

On Connection and Twirling

by Erik Hoffman

Picture this: you are dancing the man's role, the call is woman's chain. You like to gauge your "leader role" on your understanding of the experience level of the dancer with whom you're interacting. So, you're thinking, "straight (great) courtesy turn," or, "a twirl or two," but with some connection. The next neighbor woman pulls across and suddenly your hand is thrust upwards and she starts twirling. The first time, you're caught a bit off guard. But the next time, you pull your hand away, and she just spins away, no interplay between the two of you, no connection whatsoever. This scene has happened to me a number of times.

Connection is a large part of why many of us are drawn to contra dance. There is connection to the phrase of the music, the connection to your partner, and the connection to other dancers. Now, don't get me wrong, I enjoy twirling. I've enjoyably experienced it from both sides, as twirler and twirlee, and I will continue to do so. But, for everything gained there is something lost.

What is diminishing in twirling is the connection between the two dancers. A courtesy turn is a brief moment of engaging interaction. In a normal courtesy turn, there is a chance to give delicious weight as you engage each other's eyes. There is even time to chat a bit. Your bodies are closer together: it's more of a "cuddle." (Some of the best dancers with whom I've had the privilege to dance never twirled, and it felt great.)

As twirls are introduced, this connection diminishes. A single twirl at
see **CONNECTION**, next page

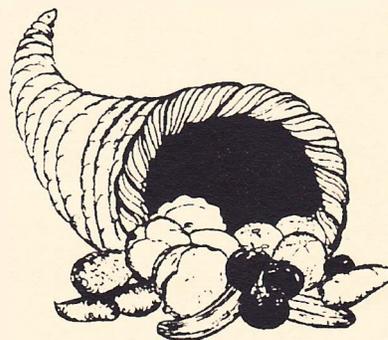
Star Gazer

Winter and Fall for Music and Dance

For those of us enamored with music and dance, here's some activities to warm our hearts over the next few months. They say home is where the heart is, so let's look close to home first.

The **Harvest Moon Dance Festival**, September 22-24, could be for you even if you're not registered yet, because it might still be possible to attend. Call George at (805) 563-0932 for the latest info.

That Sunday night's Carrillo Ballroom dance (September 24) is open to all and



features the Festival staff: **Dan Pearl** and **Uncle Gizmo**. Also featured is a ballroom full of festival-crazed dancers who are certain to charge up the band, the caller, and indeed, the entire floor, perhaps even raising it a few feet.

DANCES FOR FALL HOLIDAYS

Halloween falls on a Tuesday this year, but let's get our priorities straight: our annual **Halloween Masquerade Ball** and costume contest falls on Sunday, October 29, and brings **Erik Hoffman** down from the Bay Area and the **Chameleons** out from under some local rocks. Come as your favorite life form or object, or even an intangible.

Our annual pre-**Thanksgiving Potluck and Dance** is penciled in for Sunday, November 19, at 5:30. The dance itself is in ink, but not the potluck, because Elliott Karpales, our new potluck coordinator

(thanks, Elliott!), needs two or three more volunteers to help make this potluck happen. Call Elliott at 682-1877 to help out. (Don't worry—it's not a major commitment.)

If the potluck does happen, bring an edible concoction to share, \$1 and your own tableware. Listen for announcements at our dances or call the dance hotline for updated information. Remember, we'll have a dance at the usual time in any case.

We have the Carrillo Ballroom reserved for a **New Year's Eve Dance** this year! We're not sure yet just how long into the New Year we'll dance, but certainly a measurable amount. (Look for details in the next *Dance Star*.) If you'd like to help make this event happen, call Carl Magagnosc at (805) 964-0442.

OTHER EVENTS HERE & THERE

Here's a partial list of more dance- and/or music-related events coming up. Look for flyers on our literature table or call the number indicated.

Echo Summit Dance Camp, near Lake Tahoe, September 15-17. With **Erik Hoffman**, the **Hillbillies from Mars**, **For Old Time's Sake**, and **Cis Hinkle** of Atlanta. (916) 481-1974.

BACDS Fall Weekend at Monte Toyon, near Santa Cruz, October 6-8. English country and contra dancing, with dance instructors **Erna-Lynne Bogue** and **David Kaynor**. Plus **Morris**, clog and longsword. The theme this year is "bats" for some reason. (415) 856-2259.

Camp Sturtevant Hike and Dance Weekend, the second annual, October 7-9, at Camp Sturtevant in the San Gabriel Mountains. Hike in, do dance camp-type stuff, hike out. (Mules available for hire to carry your gear for you.) With **James Hutson** and **Spin Cycle**. Call Rich at (818) 249-9369.

see **WINTER AND FALL**, back page

In the first installment, Jonathan discussed New England and Southern square dancing. Here he covers Western square dancing and (briefly) the modern "club" square dance movement.

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Traditional Western square dancing was essentially the two forms discussed previously—primarily the Appalachian—moved



The various forms of square dance

■ Second of two parts

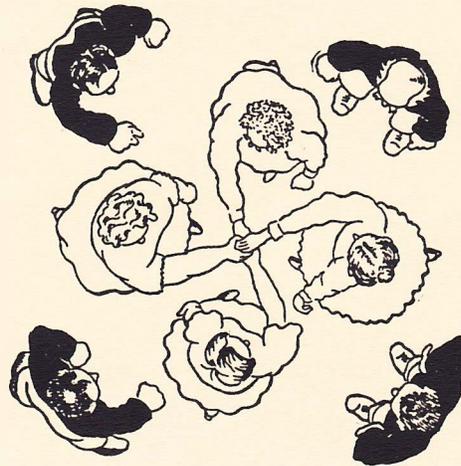
to the Western frontier. The notable things about this form were that most of the dances were done in "visiting couple" format (couple 1 dances with couple 2, then with couple 3, then with couple 4, then couple 2 leads...lots of standing around), the dancing was unphrased (moves beginning and ending anywhere in the music), and there seems to have been a whole lot of patter calling, more even than in Southern dancing. ("Patter" is the little rhymes we callers like to throw in sometimes: "Promenade, go round the track, make those feet go whickety-whack.")

Both these facts are easy to understand, I think, when one considers the setting. The callers were untrained: they probably were just folks who'd done some dancing back in New England or the South, and called sequences of moves as best they remembered. (Quick now: how many complete dances could you call from memory, right at this moment? They were no different.) Just as

A Square Dance Breakdown

by Jonathan Southard

significant, the dancers were all or mostly beginners too. Any caller who has worked with groups of ALL beginners can tell you two things: don't expect them to dance on the musical phrase, and go easy on dances where everybody has to move at once and be in the right place at the same time. So the unphrased, visiting couple squares were ide-



al. In addition, the music might have been just one instrument, or at most two, so the patter must have been a welcome addition to the band.

Traditional Western dance is, of course, extinct because its setting is extinct. And patter seems to be a dying art as well. I think the latter is true for two reasons: first, mod-

ern dancers like to have more and more moves fit into the available music, to make things more exciting. That means you spend more of your time as a caller prompting, and you just don't have as much leisure for, "Corn in the crib and peaches in

the shack, now promenade, go round the track." The other reason is self-fulfilling: since it's a vocal art, if people (callers) hear it less, then they will do it less, and this accelerates the decline. By the way, for the curious—people sometimes ask this—my own patter is all phrases that I've heard on recordings or live (or in some cases, read), and at this point I just have a stock of these phrases in my brain available for use on the spur of the moment.

Traditional Western square dance gave rise, though, to the **modern square dance** movement, which began in the late 1930s with a high school principal named Lloyd Shaw. He decided to make dance the basis of his high school physical education program. To this end he travelled all around the West collecting traditional dance calls. One thing led to another, and this activity gradually evolved into a separate and highly organized dance form, with hundreds of different codified moves. Since we don't do this dance form at our dances—and since I don't know much more than what I've just told you—I won't say more about it here.

The opinions—and any errors—in the foregoing are strictly my own. I welcome corrections and the presentation of alternative points of view.

Connection

from front page the end of a courtesy turn doesn't lose much, but the earlier the pivotal hand goes up, the less eye and body contact there is. The extreme is the scenario already described. Not only that, but often, twirling leads to being out of position when the music dictates the onset of the next figure. When that happens, it's rude to the entire set! It is easy to lose sight of the fact that when we dance, we are connecting to an entire set. When we get off time with that set, we are losing that connection too.

The decision as to the type of twirl made requires the consent of both people, and either can deny it. If the "turner"

wants to invite a twirl, s/he starts to lift the joined hands. If the "turnee" wants to accept, s/he engages the lift. If not, the "turnee" keeps her or his left hand low, as a normal courtesy turn occurs. (I use these words, "turner" and "turnee," because in contra dancing there is no leader or follower. Though sex roles are defined, the roles are complete, and everyone knows exactly what to do to carry out their part of the dance. Thus there is no leading or following.)

The position I promote and follow (with room for playfulness and mistakes) is first, that "no twirl" is the default, and second, if a flourish makes you fall behind

the phrase of the music, don't do it.

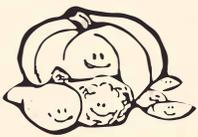
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This article originally appeared in the Bay Area Country Dancer no. 44. Erik calls our Halloween dance on October 29.

CHECK THIS OUT!

Bring two friends, new to contra dancing, to an SBCDS dance, and you get a free dance pass. Or bring one friend to one dance, and another friend to another dance. Same deal.

New dancers receive a free dance pass good for their second dance in any case.



Fall 1995

Santa Barbara Contra Dance Calendar



Santa Barbara Country Dance Society • P.O. Box 21904 • Santa Barbara, CA 93121-1904 • (805) 969-1511

Location Key

CB Carrillo Ballroom, 100 East Carrillo St., Santa Barbara. Co-sponsored by Santa Barbara Adult Programs.

CARP Main School, corner of 8th and Palm, Carpinteria.

Come dance on the finest floor in the West at the Carrillo Ballroom and at the more intimate Carpinteria setting. Join the fun! Dance to the irresistible rhythms of live old-time string bands. We'll do the flowing contras of New England, colorful square dances, plus a few old-time couple dances such as waltz.

We hold an **Introductory Workshop** before each dance. Come at 6:30 to learn the basics. No prior experience or partner is necessary. All dances are taught and prompted. Generally, the dances are simpler earlier in the evening. Wear comfortable shoes and clothing, and have a good time!

Times & Admission (unless otherwise noted)

Admission: \$5

Dance time:
7:00–10:00 pm

Introductory Workshop:
6:30 pm

FOR THE LATEST DANCE INFORMATION, CALL (805) 969-1511, THE SBCDS 24-HOUR DANCE HOTLINE

DATE LOC CALLER • BAND

Sept 3	Sun	CB	Carl Magagnosc • Immortal Lemmings Back from the brink.
Sept 9	Sat	CARP	Gary Shapiro • Chameleons Back from the shadows.
Sept 17	Sun	CB	Carl Magagnosc • Swing Easy Ease yourself over to the ballroom and swing a few.
Sept 24	Sun	CB	Dan Pearl • Uncle Gizmo (\$6) Don't miss the Harvest Moon staff and the Harvest Moon excitement.
Oct 1	Sun	CB	Jonathan Southard • Kitchen Junket Help welcome back KJ from their summer excursions.
Oct 14	Sat	CARP	Gary Shapiro • Hot Flashes No need for medicine.
Oct 15	Sun	CB	Carl Magagnosc • Growling Old Geezers No need for a geriatrician.
Oct 29	Sun	CB	Erik Hoffman • Chameleons No <i>need</i> for a costume, but consider wearing one anyway. It's our annual Halloween Masquerade Ball.
Nov 5	Sun	CB	Jonathan Southard • Growling Old Geezers
Nov 11	Sat	CARP	Jonathan Southard • Swing Easy
Nov 19	Sun	CB	Gary Shapiro • Kitchen Junket Preceding the dance, there might be a pre-Thanksgiving Potluck at 5:30. Call the SBCDS hotline for the latest information, or call Elliott at 682-1877 to volunteer to help make it happen. If it does, bring food to share, your own tableware and \$1.

September 1995

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Other Events in Our Vicinity

Ojai — Ojai Art Center, 113 Montgomery St. Fall dances to be announced. For the latest info call Ginny at (805) 646-0832 or the SBCDS hotline.

San Luis Obispo — Second Saturdays, 8–11 pm, intro 7:30. SLO Veteran's Hall, 801 Grand Ave. near Monterey St. Admission \$5.

Int'l Folk Dancing at 5:30. For info call (805) 541-0201 (hotline). **Fiddlers Convention** — Oct. 8, Stow House, 304 N. Los Carneros, Goleta, 10:30–5. Info: Folk Mote Music, (805) 962-0830.

Los Angeles area — Contra dances every weekend. For more info call the 24-hour LA Dance Hotline at (818) 951-2003.

Winter and Fall from front page

Old-Time Fiddlers Convention, 24th annual, Sunday, October 8. Old-time music, competition for all levels. Stow House in Goleta, 10:30 am to 5 pm. Call Folk Mote Music at (805) 962-0830.

CTMS Malibu New Year's Camp. Mu-



Square Dance Class Starts

A beginner class for square dancing, sponsored by the Santa Barbara Bachelors 'n' Bachelorettes Club, begins October 3, and continues on Tuesdays through June. The class meets at the Peabody School, 3018 Calle Noguera, in Santa Barbara, from 8 to 10 pm. Country/Western line dancing will be taught from 7 to 8 pm. Instructor/caller is Wyane (no typo) Simpson. For information call 962-5523.

sic and dance at Camp Hess Kramer. (818) 342-7664.

San Francisco Folk Music Club's **Camp Harmony**, also around New Year's, an annual camper-run music and dance camp. To apply this year, you must join the SFFMC by September 1! (415) 661-2217.

Crisis: SBCDS Needs Us

Crisis? What Crisis?

Perhaps things are going too well, and perhaps that's part of the problem: "If it don't seem to be broke, don't fix it."

The SBCDS is run almost entirely by volunteers, dancers like us. Some of our dancer-volunteers have had to move on from some important tasks, and right now we have real needs in the following areas:

- Mailing list maintenance, call Carl, 964-0442
- Potlucks, call Elliott, 682-1877
- Harvest Moon, including Friday (Sept. 22) setup, call Peter, 899-2912

Santa Barbara Country Dance Society

dance star

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The SBCDS encourages articles, letters, artwork, comments and suggestions.

Send or phone them to the SBCDS, or bring them to a dance.

Opinions expressed are those of the individual authors.

- New Year's Eve Dance, Carl, 964-0442
- Dance coordination, Scott, 685-3926
- Refreshments, call Tony, 569-3967, or Donna, 682-1877
- Oak Park dance equipment transportation, call Scott, 685-3926



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