



# Bay Area Country Dancer

No.118– June 2019

[www.bacds.org](http://www.bacds.org)

## The experience at American Week 2019 can be tailored to each individual

By David Buesch

Imagine yourself waking up each morning this June 30-July 5 at the 38<sup>th</sup> BACDS American Week dance and music camp: You stroll through the woods and across the bridge to Waltzes Before Breakfast. Your day unfolds with contra dancing with Susan Petrick and Luke Donforth and music and singing sessions led by members of Wake Up Robin and The Figments. You might practice calling with Susan Petrick, learn choreography with Luke Donforth, or join the camper band--all in preparation for the Wednesday night camper dance. You can relax with a session of yoga, crafts, or photography. At Round Up each afternoon, campers entertain each other with music, sing along, story-telling--most anything they want to share. Every evening offers high-energy contras and late-night jamming.



This year we'll have gender-neutral calling. If you are accustomed to Larks and Ravens, then this is a wonderful opportunity to support those who want to learn. And although we'd love to have you for the full week, if a partial week better fits your schedule, you can come for just the first or last half. The full week fee is \$750, and we offer youth rates and a sliding scale for those over 30 who cannot afford the full fee.

The week culminates with the Friday Night Gala featuring both bands and callers and lots of camper dancers. The Gala will be held 8:00-11:00 pm at the First United Methodist Church, Palo Alto, California, with an Introduction 7:30-8:00 pm. The Gala is open to the public. Additionally, American Week callers and bands will be playing the Palo Alto and San Francisco contra dances on the Saturdays before and after camp.

For more information and to register, please visit [AmWeek.org](http://AmWeek.org).

## South Bay Contra's LAST DANCE is August 18th.

by Claire Takemori

Shirley Worth started San Jose Community Dance in August 2012, and was sponsored by the First Unitarian Church of SJ. When Shirley moved to WA in 2016 a new group of volunteers took over and renamed the dance, changed to gender-free roles, and added family-friendly features (modeling after BIDA, Boston Intergenerational Dance Advocates). After 7 years of dances, South Bay Contra's last dance will be Sunday, August 18th.

We are fortunate to have several dance managers and many volunteers who help setup and cleanup at the dances. A BIG Thank You to all the dancers who have helped make the dances happen over the last 7 years!

Life is busy and I do all the organizing and programming for South Bay Contra. And it's just no fun to do it without an active committee. We asked via email, Facebook group, and at the dances for folks to do one small task each month or so, but sadly no takers. Well I should not say none... the perpetual volunteers who are already doing more than their share of dance organization & support did offer to help (with little spare time).

So, come celebrate our final dance on Sunday, August 18th. We have special talent, Continental Drift, from NY & WA with Lynn Ackerson calling. Yeah, change is hard, but usually incredible things come from it. I'm hopeful!

# Bay Area Contradance: Innovation *and* Tradition

By Bob Ashforth

Hello, contradance peeps! I am delighted to have this opportunity to share my perspective on some topics I believe are important to keeping contradance in the Bay Area true to the folk tradition. Specifically, *expanding* the dance form rather than embracing change and ignoring our roots... keeping some 'balance,' one might say. :-) I'd like to start a general discussion in this area, especially among dance callers and teachers.

Personally, I have relished the full rainbow of human differences since my growing up in Boston. My contradance roots also stemmed from New England, until I moved to the Bay Area in 2005.

What I've observed here is that the original dances are completely ignored. Those of you who learned contradance here may never have danced a 'proper' dance; you may not even know the term. Callers, if you don't even have one proper dance in your repertoire, I submit that you really can't consider yourself a complete contradance caller. Dancers, if you've never danced the figure 'contra corners,' you literally don't know what you're missing! (Callers, I suggest 'Chorus Jig' as your first proper dance.) Many aspects of proper dances have a unique feel to them compared to modern dances, and the opportunities for the 'inactive' couples to 'cheat' are frequent and relished.

The issue which concerns me most currently is the way that Bay Area callers and teachers are dealing with changes regarding dance roles and gender. Two examples follow.

The first example is a respected and beloved local dance caller/teacher who emphasizes "Gender doesn't matter!" when teaching newbies. Folks, gender clearly *does* matter, as dance is a rich interaction between two unique individuals, with all bells and whistles included. This instruction implies that contradance is genderless, which is like saying we respect a rainbow of inoffensive pastels. I think the intent was more likely to inform newbies that an externally expressed gender doesn't necessarily identify the role of the dancer.

The second example is another much loved local caller and dance teacher who tells newbies that when you ask someone to dance, you should ask them which role they would like to dance. (Insert 'cringing' emoji.)

Folks, I'm sure that for many of you, dancing both roles is hugely fun... but the push to brand anyone who doesn't make this choice as somehow lesser or 'wrong' is IMO a huge overreach. Dancers are obviously able to express their preference when you ask them to dance, but making this question an expectation for anyone *asking* someone to dance is not appropriate in my view.

Yes, I am one who prefers to enjoy my 'traditional' role to the fullest extent, and I know that I am not alone. For callers to treat such topics as Things Which Have Been Decided is troubling; I don't have any suggestions for how callers can get a sense of what the dance community prefers, but if we could come up with one, I think it would be immensely healthy. (A side note for those who dance both roles: *Please* don't switch roles in the middle of one iteration of the dance when the other couple are obviously new. I am careful to not add flourishes which could confuse newbies, and I think maintaining this courtesy is important to retaining newbies for life.)

One final comment is on a recent change on which I believe our community is divided: It Has Been Decided that the term 'Gypsy' should be removed from the much-loved dance figure as something which is offensive to the Roma people. I am an admitted word freak, and a passionate advocate against any form of discrimination, but asserting 'ownership' of a word and its connotations is in my view arrogant. To me, the term 'Gypsy' in music and dance is an homage to the glorious passion of the Roma people... and I have yet to meet a single Roma person who perceives this as a denigratory term. In short: Who decides when a word must change?

If the community as a whole feels that the term for this figure must change (I'm not 'the decider!'), *please* don't continue to use bland phrases such as 'right shoulder round' which completely depersonalize this most personal of contradance figures! In place of that, I propose something like 'eye lock,' which is really what this move is all about.

For those of you who have made it this far, I thank you for your indulgence, and I hope that your thoughts are duly provoked. :-)

## Save The Date - November 16, 2019 - For Alan's Big Birthday Ball

Alan Winston - longtime BACDS Board chair, English and contra caller, choreographer - is having a big birthday this year, and he's decided to have a party for the country community.

Taking the calendar spot that Fall Ball has vacated, the dance party will take place on November 16, 2019, at the Hill and Valley Club in Hayward. The program will be all Alan's choreographies (mostly English (including "Woodshed", "Southwind", "New Decade Waltz", "Sparkling and Still") , a few contras (including "The Lowdown", about to be published in CDSS News), Alan and guests (Sharon Green, Lise Dyckman, Eric Black) will call, and StringFire! will play. We'll have a half hour of open waltzing 7:30-8:00, country dancing 8:00-11:00.

You'll be Alan's guest at the party - free admission for all. You can bring snacks to share if you want to bring something other than your smiling face and your dancing shoes, but the important thing is to come and celebrate. Wear something festive and danceable - that could be t-shirts, formal wear, Regency costume, Morris kit, Dickens Fair garb.

We'll have a ball preview at the Palo Alto English the night before (on the 15th); some of the dances have some challenge to them, so we'll take a look at those. That's a regular PA English dance so regular admission will be charged (which includes the "pay what you can" option).

If you're pretty sure you're coming, drop a line to [AWinstonDance@gmail.com](mailto:AWinstonDance@gmail.com) so Alan has some clue about how many refreshments to get, but don't let not RSVPing keep you from coming.

## Teen Games, Jams and Dance!

*By Claire Takemori*

The Teen Contra began last May 6, 2018. After a request for a local teen music jam, we had another dance November 3, 2018 including a teen music jam before the dance, and there were lots of requests for more dancing. Since January 2019, this has been a monthly dance, usually with about 25 teens (13-19 years old). I noticed teens were coming early for the music jam but sitting around on their phones, so I offered them some "ice breaker" games, and that went pretty well. It was a huge relief for some new dancers who did not know anyone yet. Now it is a regular thing; while the music jam has teen musicians on fiddle, cello, bodhran, guitar, banjo and sometimes piano, in the other room there are teens laughing, working together to solve games and learning more about each other.

The dancing is the best part. They are smart, quick learners, respectful and getting to be good dancers. They seem to enjoy the variety of dances that are called, from easy mixers to simple contras, complex longways, squares, and ceilidh dances. The music has been wonderful too, with talented musicians such as Jess Newman, Derry Akin, Will Wheeler, Simon Lace, Daniel Steinberg, Scott Jespersen and Elizabeth Dequine. We've been fortunate to have a sound tech up until May, when I did the organizing, calling and running sound with Will Wheeler's help! (Thanks to Eric Black for loaning us his sound gear). Thanks to Vince Piantanida, Matt Mathis, and Eric Black for doing sound for the dances!

I'm looking for a parent or contact at the Waldorf School of Peninsula who might be able to invite the teens at the High School to the dances.

And I can use someone to design a webpage that will link to BACDS and be a better landing page than the current [bit.ly/teendance](http://bit.ly/teendance). Can you help me?

We are taking a break over June, July & August when the hall is too hot and families are on vacation. We plan to start back Sep, Oct, Nov on 1st Saturdays in San Jose, at First Unitarian Church. There is interest in an East Bay Teen Contra and possibly Peninsula. If I can find a cheap space, we will try to keep the teen music jams going during the summer. Anyone know of a room with chairs that they can use?

If you know of teens, or an affordable hall, or want to help with the Teen Contras, please let me know! More Info: [bit.ly/teendance](http://bit.ly/teendance)

## Go West, Kate Barnes, Go West!

*By Sharon Green*

English country dancers and music lovers are looking forward to Kate Barnes's Bay Area gigs when Trio Picante heads west for Hey Days this July. But Kate has had her eye on the Bay Area for some time now, as a quick survey of the newly-published Volume 3 of The Barnes Book of English Country Dance Tunes makes clear.

Four greater Bay Area composers and eight greater Bay Area choreographers have the honor of being included in this latest volume of the standard anthology of English country dance music. Napa's Rebecca King leads the list of composers, with eight tunes written or arranged for reconstructions by Andrew Shaw or composed for modern dances by Gary Roodman, Sharon Green, Bonnie Richardson, Ron Coxall, and the late Robin Burke. Rebecca is joined by Shira Kammen, whose tunes are favorites of choreographers Brooke Friendly and Chris Sackett (four Kammen tunes for dances by Brooke and Chris appear in the new Barnes), by Ruth Anne Fraley (formerly of Palo Alto), and by Patti Cobb, whose waltz Paulina was on the program of the recent Playford Ball.

Seven of the eight BACDS choreographers whose dance tunes appear in Barnes 3 are active callers. In alphabetical order, they are Alan Simpson-Vlach (whose dance Emma's Commencement was misattributed to Gary Roodman), Alan Winston, Bob Fraley (now of Eugene), Bonnie Richardson, Bruce Hamilton, Kalia Kliban, and Sharon Green. The eighth, Robin Burke, belonged to both BACDS and the Sacramento Country Dance Society; Robin and her husband Ed were longtime volunteers at our camps and special events.

Still looking for Bay Area connections in the new Barnes? There are lots more than composers and choreographers to be found. Take A Child's Christmas in Berkeley, for example. BACDS President Kevin Goess commissioned Rebecca King's tune as a gift for his wife Anne Bingham Goess. Or consider Mendocino Cure, whose title refers to BACDS's Mendocino English Week. Oregon's Brooke Friendly and Chris Sackett wrote the dance for their Berkeley friend Tom Colton. (They also wrote The Bemused Benthologist for multi-instrumentalist Jim Oakden, and (commissioned by Loretta Guarino Reid) choreographed Breakfast with Coyote for Sherry Kumler. Similarly, Alan Winston, the tune for whose dance Southwind also appears in Barnes 3, wrote Sparkling and Still to celebrate the wedding of Carol Ann Krug and David Graves. (As Alan will explain, Krug is a sparkling wine, while the Bordeaux region Graves is noted for its still wines; hence, the dance's name.)

Barnes 3 is indeed a treasure. BACDS is fortunate to be so well represented in this brilliant new collection.

P.S.: In writing this article, I was unsure whether to include composers and choreographers living outside the greater Bay Area who have played a major role in BACDS activities. Jenny Beer, Mickie and Beth Zekley, Brooke Friendly and Chris Sackett, Mary Devlin: when you explore your copy of Barnes 3, be sure to check out their contributions.

## Fall Frolick: Festivities, Fun, and Friends

by Sharon Green

Looking for a weekend in the redwoods, with dancing and music all day and a good part of the night? Fall Frolick's the weekend for me, and I hope it is for you. With English country dance sessions led by Robin Hayden, David Millstone, Kalia Kliban, and Sharon Green, Scottish country dance sessions led by David Newitt, even a contra hour thrown in for fun, Fall Frolick offers a wealth of dancing opportunities.

What can you expect when you come to Fall Frolick? Well, there'll be music everywhere, with a staff that includes Charlie Hancock and Rebecca King on piano, Jon Berger and Susan Worland on strings, David Mostardi on accordion, Musica Pacifica's Judy Linsenberg on recorders, and Jim Oakden on whatever he feels like playing at any given moment. Oak, Ash & Thorn's Doug Olsen will be leading the sing-alongs, plus the Sacred Harp sing on Sunday morning. And there will be the food. No, I'm not talking about the meals, which are fine. But campers go all out providing luscious treats for the Friday night post-dance dessert potluck and for Saturday afternoon's Happy Hour. Sweets, savorys, just what you need to boost your energy for a happy return to the dance floor or a quiet hike along Monte Toyon's scenic trails.

And then there will be the friends. Each year we've had special folks join us at Fall Frolick—music students from Texas Tech, dance enthusiasts from the UK, teenaged dancers from Willetts, grad students from Cal. For the past several years Paul Bestock has captured these gatherings of friends, taking group photos of smiling dancers during Saturday's Happy Hour. I love the way bunches of folks from different areas sign up together, so we wind up with group shots of dancers from Napa, dancers from Sebastopol, dancers from Sacramento [the Sacramento folks bring their own t-shirts!]. I would adore having more of my SoCal dance friends here, and my Northwest dance friends as well. I think they'd photograph pretty darn well.

Fall Frolick: Friday, October 18 to Sunday, October 20. Sign up today! See our website at [bacds.org/fallfrolick](http://bacds.org/fallfrolick).

## Thank you, all Volunteers!

BACDS wishes to express thanks to all volunteers who help keep our many events running smoothly. We couldn't exist without you!

In particular, we would like to acknowledge the volunteers who help run the monthly Teen Contras, especially the sound techs: Matt Mathis, Vince Piantanida, Eric Black.

## Upcoming Events

Sun, Jun 30 - Fri Jul 5	<b>American Week at Camp Jones Gulch</b>	<i>Luke Donforth, Susan Petrick</i>
Sun, Jun 30 - Sat Jul 6	<b>Family Week at Monte Toyon camp</b>	<i>Various</i>
Sun, Jul 7 - Sat Jul 14	<b>Hey Days at Sonoma State University</b>	<i>Brooke Friendly</i>
Fri, Aug 9 – Sun Aug 11	<b>Balance The Bay in San Francisco</b>	<i>Various</i>
Fri, Oct 18 – Sun Oct 20	<b>Fall Frolick at Monte Toyon camp</b>	<i>Various</i>
Sat, October 26	<b>Halloween Ball in Palo Alto</b>	<i>TBA</i>
December (date TBD)	<b>No-Snow Ball</b>	<i>TBA</i>

See [bacds.org](http://bacds.org) for more information. For events sponsored by our neighbors, see [nbcads.org](http://nbcads.org) (NBCADS), [sactocds.org](http://sactocds.org) (SCDS), [sffmc.org](http://sffmc.org) (SFFMC), [santacruzdance.org](http://santacruzdance.org) (TDSC), [montereycontradance.org](http://montereycontradance.org) (MCDC), [cccds.org](http://cccds.org) (CCCDs), [facebook.com/NorthOaklandSquareDance](https://facebook.com/NorthOaklandSquareDance) (NOSD), [lcfid.org/sf](http://lcfid.org/sf) (QCD)

This issue was edited by Chris Folger. Send corrections to [TheDancer@bacds.org](mailto:TheDancer@bacds.org). Deadline for the Fall Dancer: August 25, 2019. Send submissions to [cjfolger@yahoo.com](mailto:cjfolger@yahoo.com). Please join the conversation.