

# **Contra Callers' Course – July 4-11, 2009**

## **at BACDS American Dance & Music Week**

### **Important Information**

An additional track available at camp in 2009 is the **contra callers' course**, an intensive workshop designed for advanced-beginner through intermediate callers who are ready to work hard at getting to the next level. This course is designed and led by **Lisa Greenleaf**, and has been taught for the past three years at Pinewoods Camp in Massachusetts. Lisa brings many years of experience to her callers' workshops. While calling at camps across the country as well as in Europe, she particularly enjoys observing how people learn to dance as well as how they build effective dance communities.

The course will focus on two particular topics important to any caller: teaching skills (understanding choreography and crafting concise teaching vocabulary) and stage presence (becoming comfortable behind the mic, learning how to handle mistakes or unexpected situations, and working with musicians).

**Class Descriptions:** During the day, participants should expect to focus most of their energy on the course, which covers three class periods. Each morning will begin with a workshop to cover such topics as teaching figures and recognizing good choreography. The latter half of each morning will be a time for hands-on practice of basic microphone and stage techniques as participants' practice conducting an effective walk-through and working with a band. The afternoon session with Lynn Ackerson will be a part of the all camp open mic, affording callers a chance to be in the large dance hall. At all other times, course participants will be able to participate in all of the regular activities of BACDS American Dance and Music Week. The cost for the course is \$825, the same as for the regular camp participants.

Requirements for the applicants to the course are:

1. Be familiar with the AABB structure of contra dance music
2. Know the difference between a jig and a reel
3. Know how to cue the first figure of the dance off of the four potatoes
4. Know how and when to signal the band to go out
5. Have called at least 3 contras (individual dances, not evenings) in a real dance setting [Some communities sponsor open mic dances or new callers' nights, and some callers are willing to allow new callers to call one dance during an evening. Or you can get a bunch of friends together and host a dance party, but it needs to be to live music.]
6. Have a repertoire of at least 3 dances you know and feel comfortable teaching and calling
7. Attend contra dances regularly so that you are familiar with the moves, the culture, and the music
8. Be prepared to receive and incorporate feedback, even if you have a lot of calling experience

Participation in the callers' course is by separate application and is limited to six students. A committee will evaluate applicants based on potential, level of serious commitment, and likelihood of making a contribution to their home dance community.

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## **Application**

Applications must be sent to the registrar by 03/07/2009. NOTE: you must also submit a separate [registration for BACDS American Dance and Music Week](http://www.bacds.org/amweek) available at <http://www.bacds.org/amweek>.

Loren Kalmen  
2211 Latham St, # 310  
Mountain View, CA, 94040

You will be notified of your acceptance on 03/21/2009. If you are accepted, you will be sent further information and a pre-camp assignment by Lisa.

If you have further questions about the course, please contact Lisa Greenleaf at [laleaf@verizon.net](mailto:laleaf@verizon.net).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Home Dance Community: \_\_\_\_\_

How many years have you been contra dancing? \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been calling contra dances? \_\_\_\_\_

How would you rate your level of skill as a caller? \_\_\_\_  
a) novice (called a little bit, but few if any full evenings)  
b) beginner-intermediate (called some full evenings)  
c) intermediate (have lots of experience)

Do you have a mentor, or is there a caller in your area who could be your mentor?

What other forms of dance have you experienced?

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#### **Application** (continued)

*Below are some serious questions to answer thoughtfully. We encourage you to mull them over for a while before answering.*

Why do you want to be a contra dance caller?

What are your professional goals as a caller (e.g., help out my local dance scene now and then, call regularly, start a new series, do dance camps, etc.)?

List three or four qualities you have that will make you a good caller.

List three of four qualities you have that will make you a good leader in your contra community.

Why do you want to attend this callers' course?

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### **Application** (continued)

Calling is more than just getting up and prompting a dance. To become a good caller, one must study and understand choreography, work on teaching language, gain knowledge of the different styles of dance music, accept feedback, develop leadership skills, and create a positive stage presence. Obviously, there are many other factors as well. Are you prepared to work hard to acquire these skills?

In this course, Lisa's goal is for you to streamline your teaching and to project an effective stage persona. To get the most out of the work, you will need to have a "beginner's mind", no matter how long you have been calling. You will have to be open to making mistakes and to receiving constructive feedback and supportive suggestions. You will then be expected to incorporate those suggestions quickly. What do you think this experience will be like for you?