



Bay Area Country Dancer

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www.bacds.org

Where Do Hot Dance Musicians Come From?

Lee Anne Welch

Come to the Palo Alto contra dance on November 8 to see *Sorcerer's Apprentice*, and dance to the next generation of fiddlers! The members of the band are private fiddle students of Lee Anne Welch. Some have only played for a year, and some have played over 10 years. We hope they will be playing for dances for many years to come!

The band started in 1998. Lee Anne had a few students who were getting quite proficient and she wanted to offer them a real musical performing experience. Paul Machlis played piano with the band for a number of years. More recently, Andy Imbrie has been playing piano. On November 8, the keyboardist will be Daniel Steinberg, from *Hillbillies from Mars*.

The band usually plays twice a year at either the Felton or Palo Alto dance. Their last appearance at a BACDS dance was May 12 in Palo Alto, with twelve fiddlers ranging in age from 8 to 18 years.

Lee Anne has been cultivating contra dance music in elementary and middle school. For seven years, she taught violin classes at the Waldorf School of the Peninsula in Los Altos. Contra dance music was part of the curriculum. Instead of playing for school assemblies, the violin class would play for a school contra dance while parents and classmates danced. The contra dances have become a tradition at the school, and Erik Hoffman is often the caller.

Jubilee Dancers Triumph in Marin!



Congratulations to the Jubilee dancers for winning the following awards at the Marin County Fair in July.

- ❖ 2nd place in Group Dance Performance for “The Shim Sham Shimmy”
- ❖ 1st place in the same category for “Posin”
- ❖ 1st place for Audience Favorite
- ❖ Best in Show!

Jubilee American Dance Theatre is a truly unique performance ensemble bringing to life the dances, music, songs and stories of the folks that made America. From Appalachia to the Swing Era to Cajun Country, the New England Whalers, Baja California, America's

immigrants and more, Jubilee transports you to another time and place through its rich weaving of stories, songs, dance and music.

All of Jubilee's work is set in context with costumes and props that reflect the time and place. Jubilee celebrates the traditions, rituals and social customs of America's folk!

Jubilee American Dance Theatre became a BACDS team in 2003.

Upcoming Fall Events

Sep 12-14	Echo Summit (SCDS)	Linda Leslie and Gaye Fifer, with Groovemongers and Great Bear Trio
Oct 17-19	Fall Frolic	Monte Toyon
Oct 25	Halloween Contra	
Nov 15	Fall Ball	Brooke Friendly, with Charlie Hancock, Shira Kammen, Jim Oakden
Dec 6	No Snow Ball	
Dec 31	New Year's Eve	David Newitt, with Stan Kramer, Susan Kramer, Ruth Anne Fraley

See www.bacds.org for more details. For events sponsored by neighboring organizations, see www.nbcds.org (NBCDS), www.fussell.org/sacramento (SCDS), and www.sffmc.org (SFFMC)

Expand Your Dance Repertoire

Bill Ward

At nearly every Contra dance and most English country dances, the band will play a waltz or two, often a hambo after the break, and, occasionally, an encore swing or polka. The music is delightful and compelling, but if you don't know the steps, you're stuck on the sidelines. You might also want to learn some swing moves to jazz up your Contra dance style and take advantage of spare moments at the end of a set.

Hambo and waltz workshops are offered occasionally before various Contra and English dances; be sure to check the BACDS schedule for those. And, dance weekends and camps often provide special sessions to work on various couple dances and contra dance embellishments. But, for the most part, these dances aren't taught on Contra or ECD dance evenings, so where do you go?

Swing dancing had a surge in popularity in the 1990s and is still going strong. Swing dance classes usually offer an hour or two of lessons followed by an open dance party. Music is usually played by a DJ, but sometimes there's a live band. Here are just a few of the many swing dance opportunities in the area. For many more choices, try an Internet search on "swing dance classes" in your city.

Sunnyvale	Wednesday Night Hop	Wednesday evenings	http://www.wednesdaynighthop.com/
Redwood City	Swing Central	Tuesday evenings Second Saturdays	http://www.redwoodcityswing.com/
San Francisco	Lindy in the Park.	Sunday afternoons	http://www.lindyinthepark.com/
San Francisco	Tuesday Night Jump	Tuesday evenings	http://www.oldtimey.net/tuesdays.html

Friday Night Waltz is a popular venue for *vintage ballroom dancing* -- waltzes, polkas, and other traditional couple dances. These events are held in Palo Alto on the 1st and 3rd Fridays at the First United Methodist Church (same venue as the Palo Alto contra dance); and in Oakland on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays at the Oakland Veterans Hall. Friday Night Waltz is a really good place to learn the social dance approach to these wonderful standards – it's friendly and forgiving without the stylistic rules of international or competition ballroom dance. It's also where you can learn the elegant Congress of Vienna waltz that is sometimes played at ECD events. The website, <http://www.fridaynightwaltz.com/>, provides schedules, descriptions, and links to many other vintage dance events in the Bay Area.

Another popular destination for social dancing is Friday Night Blues. *Blues dancing* is hard to describe; it's a slower, sultry dance form with elements from swing, foxtrot, and tango. That close-embrace swing contra dance couples sometimes do is borrowed from blues dance. You can take classes and dance away your blues every Friday night in San Francisco. For more information about this friendly venue, see <http://beyondblues.com/fnb/>.

Argentine Tango is a challenging and very popular dance, and there are lots of opportunities to learn and practice in the Bay Area. Besides being a lot of fun, learning Argentine Tango will improve your dance frame, posture, and lead and follow skills in just about all kinds of social dancing. The best way to find out about classes near you is to do a web search. Here are a few links that will help you get started:

http://www.sftango.com/sf_argentine_tango_classes.html
<http://www.batango.com/>
<http://tangomango.org/>

Nervous about who you might be dancing with? You might be pleasantly surprised to find familiar faces at a new dance class. Most dance classes don't require that you bring a partner. The instructors have students in the classes rotate, so you'll meet the people you'll be dancing with. You might find a likely partner at one of your regular dances who is interested in learning another dance. And be sure to invite the new people you meet in your classes to try Contra and English County dancing too.

Letters to Miz El

Dear Miz El,

Yes, I know; you said if I can walk I can dance. But I hate to mess up. Is there anyway I can practice at home?
Signed, *Shy in San Francisco*

Dear Shy,

The Chattahoochee Country Dancers (Atlanta) have produced nine short videos teaching the basic moves of contra dancing. You can view them at <http://www.downhomedancing.org/lessons/>. According to our FOOTMAD friends in Birmingham, Alabama, and sister Joyce Cauthen who sent Miz El this info, the videos are fascinating showing not just the moves but the joy of contra.

Signed, *Miz El*

From the President

As we come to the end of another fiscal year for BACDS, we find ourselves still facing many of the same concerns we've been dealing with in past years. The final numbers won't be available until October, but attendance at regular dances has continued its slow downward trend, and hall rents are continuing to rise. We shouldn't be too surprised: the national economy is also struggling, and we all know what has happened to gas prices. The news is not all gloomy: all three summer camps did well this year; we've seen a lot more new faces and younger faces at our dances, and BACDS still has enough money in the bank to survive a number of bad years.

Congratulations to all three summer camps (American Dance and Music Week, English Week, and Family Dance Week). All three camps had full attendance this summer, and the volunteer committees put together some really great programs. The Family Week committee deserves special commendation. At this time last year, they were worried: a couple of key organizers from the previous year were not going to be able to continue. They found replacements, and put together a fabulous camp backed by what has become a real powerhouse of a committee. Great job.

This year was the first year of the new youth scholarship program, sponsored by our national umbrella organization, the Country Dance and Song Society (CDSS). BACDS participated in a big way, accepting six youth scholarship campers (three at American Week and three at English Week). The scholarship camper's attendance fees are paid 50% by CDSS, and 50% by the camper's home dance group.

Our weekend camps were a mixed bag. Fall Dance Weekend has reorganized itself as the *Fall Frolick*, an English-only weekend, and has drawn a lot of interest. At the time I write this, it's 80% full. By the time you read this, you may have to get on the waiting list. Fall Weekend is sponsoring its own Youth Scholarships, funded by the generosity of its campers. Spring Dance Weekend had really poor attendance last March, even though it had a stellar staff and program (and was loads of fun). The Spring Weekend committee could really use some new ideas and new volunteers to help turn things around. *Balance the Bay*, our San Francisco Contra Weekend, was a qualified success. It was a fabulously fun and successful weekend. The fact that it lost money was to be expected for a first-time event with an inexperienced organizing committee. We're planning another one for next year: get on the committee now while there's still room.

The biggest drop in attendance at our regular dances came from the 2nd Friday (formerly El Cerrito) contra dance, which moved to Humanist Hall in Oakland in January (because of high rents and difficulty with the hall management in El Cerrito). The new location is less popular; attendance is way down. If you want this dance to continue, you will need to help bring in more people or find a more popular hall. Attendance figures for other dance series are down slightly in most cases. Interestingly enough, they are up slightly at the Palo Alto English and Palo Alto Contra dances, which had been having trouble with low attendance in the past. Another potential bright spot is the 2nd Saturday San Francisco English dance, which has been struggling with low attendance for years. They moved to a new hall this summer, and also made the bold move of adding another time slot (4th Sunday afternoons). It's too soon to see it in the statistics, but attendance is up, and a new community is building around the Sunday afternoon dance.

Also this year, the BACDS Board approved minimum guaranteed payments for the band, callers, and sound technicians at our dances. It's a new thing for us. In the past, we never had to worry: attendance was good enough that our *standard* percentage of the admissions price paid the musicians well enough most of the time, and they were generous enough accept a lower payment when attendance was low. But with attendance trending downward, this puts too much pressure on the generosity of our bands and callers. This can't go on, so we set a limit. It means BACDS loses a little more money on dances with low attendance, but we're not passing the loss on to our hard-working talent.

Will we have to raise prices to keep our dances afloat? We'll be debating that again in the coming year, and we'd appreciate your input. Everything else seems to be getting more expensive; we can blame it on inflation in the overall economy. But *reducing* prices for students has helped bring in more young people . . . I don't know the answer yet, but we'll keep looking for one.

Keep dancing, bring your friends, and remember that we don't get *anything* done unless someone like you volunteers to do it.

~ Jens Dill, BACDS President, bacds-president@bacds.org

Camp New Harmony

Patience Young

The San Francisco Folk Music Club's year-turning festivities are moving this year from the redwoods of the Santa Cruz Mountains to a new site in the drier oak-forested hills between Calistoga and Santa Rosa. There are actually lots of different species of trees on the camp's extensive property. The camp is scheduled from Tuesday, 12/30/08, through Sunday, 1/4/09.

Camp New Harmony features the same dance and music activities as in the past—with a full dance floor in one of the camp's main buildings dedicated to daytime workshops and evening dances—along with a food service

tailored to our requests. As usual, there are plenty of opportunities for impromptu celebrations to ring in the New Year, rekindle old friendships, and start up new ones. And, of course, camp offers plentiful music workshops, concerts every evening, jamming, singing circles, kids' activities, and perhaps even a jokefest.

Improved amenities over previous years include indoor plumbing *everywhere* and a wider range of housing options for singles, couples, families, and circles of friends. Rates are lower than last year, with special low rates for campers under the age of 30. While the property includes hiking trails and open spaces, its central communal buildings and housing are conveniently situated and fully accessible.

The atmosphere is casual, chance encounters are delightful, and many magical moments are anticipated. Dance to different bands every night, and take a workshop in a new dance style. Come for the dancing and enjoy the other pleasures that Camp New Harmony offers.

Come for one day or all 5 nights. Check the <http://www.SFFMC.org> website for more information, online copies of the registration and membership forms, photographs of camp, and further updates. SFFMC looks forward to ringing in the New Year with you at our new holiday home in the northern hills!

Why I Love Contra Dancing

Renna Ulvang

I've been a Contra dancer for over two years now, and I've seen my interest blossom from curiosity to passion. There is so much about Contra dancing to love; it is the most inclusive and user-friendly activity that I can imagine.

It is a form of exercise which delights rather than drains. It provides aerobic exercise to those who add fancy spins and twirls, but it also accommodates a gentler, injury-forgiving pace. It appeals to people of all ages and, for that reason, provides an immediate sense of community and belonging. No one is too young or too old for this dance. There is someone close to 80 who dances most of us under the table, and a couple of weeks ago, I chained across a set with a woman with a sleeping infant in her backpack.

Contra dancing can be highly social: flirty, conversational, intimate for those who seek it and yet, because of its structure, it also allows for a more limited connection with no questions asked, no feelings hurt. It is safe for those who need safety and provides room to go deeper. You can start at one end of the continuum and progress to the other. I have met people who I know will remain lifelong friends; others are fun to see once in a while to just share smiles and dance-oriented handshakes. There is something freeing about relationships like that.

Contra dances can quench the thirst of the spatially gifted and favor those with an intuitive, physical approach to dance. The caller is there to provide guidance and instruction to those who need them; more experienced dancers can tune in to the music and the rhythms.

There's always the music! Where else can you spend three hours with gifted musicians bringing all manner of styles, instruments, cultures, and rhythms into one excitement-filled evening? There is nothing like dancing to live music and the cost is incredibly reasonable given how much energy and dedication the musicians put into their efforts to stimulate and delight us.

And there is something decidedly spiritual about Contra dancing for me. It is a reminder of the sacredness of new beginnings, discoveries, inner talents, and the vulnerability many of us associate with dancing. We share community, friendship, joy, fun, and the blessed ability to praise with our bodies and hearts.

If you have a story about what you love about Contra, English country, or Morris dancing, send an email to Julie Thomas (caljuliet@comcast.net).

Board Activities and Other Notes

Please extend a warm welcome to the new BACDS Board of Directors (elected in May). Look for them on the dance floor and let them know about your concerns.

Eric Black	Susan Gere	Mary Tabor
Joyce Cooper	Sharon Green	Alan Winston, Chairman
Jens Dill, President	Scott Johnson, Secretary	Ellen Wall
Jody Distler-Dill	Annette Kindred	Diane Zingale, Treasurer
Barbara Furgason	Joan Maramonte	

Also, please extend your thanks and good wishes to last year's Board members who have moved on to other things. They are all still around, and still actively contributing to our dance community.

Karen Fontana	Davey Hudson
Diane Frank	Denis Thalson

Meetings of the BACDS Board are usually on the third Thursday of each month. They are open to the public.

This issue was edited by Julie Thomas and Loretta Guarino Reid. Send corrections to caljuliet@comcast.net.
Deadline for Winter *Dancer*: Nov 15. Send submissions to [<TheDancer@bacds.org>](mailto:TheDancer@bacds.org). Please join the conversation.