

Hands Four

The harvest moon has traditionally been a blessing for farmers. Just as the summer's crops were ready for picking, the bright autumn moon, still high in the sky at sunset, would extend the day with its warm glow for a few precious hours. This allowed the early settlers the extra time needed to reap the benefits of the season's bountiful harvest.

Well, with the advent of the Industrial Revolution and the coming of the super-market, a lot of us urbanites have lost touch with the true meaning of a harvest moon, but not so for some 140 dedicated contra dancers who stayed up late September 21 and 22 to reap the bountiful harvest of wonderful dances and delightful folk music at the 6th Annual Santa Barbara Harvest Moon Festival. What a festive weekend it was.

The nationally renowned Ted Sannella brought from New England a repertoire of his own original contras, squares, and triples, seasoned with his heartwarming anecdotes about the origin of the dance titles. His crisp, clean, and animated calls made for a delightful weekend of dance.

Sharing the stage with Ted was the musical magic of four of the most talented musicians on the contra scene. On fiddle and dancing feet was Cathie Whitesides, Laurie Andres tickled his piano accordion like an old friend, Paul Kotapish in his best sense of humor worked wonders on the mandolin. To round it all out, there was Paul Rangell, whose paintings were on stage, playing a guitar that

Becoming a Good Dancer

As I have been developing as a caller and a leader of contra and square dancing, certain questions keep coming up. Recent events, both in the Bay Area and Santa Barbara, have led me to do some soul searching on one of these big questions: What makes a good dancer?

There tends to be three stages in the development of good dancing. Phase one is beginning; phase two, hot shot; phase three, community dancer.

During phase one, dancers are working on vocabulary and timing. It is this period where a dancer is learning what movements go with which calls and how to time it with the music. Figures such as the woman's chain, hey, and contra corners take time to become part of the repertoire. Also, during the beginning stage a dancer is learning how one figure flows into another. As a dancer gains confidence with transitions and figures, a dancer begins to develop style. It is when a dancer experiments with dance styles that he or she might transmute into the hot shot stage.

Hot shot dancers think a good dancer is able to perform lots of fancy footwork and extra twirls, and still be close to on time in a contra. With this thought in mind, these people rush for others of similar ilk and jump in the center set, hopefully excluding all beginners so that as one progresses up and down the line everyone will be there with an extra pirouette after each allemande in a contra corners. Or one may find a rising excitement in trying for seven or eight twirls in the course of a courtesy turn. For

many this constitutes "good dancing."

Many people get stuck here, never growing up out of this selfish phase. It's too bad, because the sense of joy that comes from the third phase is lost to those who get stuck in "hot shot."

So what is stage three? Stage three is community dancing. It is here where a dancer finds that good dancing is the kind of dancing that welcomes everyone. A good community dancer may find enjoyment in the interaction with the extra twirls of a fellow experienced dancer, but will also find tremendous fun in engaging with a lost newcomer while executing a simple courtesy turn.

A good dancer will spread a sense of enjoyment to all he or she dances with. A good dancer is concerned that all the dancers in the hall dance well. It is here where the sense of community that surrounds and pervades the contra dance flourishes and grows. More than anything else, it is this sense of community that keeps people coming for more.

Although challenging and tricky dances are lots of fun, for the community dancer, it is the interaction with people in the set dances that become the height of enjoyment. In this spirit, even the simplest of dances are lots of fun.

I'd like to share a case in point. The last time I was in at a San Francisco dance, I asked a woman to dance who I had never met before. She said, "I've only danced one dance before."

"I don't care," I told her as I whisked her into a contra line.

Old Time Barn Dance Calendar

Location

CB: Carrillo Ballroom, 100 East Carrillo Street, Santa Barbara.

OP: Oak Park dance platform, Junipero at Calle Real, Santa Barbara

Special Concert

On Saturday, February 10, 1990, SBCDS is proud to present in concert, Evo and Jemmy Bluestein with Ira Bernstein. Evo and Jemmy have graced our dances on numerous occasions with their inspiring dance music.

Ira Bernstein is a master clogger and tap dancer. He is considered among the country's foremost purveyors of traditional clogging.

For those of you who missed their concert a couple years ago, now is your chance. Besides the music and dance being totally inspirational, it's a veritable tour through the history and development of step dancing, with many regional styles displayed with dazzle and grace.

The concert is scheduled to be held at the Natural History Museum's Fleischmann Auditorium. Tickets will be \$8.00. Mark your calendar and watch it!

Note

The Challenging Contra Series is planned to continue, twice a month. Watch for time, date, and location, or call the Contra Hotline, (805) 969-1511

Come dance on the finest dance floor in the West at the Carrillo Ballroom or under the stars at Oak Park. Join the fun! Dance to the irresistible rhythms of a live old-time string band. We'll do the flowing contra dances of New England, the colorful square dances of the Old West, plus a few old-time couple dances such as waltzes & polkas.

Beginners' Workshop

We hold a beginners' class before each dance! Come at 6:30 to learn the basic moves. No prior experience is necessary as all dances are taught and prompted. Wear comfortable clothes. Generally dances become more challenging as the evening progresses.

Times & Admission

Beginners' class, 6:30; Dance, 7-10 pm. All dances \$4.00 unless otherwise noted.

Phone

For the latest dance information call: (805) 969-1511.

Good Dancer, from cover

The dance was a fairly tricky one, with a hey to a half woman's chain followed by women do si do and return to partner. Although my partner had to keep her wits about her, with a little help, she managed to get it right about half the time. Throughout the dance, though, we were in high spirits. We'd laugh out loud at the little mistakes and big successes we had. That dance was one of the most fun I had all night!

So the next time your at a dance, don't limit yourself. Find out what fun it can be to dance with everyone at every level of ability. Go for an outside line. Then bring a beginner into the center set. Let loose and laugh while enjoying the simplicity and flirtation of a straight courtesy turn with no extra twirls, just a long look into someone's eyes before you're off into the next figure. Let the sense of community develop in you. Jump into phase three and become a good good dancer.

—Erik Hoffman

Sun. Nov 5 CB

From Spokane, WA, comes Caller and Dance Composer of renown, Penn Fix. Penn will be joined by the Growling Old Geezers.

Sat. Nov 11 SLO

Join Erik Hoffman and the Growling Old Geezers at the San Luis Obispo Grange hall, 2880 S. Broad St., SLO, for a day of contras, Squares, and dance styling. An open dance follows that evening. Call Erik, 969-9777 for workshop registration details.

Sun. Nov 19 CB

Join us in our annual Thanksgiving Potluck. Then dance to the lofty tunes of two of the Bay Area's finest, Cathie Whitsides and Craig Johnson, fiddle and piano. Erik Hoffman will call the dance. The potluck is at 5, \$1. The dance follows at 7, \$5.

Sun. Dec 3 CB

Carl Magagnosc and the J & T Fiddle Band

Sun. Dec 8 CB

From England comes caller and historian of American dance, Bernard Chalk. Kitchen Junket will provide the tunes.

Sun. Dec 17 CB

Carl Magagnosc and the Live Oak String Band.

Mon. Dec 25 CB

Join us in our second annual Christmas Dance. Erik Hoffman will call, Music TBA.

Sun. Jan 7 CB

Erik Hoffman with the Tecolote Tune Twisters.

Sun. Jan 21 CB

Caller Flip Alpern, from Ukiah, CA, leads the dance while the Tecolote Tune Twisters twang those tunes.

February Dates

Sun Feb 4, Sun Feb 11, & Sun Feb 18

Neighboring Dances

Ojai Art Center: November 25, December-January (call)
SLO: 2880 So. Broad St.: November 11, December 9, January 13

Hands Four *from cover* made me want to stop and listen.

All of this under the intimate Oak Park Big Top, casting its warm harvest moon glow over the enthusiastic and joyous crowd. With two potlucks, numerous workshops, a lunch hour concert, and an all night music jam, many will be tapping their toes with fond memories for months to come.

Looking to the months ahead, Santa Barbara will play host to a variety of guest callers and musicians to entice and delight your ears and feet.

Starting November 5 we are very lucky to have caller extraordinaire Penn Fix. Fix is a contra dance composer from Spokane, Washington. He is accompanied by "Sandy's Fancy", who you may remember has tickled yours in the past with their delightful music.

Our Thanksgiving potluck will be on November 19th and Cathie Whitesides has gracefully consented to bring her fiddling magic back to town along with San Franciscan pianist, Craig Johnson, with Erik Hoffman calling — an evening not to be missed.

A special treat has been planned for Friday, December 8th: Bernard Chalk, originally from Great Britain, will be calling, of all things, American contras, plus a few surprises.

Our Christmas Day dance has become a local tradition and a wonderful way to end this special day with friends, neighbors, and Erik's surprise dance band. Dress in red and green, and watch out for the mistletoe!

Start the '90s off right with Flip Alpern on the 19th of January calling all the way from Ukiah, California.

Judging by the number of happy faces at the dances, the bundles of Dance Stars we send out, and the phone calls from callers and musicians from all over the United States wanting to perform in our town, it's clear that our future will be looking up for the '90s. Santa Barbara promises to be one of the most exciting

places for Contra dancing in the coming decade!

NOTE: You may notice that the dates and locations for the Challenging Contra Series has been omitted from the calendar. There has been a scheduling problem as of this publica-

tion. But not to fear, the dances will continue, so keep your ears open at the dances, watch for a special flyer, and for more details call our Contra Hotline 969-1511.

— Shane Butler

Orienting Squarely

As promised, here is a look on the bearings you'll find yourself using when dancing squares. Grab a partner, square 'em up, and let's take a look at where you're at!

First, there are the basic directions, much like contra. When "squaring" the set, all couples face the center. The "outside" is obvious. Left and right are as dyslexic as ever.

Then there are the couple classifications: heads and sides, and couple numbers within the square. Both these classifications are oriented in reference to the room. Head couples normally have either their back or their face to the caller. Sides have their sides towards the caller. The Head and Side positions almost always refer to the people in those positions at any particular time thus both men and women may find themselves as both a head or side at some time during a dance.

In the numbering system couple one has their back to the caller; couples two, three, and four go consecutively to the right. This number remains with the couple, or at least with the man role, throughout the course of the dance. So a person starting as a side may become a head and vice versa, though the number four man will remain number four throughout the dance.

In square dancing, partners often change though "geographical" relationships remain the same. The geographic relations are: partner,

corner, right and left hand persons, and opposite. For the women, your current partner will be found on your left, for men, look to the right. On the other side is the corner. Men look left, women right. A call for a man to go to his right hand lady tells him to go to the woman of the

couple to his right. Surprisingly, a woman finds her left hand man to her left!

Your opposite is directly across from you. These denominations can be a source of confusion, as these faces can change throughout the dance.

Luckily, there are only seven other faces to remember and usually four are of the opposite sex, so it's not too bad!

There are many calls where people, "go around one," (or two or three). In these calls the reference points are people. Usually, people start walking around the outside of the square and pass the specified number of people. Then they either cut into the center of the square, or they cut into a line formed with the people at the specified location.

In Conclusion

As you dance squares, listen to the caller. Note the points of reference. Learn to flow through the dance using these points as a guide. As you dance, these points will become second nature, and you'll find yourself enjoying all sorts of squares as well as "hash" calling (impromptu calls at the whim of the caller) with ease and joy.

— Erik Hoffman



The Santa Barbara Country Dance Society is a center of the Country Dance and Song Society of America (CDSS) which was founded in 1915 to preserve, promote, study, teach, and enjoy our English and American dance, music and song heritage. We encourage you to support CDSS by becoming a member. Members receive a bimonthly national newsletter, a yearly scholarly publication, and discounts from the CDSS Store of records, tapes, CD's, and books. Look for applications at our dances or write or call CDSS at:

Country Dance And Song
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17 New South St.
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A Call for Child-Care

In the first Dance Star a call was put out to parents to help develop a child care program at our dances. The only response was from one person who thought we should raise the cost of admission so we could pay for a child care person.

Is this a good idea? Are there parents who would like child care at dances? Are there parents who would like to work with the coordinating committee to create a child care proposal?

If there is please call and leave a message on our phone machine, 969-1511, or write us. Some of us would like to work with you.

Dance Star

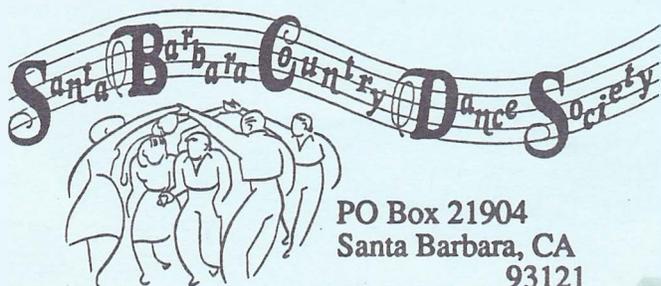
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Winter Wonderland

Join the intrepid holiday dancers as they brave the wild and wintery elements at our annual Christmas Day Dance, Monday, December 25 (of course), with Erik Hoffman calling.



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