



Bay Area Country Dancer

No. 72 – December 2007

www.bacds.org

Balance the Bay!

BACDS Announces the First Contra Dance Weekend in San Francisco

Registration Opens December 1!

Across the country, non-residential, or “urban,” contra dance weekends continue to gain popularity. Many Bay Area dancers travel up and down the West Coast and across the nation to attend them. We are thrilled to announce that on December 1, 2007, registration will open for our very own urban weekend in beautiful San Francisco! Balance the Bay will be held May 9 – 11, 2008, at the Armenian Cultural Center Hall on Brotherhood Way.



Some of the benefits of an urban dance weekend (as compared to a dance camp) include:

- No rustic cabins to share with snoring bunk-bed buddies
- Dancers bring their own food or explore local restaurants
- Less intense schedules with later start times -- sleep in on Saturday!
- Lower admission price
- Contra, contra, contra!

The weekend will feature Carol Ormand (WI) calling to the music of Lift Ticket (USA). They will be joined by local favorites, caller Lynn Ackerson from El Cerrito, CA, and The Crabapples from Monterey. The weekend will primarily offer contra dancing with a few other workshops on Saturday if you want to work on couple dancing, singing, dance calling, or musicianship. The full schedule is still being finalized.

The Armenian Cultural Center is in an ideal location with a large parking lot. The safe, pleasant neighborhood is near the San Francisco Zoo and SF State University. Restaurants are always in close proximity in San Francisco. The dance hall is very large and will hold just over 200 dancers.

Why 200 dancers? “Dance weekends with 200 dancers have a much different feel to them than smaller dance weekends of 100 or so,” explained Karen Fontana, weekend co-chair with Diane Frank. “We want the San Francisco Bay Area to have our own large weekend filled with fun people from everywhere.”

Since San Francisco is such an attractive tourist destination, we hope dancers will be enticed to tag on a few days before or after the weekend to explore the city's treasures and the California coast.

If you have dance friends or relatives you want to lure out for a visit, tempt them with the added bonus of Balance the Bay. It's a lovely time of year.

How can you help make this weekend a rousing success?

- Sign up to attend! Registration forms will be available at dances and on the web after the first of December: www.bacds.org
- Invite your dance friends from other parts of the state or country to sign up for Balance the Bay.
- Open your home to dancers from out of town to help keep their costs low. (Dance gypsies are often used to camping out on available floor space.)
- Offer rides to and from the airport during the weekend.

Also, there are lots of opportunities to help prepare for the weekend and to volunteer during the weekend to keep it humming sweetly along. Everyone is welcome to sign up on the San Francisco Contra Weekend email list, whether you are on the committee or not, to receive regular updates about this great weekend. To do this, simply sign yourself up at:

<http://bacds.org/mailman/admin.cgi/bacds-urbancamp>

Or, contact Karen Fontana at (650) 691-9663 or karen_fontana@yahoo.com

Geek Day Heaven!

Sound Engineer Workshops and Apprenticeships

February and March 2008

San Rafael Masonic Hall on Lootens

Do you like order, widgets, gadgets and electronics? Good sound? Being close to fabulous music? Being a key part of your dance community? Come get trained to become a Sound Engineer! Responsible for the sound of the caller and musicians, the sound engineer plays an important role in our dance communities by making the music and vocals sounds so good we just gotta dance!

A joint workshop among BACDS, NBCDS and the SF Queer Contra dance communities for all traditional dance forms will be held on the second Saturdays in February and March 2008. The first workshop will be held on February 9, the second date is still to be schedule, so stay tuned!

Marty Brenneis will instruct and plenty of hands-on widget fidgeting, tinkering and fiddling (no pun intended!) practice will be included. The training will start in the late after will include setting up for the San Rafael Contra Dance that evening to gain practical experience. Workshops will build on each other, so be sure to attend both.

There will also be a sound engineer workshop in the peninsula area sometime next year.

However, you don't need to wait for a sound workshop to start getting your hands on the cables and learning the ropes! Another way to learn is by approaching your local sound engineer and working along side by side at each dance, building on to more learning.

We'd also like to reach out to local colleges and high schools and match this role with young folks studying theatre production, electronics or music.

If you know anyone who might be interested in learning a new skill or learning more tricks of becoming a fantastic sound engineer, and also making a huge contribution to our dance communities, please contact your local sound engineer, or contact Marty Brenneis (415-485-4478), Davey Hudson (510-260-7643) or Eric Black (650-747-0786).

Watch for more information in your email, on your flyer table, or from your local sound engineer.

No Child at Home? Family Week is still for you!

BACDS Family Week was started in order to extend our cherished traditions of music and dance to the next generation. It is a treasured summer experience for many families from northern California and beyond, and has produced a number of 'graduates' who stay connected and bring exceptional skills and confidence to their new lives.

But it isn't just for nuclear families-- many folks (some with empty nests) bring along a niece, nephew, grandchild, or friend of the family. Families-of-one also participate, and this year we congratulate long-time camp member Andy Wilson (converted to family man) for helping to create new dancers in the most labor-intensive way: he and his bride, Stephanie Hudson, are expecting this spring!

This year our 16th Family Week will return to a wonderful new location, Foothill Horizons--a large, modern site in the pine and oak woodlands of the Sierra foothills just outside Sonoma. Adults and children of all ages will gather to dance, play (both games and instruments), sing, swim, listen to stories, make crafts and, most important of all, to build the kind of friendships that will last a lifetime.

Come and share in creating a community. Learn new skills-- try the bagpipes, demonstrate how to hang a spoon from your nose, try your hand (or foot) at stilt-walking. Pass along your special talents at camper-led afternoon activities and music jams. Have a great time, knowing that your child (grandchild, niece or nephew) is having as much fun in their class as you are in yours. Come and get to know the wonderful folks who have been coming to Family Week for years, and experience the ridiculously talented staff who seem to keep coming back for more-- it's rumored Steve Hickman will make it to camp this year.

Share the dance traditions you love with a new generation, and have fun doing it!

BACDS 16th Annual Family Week
Saturday, July 5 - Saturday July 12, 2008

Program Director: Randall Cayford
Camp Manager: Wayne Mullen
Registrar: Rhonda Cayford

For more info, see
<http://www.bacds.org/familycamp/>
or email: FamilyWeek2008@bacds.org.



Playing with Food at the Playford Ball

For years, Playford Ball dancers have delighted in the playful names of the dishes served during the ball's sumptuous refreshments break. Each year sees the return of traditional favorites like Lacks Health, made with recipes handed down from dancer to dancer in the community.

In 2008, however, we've a new way to play with our Playford food. While many volunteer cooks will choose to stick to their tried-and-true favorite recipes, making the same great dishes they made in previous years, others can try their hand at inventing new dishes whose names play on the titles of the dances for our 2008 ball.

Here's the game. One of the dances on the 2008 Playford program is Alisa Dodson's Farewell California. Several possibilities come to mind. Pearwell California--a pear tart, possibly. Eclairwell California--small chocolate eclairs would be a treat. There could even be Farewell Cauliflower for a healthful snack. You name it, you make it (or commission a friend to make it for you).

As the time for the ball draws near, food chair Sharon Green will be dropping by local dances with a list of ingredients ("I need something with tangerines for Barbarini's Tangerine.") and a starter set of food puns. Feel free to come up with your own puns or to work with a title already on the list. Donations of money to purchase special edibles are also welcome. How else could we wind up with a ball food called The Merry, Merry Milk Duds?

New Design for 2008 Fall Weekend

2008 will be a banner year for BACDS, with not one, not two, but three weekend camps for dancers and musicians. In March, we'll hold our traditional Monte Toyon Spring Weekend, a splendid event featuring both contras and English country dancing. In May, we'll enjoy the Bay Area's first Urban Contra Weekend, a brand-new exciting opportunity for dancers hankering for a pure contra experience. Finally, in October, we'll head back to Monte Toyon for our new, revised Fall Weekend: an all English country and display dance weekend designed to attract dancers from coast to coast.

Currently the West Coast boasts only one all-English country dance weekend: Seattle's non-residential Cascadia Weekend in early May. Like Cascadia, BACDS's new Fall Weekend will capitalize on the wealth of stellar local musical talent for its staff. (Jon Berger, Chuck Ward, and Rebecca King have already agreed to come on board.) The teaching staff will be both local and national, possibly even international. Unlike Cascadia, our Monte Toyon Fall Weekend will prominently feature display dancing and will include a strong music track. The organizers hope to build in sessions for children as well.

At its November 15th meeting, the Board authorized the establishment of a Fall Weekend committee to work on redesigning the weekend. Thanks to 2007 co-managers Alan Winston and Vanessa Schnatmeier for coming up with the proposal, and to the Board for agreeing to support this new project. Currently on the committee are: Sharon Green, 2008 programmer; Mary Luckhardt, 2008 treasurer; Alan Winston; Vanessa Schnatmeier; Victoria Williams; Michael Siemon; and Lise Dyckman, Jocelyn Reynolds and Randall Cayford have been helping with advice on display dance programming; other members and friends of BACDS have signed on to help promote the weekend in their communities up and down the West Coast.

If you are interested in joining the committee or in helping the redesigned weekend in some other way, please get in touch with Sharon Green [Phone: 510-654-7974; e-mail: sharongreen@post.harvard.edu].

San Francisco Contra Weekend



**Fri May 9 to
Sun May 11, 2008**

featuring

Carol Ormand

calling to the music of

Lift Ticket

(C.W. Abbott, Rex Blazer,
Seth Houston, Russell Shumsky)

with local favorites

Lynn Ackerson

and

The Crabapples

(Norm Cotton, Marta Lynch,
Bob Silberstein, Sarah Springer)

Sign up now while space is available:
(650) 691-9663 www.BACDS.org

From the President



One of the things I've learned as President is that there is no one person in charge of running BACDS. Getting things done in the organization takes a delicate balance between personal initiative and community responsibility. When the organization gets out of balance, things fall through the cracks.

Personal initiative is how things get done. Nothing happens unless some volunteer steps forward to make it happen. Community responsibility is how we try to ensure that what gets done is for the benefit of the whole dance community. Anyone who takes on a job is doing so with the "advice and consent" of the whole community, and has a responsibility to keep the community informed and to accept feedback.

The recent problems with the BACDS website are an example of what can happen when there is too much personal initiative. Nick Cuccia took on the webmaster job years ago because he had the skills and the facilities. He hosted the bacds.org web site on the same machine that he used to host his personal domain (talamasca.com). As owner and administrator of the machine, Nick did most of the work himself.

When Nick and Andrea bought a house in Merced this fall, Nick thought he could continue to host bacds.org from the new location, but discovered at the last minute that his new internet service would not be up to the job. In the midst of moving, he quickly offloaded the BACDS web site onto a different machine which he handed off to Alan Winston.

The result: the site was completely down for a few critical days because even Nick's prodigious juggling skills can't keep that many balls in the air. When it came back up, lots of bits were still broken, many of them to do with finding the dozens of places in the bacds.org web structure that linked to things at talamasca.com and changing them to point to bacds.org.

One of the things that was most seriously broken was the spam filtering. Nick ended up having to install a completely new spam filtering package, and it took just over a month to get it working to his satisfaction.

The web site is now up and running on the new computer; the spam filtering is in place, but not yet well trained. But it's still a temporary arrangement, living at Alan's house for the time being, while we work on finding a more stable and secure home for it. There will be another transition coming when that happens. I hope we can make it go more smoothly.

This is an example of personal initiative taken to extremes, with Nick and webmaster-in-training Alan working on their own to solve a problem. I can't say for sure that the web site move would have happened more smoothly if Nick had solicited and received more help. But I'd like to think so.

On the other side of the coin, we have the ongoing discussions of how to cope with declining attendance at our dances. Here we see a lot of community responsibility: lots of ideas about what we could and should try, lots of debate over the merits of those ideas, but not very many individuals stepping up to act on them.

Notice that I didn't say nobody was stepping forward. Eric Black and Charlie Fenton each individually stepped forward to try out the ideas we've been debating about guaranteed minimum payments for the bands at our dances. A few people have posted articles about our dances to various web sites (Lynn Wilde to hubpages.com, Holly Bonasera to yelp.com, Davey Hudson to his own site, downhomedancing.org).

Still, there is a lot of room for more people to take initiative and get things done. Just remember to keep the community informed of what you are doing, so that we all move in more or less the same direction.

For those of you who are wondering about how BACDS is doing financially, we had a good year. Our camps filled for the most part, and brought in enough money to make up for last year's losses. Attendance at our regular dance series continues to decline, however, and the dance series by themselves just barely broke even. It's time for each of us to introduce a new friend to our dances.

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

Letters to Miz El

Dear Miz El:

I've heard that playing for contra dances is a good way to make money. Is this true and how much could I expect to make?

Signed: The Fresno Fiddler

Dear Fresno:

I checked with several musicians who regularly play for our dances, and they assure me that they can make a significant two-digit income playing for dances. They emphasized that the way to make a small fortune playing for dances is to start with a large fortune so that, after several years of barely making "gas money," they now have a much smaller fortunes.

Quite obviously, those who call and play for our dances clearly do it for the love of the music and the energy they get from us as dancers. One fiddler I know says that when he sits down to play at a contra dance, the dancers look at him with the same expression as his cat's when he goes to open the refrigerator door - they know to expect a treat!

Miz El takes this opportunity to gently remind our dancers to always thank the caller and the musicians who play for us.

Signed: Miz El

Bay Area Country Dance Society
American Dance and Music Week

Movement Afoot

JULY 5-12, 2008
 at the Mendocino Woodlands in
 the Coastal Redwoods
 of Northern California

OUTSTANDING MUSIC

Moving Violations: Van Kaynor,
 Becky Ashenden, Chuck Corman,
 Ron Grosslein

Notorious: Eden MacAdam-Somer,
 Larry Unger, Sam Bartlett

& Dave Langford, Bill Tomczak,
 Mike Murphy, Ann Percival

CONTRAS AND SQUARES

Lisa Greenleaf & Carol Ormand

COUPLE DANCING

Valerie Williams

CLOGGING

Judy Erickson

STORYTELLING

Willy Claflin

SINGING and More

Seth Houston

SOUND

Marty Brenneis

SUPREME CUISINE

Jeff O'Connor



For more information,
 Go to www.bacds.org/amweek
 or contact Loren Kalmen, Registrar <amweek@bacds.org>, (775) 240-6117

REGISTRATION OPENS FEBRUARY 2, 2008

Upcoming Events		
Mon, Dec 31	New Year's Eve English	Nick Cuccia with Stan & Susan Kramer, Bill Jensen
Mar 14-16	Spring Weekend	Nils Fredland, Lynn Ackerson, David Newitt with The Figments, The Moving Violations, The Bristol Players, Chuck Ward and Jon Berger
Sat, Mar 29	Playford Ball	Alisa Dodson with Rebecca King, Shira Kammen, Jim Oakden and Danny Carnahan
Jul 5 – Jul 12	Family Week	Foothill Horizons Camp, Sonora
Jul 5 – Jul 12	American Week	Mendocino
Jul 12 – Jul 19	English Week	Mendocino

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)

THE COUNTRY DANCE

Earl Leo Brownson

from the Canton, NY Commercial Advertiser newspaper, Summer 1902

Did you ever go to a country dance,
A real old kitchen hop,
Where when they'd get to dancing they
Don't ever want to stop?
Well, if you never did you ought
To go and see the fun,
That don't let up one minute till
The rising of the sun.
I've been to one or two myself,
And like to see them dance.
The old folks and the young ones that
Like wild colts kick and prance.

It's Money Musk, the Tempest, and
The old Virginia Reel,
And Fisher's Hornpipe loud and fast,
That puts springs in your heel.
The Devil's Dream, Varsouvian;
And Durang's Hornpipe old,
Hull's Victory, and Speed the Plow
That makes the timid bold.
Upon the table near the wall
The fiddler is placed;
He's old and bent and gray and bald
And swarthy wrinkled faced.
He swings his fiddle into place,
All dancers take the floor--
"Salute yer partners all," he cries,
"And right and left first four--
Grand ladies' change, and back to place--
Swing partner once around--
All promenade around the hall--
Four couple Shav'er down."

The fiddler screeches out the time
Without a skip or break: --
"Swing partner once and a half around,
And then your opposite take--
All form in line and walk around--"
Just hear the fiddler play,
"And sashay out and back again--
Then all hands run away--
Grand right and left, and swing your own--
And promenade to seat--"
His fiddle drops upon his knee
And the figure is complete.

Old farmer Green and widow Black;
By special invitation,
Get on the floor and dance a jig
Till both are near prostration.
Then someone says, "It's time to eat,"
And all crowd to the table
To get a seat if possible,
And eat as long as able:
Cold meat and biscuit, coffee too,
And quantities of cake--
All things to make you hungry and
You heartily partake;
And then you dance till broad daylight,
A score or more selections.
And go home in the early morn
With happy recollections.

Volunteer Opportunities

BACDS is an all-volunteer organization. Everything we do happens because someone steps forward to make it happen. Here are some areas where we need help.

Ellen Eagan is looking for an assistant Mailing Czar(ina) to manage the six yearly BACDS mailings on the first weekends of February, March, June, July, September, and December. Contact Ellen at letsgomets1969@aol.com.

The Outreach Committee is looking for a new chairperson, as well as volunteers, to place dance notices in various Bay Area media and notice boards. A volunteer would take care of listing one dance series in one medium (such as the *Bay Area Guardian* or *Craigslist*). The chairperson would oversee the work of these volunteers, seek out new promotional ideas, and maintain a collection of text and graphics that can be used as a resource by people writing publicity materials. Contact Jens Dill at bacds-president@bacds.org.

The Urban Camp Committee is looking for new members, and a chair to replace Diane Frank, who has had to step aside for personal reasons. Sign up at www.bacds.org/mailman/listinfo/bacds-urbancamp.

Thanks So Much!

It's nearly impossible to adequately acknowledge all the wonderful and generous volunteers who contribute their time and talents to making sure that dance happens. But we'll try. If we miss someone, let us know.

Special thanks to Davey Hudson for creatively crafting our San Francisco Contra Weekend logo, ad, and registration flyer in a very short period of time!

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