year! May 2011 be filled with dance, music and song!