

*Santa Barbara Country Dance Society***Music in Review***Contra Dance Music on Tape & CD*

Our community has been blessed by many great bands and many great musicians. Many of these bands have tapes or cd's available. So I'd like to take this chance to tell you of a few that have come my way that I especially like.

Most of these are on small independent labels and not likely to be found in your local record store. But with a little extra time, you will find yourself opening to a world of musical exploration that will open your ears or stuff stockings with something fresh and new. Many of them are available through the Country Dance and Song Society's book store. Their in Northampton, Massachusetts, and can provide books on music and dance as well as recordings by most of the nationally known contra dance musicians. And members receive a ten percent discount! To find out if they have something call them during business hours at (413) 584-9913.

At least two of our local bands have committed some of their sounds to tape, the Growling Old Geezers and O'Ryan's Belt.

The Geezers have two tapes. "All killer and no filler," is what their sign says, and it's true. Both feature their driving southern Appalachian string band style. More than that, we get to hear the breadth and depth of their love for the music as it can't happen at a dance, and it's beautiful. Both recordings feature the core Geezers, Jim Mueller and Amber Roullard on fiddles, and Jim Boulton on mandolin and bass. Also both feature past geezers just before they moved out of the area.

Chris Floyd, the once Geezerly flatpicking guitarist, is heard on their first cassette, *Squirrel Heads and Gravy*. Chris is a dynamo who drove the guitar in this old-time sounds to wondrous heights. Cowboy songs, old-time tunes, and just plain old great music make this tape a great treat.

The banjo pickin' (tenor banjo), bass pluckin', singing Jerry Renden was the second to Geezer to leave. But the Geezer's managed to complete their second tape,
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On Eye Contact*Here's Lookin' at You, Kid!*

A while ago a friend told me she liked our contra dances but felt uncomfortable having to look into so many strange men's eyes. Because of this discomfort she chooses not to come to the dance. Is this a good reason for avoiding the dance? Do the eyes have it?

There are places where a dance series has been going for generations. In discussions these are called "survival" dances. Dance series like ours, that were transported from New England with a relatively recent introduction (in our case around 15 years ago), have been labeled "revival" dances. In the "revival" contra dances much is made of the eyes. Some teachers seem to think eye-contact is the *raison d'être* of the contra dance. The gypsy, imported from the English country dance, has only recently been added to the basic contra dance vocabulary yet whole dances have been choreographed around the move of a gypsy into a swing, and both callers and dancers have delighted at the attention/tension generated by this momentary foray into the eyes of another. But what of people for whom this proves too intimate, too invasive? And this eye contact a necessary part of contra dance style?

In the survival movement, I think there's no question about this: people just dance. The few times I've witnessed "survival" dance, be it by video or being there, the question never arose. People came to the dance because they new each other and each was accepted. But in the revival, much more is made of the eyes.

Still, even here the value placed on the meeting of the eyes is not universal. Some Danish friends I made at Pinewoods this summer told me that in Denmark meeting someone's eyes meant you wanted to become more intimate. Swings with these partners rarely involved the constant gaze. As a died in the wool eyeballer, this at first was disconcerting; yet when I understood, these swings were very pleasant.

I have a similar experience when dancing with men. If there is a men's allemande in the dance I can usually count on half a hand the number of men who will
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Reviews

Road to California before Jerry's departing. With a smorgasbord of songs and tunes that tickle the ear, this, too, is a joy to hear. The old "Cotton Eyed Joe" is there to as the question, "where do we come from, where do we go?" Along with hard driving reels, a waltz, and lots of singing tunes, the *Road to California* perks up your ears. Both these tapes were recorded and produced by the Growling Old Geezers, and are available only through them. Thus you can get them at a dance, or give me a call, and I will help you get in touch with them ((805) 969-9777).

O'Ryan's Belt has not graced our dances recently, but when they did, they drove the dance with their compelling Celtic sounds. Luckily, they've committed some of this to their tape, *West of Connaught*. The band features Aimee Nemeth on tenor banjo and hammered dulcimer, Hans Metsch on accordion, concertina, guitar, and bodhran (bo-ran), Robert Winokur on whistles, and Richard Reed on guitar and Celtic Harp. Together they play Irish music that ranges from slow airs to driving reels. Some of the tunes are mournful, some bright, some wistful, some mysterious. All of this music is good for the ears.

West of Connaught is also available only from the band, so catch them at a live performance, or give me a call and I'll help you get a hold of them.

The Rodney Miller Band has a relatively recent tape and cd called *Greasy Coat*. Featuring Rodney Miller on fiddle, Paul Kotapish on mandolin and guitar, Daniel Steinberg on keyboard and woodwinds, and David Cahn on Bass and octapad, the album leaps from contra dance roots to combine with rock, roll and reggae. With such wide ranging tunes as the traditional Bourrée des Moutons or the American Polka to the modern driving rendition of Pinch of Snuff, or Rodney's Rockabilly Reel, to Daniel's swinging Dragonfly Waltz, this album entertains from beginning to end. On the Sage Arts label, find out about it by calling (206) 691-5203.

Wild Asparagus as made a name for themselves by relentless touring and creating great programs of dance and music. And it has paid off: they are the nations most well known contra dance group. The central core features George Marshall, concertina and bodhran; David Cantieni, woodwinds, percussion, and feet; Ann Percival, keyboards and guitar. On their newest production, *Tone Roads*, they are joined by Mary Lea and Susan Sternberg, fiddles, and Stuart Kenny, bass. The album is described as

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Eyes

actually meet my eyes, yet most of the time there is good weight and a very pleasurable connection.

It is my hope that these words will stimulate conversation and considerations for people who might want to dance but feel uncomfortable with this aspect of the dance. It is my belief that the dance should welcome all. I've danced in lines with blind people. I've experimented with keeping my eyes closed through an entire dance. If someone does not want to engage in this form of intimacy but wants to dance, I still want to encourage that person to share in the rest of what contra dancing has to offer. I can think of two suggestions.

If you want to surreptitiously avoid eye contact, just turn your gaze to the bridge of a person's nose. This maneuver gives the appearance of eye-contact while not actually engaging in it. It, of course, might communicate all those messages you want to avoid.

The other is to find a more comfortable place to set your eyes: a shoulder pad, a distant light, or some other conveniently located spot, and enjoy the rest of the dance.

For the rest of us, it's important to realize that we are here to enjoy the dance. Thus the brief opportunity to gaze through the windows of another's soul is not a requirement, and if someone avoids your eyes it's most likely not personal, and it, too, can be enjoyed. And if those longing gazes turn you off but you love the dance, cast your gaze to more comfortable place. Let's continue to create a place where all are welcome to share in the wide variety of manners of enjoying the dance.

Erik Hoffman

a snapshot of the explorations they have made of contra dance music on their long and winding road, the album travels through sparse fields of bluesy concertina and synthesizer to forests of jigs and reels to peaks of waltzes. On the Wild Asparagus label (WA-003) it's available from Wild Asparagus, 115 Turkey Hill Rd. Belchertown, MA 01007.

From time to time I intend to do more reviews covering fewer recordings and with a little more depth. If you want to submit anything for review I will listen to it, though I can't promise to include it in these reviews. Also note, though these choices and opinions are mine, they are hopefully not mine alone: these are some great musical gems!

Erik Hoffman

Winter 1992-1993

Old-Time Contra Dance Calendar

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

Come dance on the finest dance floor in the west at the Carrillo Ballroom, or at a quaint church hall in Carpinteria. Join the fun! Dance to the irresistible rhythms of live old-time string bands. We do flowing contras of New England, colorful square dances of the Old West, plus a few old-time couple dances such as waltzes and hambos.

Introductory Workshop

There is an introductory workshop before each regular weekend dance! Come a half-hour early to learn the basic moves. No prior experience is necessary. All the dances are taught and prompted. Wear comfortable shoes and clothing. Generally dances become more challenging as the evening progresses.

Phone: For the latest dance information, call the SBCDS 24-Hour Dance Hotline: 805/969-1511

- Sun Dec. 6 CB It's a Caller's Jubilee! Come support our up-and-coming callers OR if you are an adventurous soul with a sense of rhythm, call Erik (969-9777) to be put on the program. The *Tecolote Tune Twisters* will accompany the covey of callers. 7:00-10:00. Intro 6:30. \$5.
- Sun Dec. 20 CB "Wintertime and the *Old Geezers* are *Growling*, *Kathy Fanning* is jumping and the dancers are high!" 7:00-10:00. Intro 6:30. \$5.
- Fri Dec. 25 CB ☺ Christmas would not be the same without our annual contra dance to top off the festivities. Join your friends and dance away those extra Christmas calories with jolly old *Erik Hoffman*. Our holiday band features *Jeanie McLerie*, *Ken Kepler*, and *Friends!* 7:00-10:30. Intro 6:30. \$5.
- Sun Jan. 3 CB *Carl Magagnosc* resorts to *Drastic Measures* to get us out dancing on a cold January night. With an incentive like this, how can we refuse? 7:00-10:00. Intro 6:30. \$5.
- Sun Jan. 17 CB *Cara Moore* and *Kitchen Junket* entice us with a cozy evening of delicious dancing! 7:00-10:00. Intro 6:30. \$5.
- Sun Jan. 23 CARP Don't miss the SBCDS debut of a hot new band, *The Hot Flashes!* With *Carl Magagnosc* calling, the temperatures will be high. Wear light clothing! 7:30-10:30. Intro 6:30. \$5.
- Sun Feb. 7 CB *Erik Hoffman* and *The Growling Old Geezers* unite to infuse us with playful frolicking. 7:00-10:00. Intro 6:30. \$5.
- Sun Feb. 14 CB ♥ Our special Valentine's Dance will contain more couple dances than usual. Bring your sweetheart, or come alone and enjoy the embracing sounds of *Kitchen Junket* and *Carl Magagnosc*. 7:00-10:00. Intro 6:30. \$5.
- Sun Feb. 21 CB The happy combination of *Cara Moore's* calling and *Swing Easy's* mellow tunes is guaranteed to inspire some smooth dancing! 7:00-10:00. Intro 6:30. \$5.
- Sat Feb. 27 CARP Driven by the intensity of *Drastic Measures* and the energy of *Kathy Fanning*, we dance the winter away! 7:30-10:30. Intro 7:00. \$5.

Location Key: CB Carrillo Ballroom, 100 East Carrillo Street, Santa Barbara
CARP Carpinteria Community Church, 1111 Vallecito, Carpinteria

OTHER EVENTS IN OUR VICINITY

- OJAI: New Year's Dance Thurs, Dec 31, 8:00-1:00AM with a midnight dessert potluck; Fri, Jan 29; Sat, Feb 20. Ojai Art Center, 113 S. Montgomery Street, Ojai. 7:30-10:30. Intro 7:00. Info: 805/646-0117 (\$5. Art Center members \$4).
- SLO: 2nd Saturdays. Dec 12; Jan 9; Feb 13. SLO Grange Hall, 2880 S. Broad Street, San Luis Obispo. 8:00-11:00. Intro 7:30. Information: 805/544-7924 (\$5).
- PISMO: Fridays. Jan 22; Feb 26. Pismo Beach Veterans Hall, 780 Bellow Ave, Pismo Beach. 8:00-11:00. Intro 7:30. Information: 805/544-7924 (\$5).
- IRISH SESSIONS: 2nd & 4th Sundays. Irish music jams, songs & dance. Upstairs at Rusty's Pizza - corner of Carrillo & Bath (Free).
- LOS ANGELES AREA: Contra dances every weekend and every Thursday. Call LA dance hotline: 818/951-2003.

Dawn Dance - Santa Cruz - February 14

Fiddling Frog Dance Festival - Los Angeles - February 26 - 28 (Call LA hotline for information)

Join the **Santa Barbara Country Dance Society**. Members of the **Santa Barbara Country Dance Society** receive a \$1 discount at all regular dances (generally those in the main listing). Membership is \$18 per calendar year, from January 1, to December 31. The cost is pro-rated for each calendar quarter, so, from April 1 - December 31, the cost is only \$10.50. From July, \$9. And during the last quarter starting in October it's \$4.50. To join simply send a check to:

SBCDS
PO Box 21904
Santa Barbara, CA 93121

**LOOKING FOR A WAY TO JOIN IN MAKING
OUR DANCES HAPPEN?**

SBCDS is looking for:

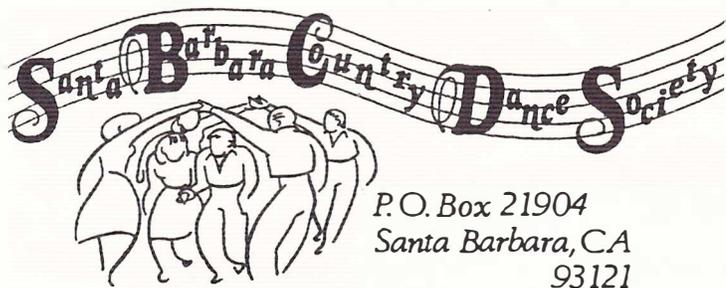
- Someone to greet people and help with signing in at the door at some dances.
- Someone with a garage to store dance decorations (including the famous Harvest Moon Parachute!).

If you are one of these people, call Bob Hamber at 964-1445, or leave a message on the Dance Hotline, 969-1511.

Lost something? Our lost & found is kept at the Carrillo Ballroom, as at the front desk at one of our dances.

Dance Star

Got something you want to write about or say about dance? The Dance Star is always looking for articles, letters, artwork, or ? All communication and contributions should be sent to SBCDS, or call and leave a message at (805) 969-9777.



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You will not receive SBCDS mailings after date on label unless you sign in at a dance or notify us.