

# DANCE STAR

Issue Number 56, Summer 2003 • News, Articles & Calendar of Events

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## Zesty Contras Come to Carrillo

Recently, contra dancer and folk dance teacher Steve Davis came up with a suggestion that we have some zesty contra dances at Santa Barbara, similar to those that are held in Pasadena on fifth Saturdays. This idea was addressed at the May meeting of the SBCDS Board and it was decided to launch the first set of these dances on fifth Sundays, on a trial basis this summer.

The zesty contras will begin at 7 PM and will last till 10:30, giving dancers a half hour more of dancing, and the dances will be somewhat more challenging. There will be an orientation workshop at 6:30. Admission will be \$8.

These zesty contras will first come to Santa Barbara on June 29. Starting it off with a bang will be caller Chuck Galt and great energizing music by Michael's Mixed Nuts. Then on August 30, Martha Wild will call with tantalizing tunes by Ruby's Dream. Mark your calendars and get ready when something zesty this way comes to Santa Barbara!

## Have a Ball

Music to delight the ear. Costumes to delight the eye. The Rose Ball in Pasadena will be the third annual Playford Ball in the Los Angeles Area to delight participants from all over.

All of this delight takes place on Saturday, October 4, from 7 to 11 PM., at the Throop Memorial Church in Pasadena. There's a practice session in Santa Ana the night before, but you can save the innkeeper's fee because we will be learning the dances for the Ball over the next few months right here in Santa Barbara at the weekly English Country Dances, every Tuesday at Oak Park, 7:30 to 9:30 PM.

Of course, you may still wish to attend the practice in Santa Ana, to do a final polish on what we will have learned, to enjoy the music, the dances and the fellowship, and to

be of help in your set.

The Music for the Ball is by the South Bay Maggots. (Maggots can be defined either as wormlike creatures or extravagant notions. We prefer the latter.)

Look for the flyers at either our contra or English Country dances, or go to the web site at <http://www.geocities.com/sbecd>, call Giovanni at 310 793-7499, or send an email to [sbecd@yahoo.com](mailto:sbecd@yahoo.com).

## High Tech Company Strikes Gold at Carrillo

By Ginger Dodgers

**Santa Barbara:** A producer of high dance delight went public today due to large demand for product.

Like a gypsy followed by a swing, the cautious market of the last few weeks gave way to clamoring for shares this morning when Santa Barbara Country Dance & Floor Springing Society, or SBCDFSS Corp., made its debut on the market.

SBCDFSS's Chief Announcement Officer, Elliott Karpsalot, made the opening call at the NYSE, accompanied by two guitar players and a mandolinist. The stock closed at \$7, and first-time investors danced away with warrants equal to 100 percent of one share, payable one week after the purchase date. "The intersection of Carrillo Street and Wall Street was inevitable," said Ted Astaire, an analyst with the musical investment firm of Goldman Sax.

"In today's economy, a successful IPO takes some real fancy footwork," Astaire said. "You can't just waltz in here and go public like two years ago when all it took was a dot-com with a flashy business plan. SBCDFSS doesn't waltz anywhere until it has conducted at least half a dozen contra dances, which we believe gives it significant traction in the marketplace."

Gary Shaperone, Manager of Left-Hand Stars, attributes the Santa Barbara-based organization's success to the talent it attracts. "We have borrowed from the employee-centric practices of the tech boom, providing such office perks as indoor plumbing, oranges in the break room, springy floors - and no cubicles. (Continued on Page 3)



P.O. Box 21904, Santa Barbara, CA 93121

# Profiles



## Michael Gutin

(A While Back)

Interviewed by Keith Connes

**Q:** Michael, when did you start to play a musical instrument?

**Gutin:** My mother tells me that when I was about three or four I would climb up on the piano in the living room and sound out tunes like “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” and “Over the Rainbow” and at that point she had an indication that I might be interested in music, and so the first formal training I had was at the age of seven.

The Lawrence Welk show was very popular in Cleveland, Ohio where I grew up, and the accordion is popular in that ethnic area. So when my mother asked me what I wanted for my seventh birthday, I asked for accordion lessons, and that’s how it started.

I played accordion for about five years and entered and won first place ribbons in several competitions, so I was considered to be one of the better young accordion players in Cleveland. But by the time I got to be 12 or 13, Lawrence Welk had passed on and accordion got to be out of style. I learned to play guitar and banjo, got more interested in playing in folk-music bands, played piano in a Dixieland jazz band when I was in high school.

I came out here on a scholarship at the University of Redlands. I wanted to come to California because that’s where people were playing rock-and-roll. While at college I played lead guitar in a rock-and-roll band and played bass guitar in a Chicago-like rock band with a lot of brass.

**Q:** Were you majoring in music at college?

**Gutin:** I wasn’t. I had considered it. I sort of dabbled around in college before I decided on a major. At first I thought I might be a lawyer, like my oldest brother, and then I thought I might be a music major. Then I thought I might be an art major because I was very interested in ceramics. Finally, I came to my senses and realized that there are a lot of starving artists and musicians out there and I didn’t really like law, and I took an engineering class and liked it. That pointed me in the direction of electrical engineering, which I’ve done as a profession ever since.

**Q:** So that’s your day job.

**Gutin:** Yes, and that’s what pays for my musicianship at night.

**Q:** How did you get involved in contra?

**Gutin:** When I moved from a Los Angeles suburb up to Santa Barbara in 1984 and opened up a consulting business, I got involved with a four-part harmony sort of doo-wop singing band. I’d actually quit playing accordion from about the ninth grade and pretty much stayed with guitar and bass guitar and instruments that you would more likely find in a rock-and-roll band. Then one of the ladies in the Santa Barbara band found an old accordion and gave it to me as a birthday gift. That’s when I realized that the accordion was coming back in style – there was more need for good accordion players than guitar players.

Getting back to your question about contra dancing, in about 1990 or 1991 I became familiar with the Strawberry Music Festival up in Yosemite. I ran into some other people from Santa Barbara and they told me about the contra dances – that I might enjoy dancing, which I love to do, and secondly, about a Wednesday night jam session that Tony Johannsen has had going for many years, just down the street from me. So I wandered down there and heard them play the old-timey music and Irish music – stuff I wasn’t all that familiar with, and it grabbed me! I started playing at the jam sessions and picking up that kind of music. Then I went to my first contra dance and became enamored with the community and with the dance form.

There was a shortage of bands around 1994 and I was asked to form a contra dance band with some other players in town that I had been jamming with, and we started The Chameleons. We went off in a different direction from old-time music and that seemed to have struck a chord with the dancers – they liked it – and that really worked well for me because my background is in other forms of music besides old-timey music, so I felt I could bring my strength to a contra dance band by bringing in different

genres. This seemed to be blossoming at that time. I noticed that some of the other well-known bands from back East and here were incorporating other styles of music into the old-timey and Irish music, which were the traditional contra dance tunes. I also noticed that when I would go dancing, those bands were the ones that lifted me up and made me want to dance.

**Q:** Tell us about your second band, Michael’s Mixed Nuts.

**Gutin:** Often bands are requested to play and not all the players can show up. The name for Michael’s Mixed Nuts came when I realized that I could vary the personnel and as long as I was leading the band we were just a bunch of mixed nuts up there playing, and that name caught on.

**Q:** How much rehearsal do you have to put in?

**Gutin:** At first, when we started The Chameleons, a lot of us were not that familiar with the genre for contra dancing – with the format and how to make it interesting – and we would rehearse once a week or every other week or so, especially since we didn’t have a lot of material. The Chameleons was a democratic band, where everybody had an equal say in what we played and so we would get together fairly often.

Then when the Mixed Nuts band started, that was made up of whoever was playing with me at the time and so I would do most of the arranging and come up with new tunes on my own. We’d show up at the dances and I’d be handing out music to everybody and the players were good enough to be able to sight read and then think about what they could do for their solos. So the Mixed Nuts hardly ever get to practice, and with The Chameleons our gigs are our practice, just because everybody is so busy.

**Q:** How far will you travel for a gig?

**Gutin:** Personally, I’m willing to travel to wherever we get one, because I can take some time off, since I work for myself, but that’s not necessarily true for all the other players who have families and other responsibilities, but we’ve traveled as far north as the Bay area and as far south as Orange County.

**Q:** So you don’t have a family?

**Gutin:** I’m a single man with a cat.

**Q:** A cat can be a family. You had a harpist in the past and a drummer now. Are there any other instruments on the horizon?

**Gutin:** It’s interesting that you ask that, because I recently purchased a MIDI accordion. It’s an instrument that allows you to use the accordion as a synthesizer, to produce the sounds of a saxophone or trombone or groups of violins very realistically. It’s also a real accordion, so I can play accordion at the same time that I’m being backed up by various

other instruments, and I'm generating all that real-time by myself. So in the last few dances I've been taking a saxophone solo or a trumpet solo and the dancers look around to see where the saxophone or trumpet is, and there's not one up there; I'm actually taking the solo myself, as if I were playing that instrument.

**Q:** At least once a year I ask you the same question – do you know what I have in mind?

**Gutin:** No.

**Q:** When are you going to put out a CD?

**Gutin:** A lot of people have asked that. It's almost imperative to have a CD these days; it's like having a calling card. I have been so busy with so many projects, either at work or playing gigs, I haven't taken the time. To do a studio CD, I'd have to get everyone together to go into the studio. What I have been contemplating is doing a live CD, recorded at one of the dances, which would capture the spirit of the dance music as it's being generated. It's been on my list, and if enough people came up and clamored for one, I'd be sure to put one out.

**Q:** I'll bet that if you asked for a show of hands at a dance you'd have your answer. Is there anything else you'd like to say to the readers of the *Dance Star*?

**Gutin:** I'd just like to thank all the people who give up their time to produce these dances. It's a labor of love and a wonderful community effort and I believe that my contribution to the dance community is music that I would want to dance to.

**Q:** Thanks, Michael.

## High Tech

(Continued from Page 1)

"There is a strong emphasis on interaction and team playing," Shaperone enthused. "Cubicles simply get in the way of what we do here."

While employees frequently move up and down the hall and the company hierarchy, most are satisfied that their careers are going around in circles. "I just keep spinning around and couldn't be happier," commented one team member while moving forward in long lines.

Another said: "Hey, I think I'm getting the swing of it. We just keep progressing, hand over hand."

— Laura Polland and Scott MacLeod

## Double Delight With Laura Light

Talented songwriter and musicians Laura Light and friends (from Charlottesville, VA) will be making a California tour, stopping in Ojai for two fun events: On Monday, July 7, a "House Concert" at David Magney and Nancy Breslin's, and Thursday, July 10, a Couples Dance at the Ojai Art Center, featuring swing, waltz, hambo, and tango. Both events start at 7 PM, with a suggested donation of \$10.

So come and enjoy a variety of music, from Southern and New England old time tunes, to the music of Scandinavia, Cape Breton and Ireland, and showcasing original songs, in addition to jigs, reels, waltzes, swing, and salsa. For further information, or to make reservations, contact Karin at (805) 933-0660 or email: karincontra@juno.com.

## From the SBCDS Board

Santa Barbara Country Dance Society is a non-profit corporation and the dances are co-sponsored by the City of Santa Barbara. The net proceeds from each dance are split between the City and SBCDS. Our part of the net then goes to cover our overhead, including insurance, the *Dance Star*, and other expenses.

Insurance costs have increased significantly the last two years, which, along with a deserved pay increase for the callers and musicians, caused SBCDS to lose money in 2002. This year, increased attendance has led to a smaller loss for the first quarter as compared to last year. With a good Harvest Moon, SBCDS should come close to breaking even in 2003.

At the SBCDS Board meeting held in March, the officers were reelected unanimously. They are: Sammy Ellis, President; Gary Shapiro, Chair; Elliott Karpeles, Secretary; Rob Gardner, Treasurer.

**Let's be Fragrance-Free.** In the last few months, I have received several complaints about some dancers wearing too much perfume or cologne. Apparently, there is a significant number of dancers (15-20%) in the California dance community who suffer adverse effects from fragrances or solvents. Please consider this when attending our dances. Thank you—Elliott Karpeles.

Sites with more information:

<http://bacds.org/camps/sprwkend2003/fragrance.html>

<http://www.richardsonfamily.org/ball2002/fragrance.html>

**Don't Adjust the Fans.** Please don't change the tilt angles of the fans in the ballroom. Tilting them down stirs up dust and causes discomfort for some of the dancers who are being blasted. Thanks—Sammy Ellis.



## A Dancer's Viewpoint

Dear Editor:

Thank you for printing Erik Hoffman's article "Becoming a Good Dancer." I agree wholeheartedly that community spirit and awareness represent the very best that contra (and other) dancing have to offer. I hope all who read it will take his words to heart.

Rick Johnson (San Diego)

Santa Barbara contra dances are  
co-sponsored by SBCDS and

CITY OF SANTA BARBARA  
**Parks & Recreation**  
Enriching People's Lives

SBCDS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation

Phone: 805-969-1511

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Board of Directors: Moira Butler, Sammy Ellis,  
Rob Gardner, Elliott Karpeles, Bob Leonard,  
Gary Shapiro, Vicki Tracy, and Bettine Wallin

The *Dance Star* is produced quarterly.

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Our special thanks to all the many volunteers who give their time and efforts to make the dances fun and contribute to the content of this publication.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in the articles, news, and letters do not necessarily reflect the views of SBCDS.

## Make Your Voice Heard!

Do you have ideas about making our dances better? Or any other dance-related thoughts, feelings, or experiences that you'd like to share with others through the pages of the *Dance Star*? Well, don't be shy – this is *your* newsletter, and your contributions are most welcome!

The best way to become a writing (Dance) Star is to email your priceless words to [dancestar@sbcds.org](mailto:dancestar@sbcds.org). If you don't have email capability, snail-mail to Keith Connes, 283 Carlo Dr., Goleta, CA 93117. If you do not want your comments published, please say so; otherwise, we will assume that you have submitted your material for publication. Incidentally, we also welcome dance-related photos.

We reserve the right to edit all submissions. Deadline for the next issue is August 1.

# DANCE SCHEDULE SUMMER 2003

## Oak Park

*Junipero at Calle Real, Santa Barbara*  
(Hwy 101 north to Pueblo exit, proceed 1 bl. past Pueblo)  
7:30 to 9:30

English Country Dances Every Tuesday  
Callers: Gary Shapiro and Alice Williams

For dances with live music the cost is \$5.00,  
recorded music \$2.00-\$3.00

June 3	Recordings
June 10	Recordings
June 17	Recordings
June 24	Live Band: TBA English Country Dances and Contra Dances <i>Free! Gary Shapiro's Birthday Dance</i>
July 1	Recordings
July 8	Recordings
July 15	Recordings
July 22	Recordings
July 29	Live Band: TBA
August 5	Recordings
August 12	Recordings
August 19	Recordings
August 26	Live Band: TBA

## SLO Veteran's Hall

*801 Grand Ave., San Luis Obispo*  
(East of Hwy 101, Cal Poly exit)

Contra Dances are normally on the second Saturday of the month  
Exception: July 11 dance (Friday)  
8:00 to 11:00 (7:30 Workshop) \$7.00

June 14	Keith Connes/Blue Sky Band
July 11	Erik Hoffman/Avant Gardeners
August 9	Graham Hempel/Growling Old Geezers

Dances appearing in this Calendar are sponsored by the following organizations, listed by location:

### Carrillo Ballroom and Oak Park:

Santa Barbara Country Dance Society 805-969-1511  
www.sbcds.org

### San Luis Obispo Veteran's Hall:

Central Coast Dance Society 805-541-0201 www.cccds.org

## Carrillo Ballroom

*100 E. Carrillo St., Santa Barbara*  
(Hwy 101, Carrillo St. exit, go north to Anacapa St.)

Contra Dances Every Sunday\*

7:00 to 10:00 (6:30 Workshop) \$7.00

Exceptions: June 15 is \$10.00. Zesty Contras are \$8.00  
and run from 7:00 to 10:30 (6:30 Workshop)

\*Note! Three dances this summer will be at Oak Park:  
June 22, July 20, August 17. See column at left for directions.

June 1	Nils Fredland/Chopped Liver <i>Free! Mary Thompson's Birthday Dance</i>
June 8	John Rogers/Kristina & Her Right Hand Stars
June 15	Donna Karpeles/Red Mountain White Trash
June 22	<i>Oak Park Dance</i> Jonathan Southard/Melody Mongers
June 29	<i>Zesty Contras</i> Chuck Galt/Michael's Mixed Nuts
July 6	Jeff Spero/Laura Light Band
July 13	Erik Hoffman/Growling Old Geezers
July 20	<i>Oak Park Dance</i> Caller's Jubilee/Lemon Pickers Blossoming callers contact Donna Karpeles donnabayet@aol.com or 805-682-1877
July 27	Gary Shapiro/Southern Exposure
August 3	Susan Michaels/The Chameleons
August 10	James Hutson/The South Bay Maggots 2:30-5:30 English Country Dance 5:30-6:30 Potluck Dinner 7:00-10:00 Contra Dance Note: Dances are \$7.00 each
August 17	<i>Oak Park Dance</i> Gary Shapiro/Kristina & Her Right Hand Stars
August 24	Donna Karpeles/Chopped Liver
August 31	<i>Zesty Contras</i> Martha Wild/Ruby's Dream



Contra dancers enjoying the Topanga Banjo-Fiddle Contest and Folk Festival. Photo courtesy of Chuck Galt