



Bay Area Country Dancer

No.85– March 2011

www.bacds.org

Balance the Bay: A Contra Dance Experience You Don't Want to Miss

*The Groovemongers, Contra Sutra,
Steve Zakon-Anderson,
and Deb Comly*

Here in our own San Francisco!

Balance the Bay is hot bands and cool breezes, exciting dancing and enticing refreshments, friendly faces and fabulous fun.

Make sure you're part of it. Aug. 12-14, 2011

Registration is now open. Register online at <http://bacds.org/registration>. Our weekend schedule will include dynamic contras, fun workshops, and more!

Every year we've had a special color theme for the Saturday night dance. This year our "color" is not a color; it's polka dots! After our traditional sit-down Saturday dinner (a culinary delight you won't want to miss), we'll return to the dance floor – adorned with dots – to generate and partake in more of that contra weekend high.

Balance the Bay

Janet Pomeroy Center, San Francisco
August 12-14, 2011

<http://bacds.org/btb> btb@bacds.org

Be forewarned: Last year's Balance the Bay was a sell-out, so the word in the contra community is "Register early!"

We hope to see you there!



Contra Sutra: Dave Bartley (fretted things), Russell S. (percussion), Marni Rachmiel (windy things), Ryan McKasson (bowed strings)



The Groovemongers: C. W. Abbott (mandolin and guitar), Mark Hellenberg (percussion), Rebecca McCallum (fiddle), Jane Knoeck (keyboard and accordion)

Memorial Dances for Patsy Bolt

by Sharon Green

Dance friends were saddened to learn of the death in Santa Barbara this January of Patsy Bolt, longtime English country and Morris dancer, and, with her husband Fred Perner, for many years co-manager of BACDS Mendocino English Week.

Tall, with striking red-gold hair, Patsy combined elegance with energy in her dancing. She brought a similar focus to all her interests: botany, bookbinding, playing the melodeon, gardening.

In celebration of Patsy's life, Fred plans to hold two English country dances over the next several months. The first, in Santa Barbara, will take place on April 16th from 2 to 6 PM, with Sharon Green as M.C. and The Glory of the West (Bill Jensen and Susan and Stan Kramer) as the band. (For details on location, program, etc., e-mail sharongreen@post.harvard.edu or call 510-654-7974.) The second dance will take place in the Bay Area, most likely this summer, but the exact date and location have yet to be determined.

Friends wishing to write to Fred may reach him at 742 Calle Alella, Santa Barbara CA 93109.

There Might Still Be Time!! Catch Spring Fever — March 18–20, 2011

One of the hottest dance weekends on the West Coast, Spring Fever, will feature callers Scott Higgs and Kathy Anderson, accompanied by The Latter Day Lizards and Contra Sutra, blending the very best of both English and Contra dance worlds, with enough of each for everyone.

To register, see <http://bacds.org/sf/register.html>.

Something New: English Dance Musicians' Course at Hey Days!

Playing for English Country Dancing is exciting and challenging – good dance musicians are able to play tunes in a wide variety of styles and are adept at improvising, interacting with fellow musicians, and creating a musical experience that serves the dancers well.

That is why *Hey Days*, BACDS's English Dance and Music Week, is delighted to offer something new – an English Dance Musicians' Course! Co-sponsored by the Country Song and Dance Society, the course is inspired by similar courses held at Pinewoods and other CDSS camps.

Musicians in the course will work intensively every morning with leader Anita Anderson, an extraordinary English country and contra dance pianist who plays with Tricky Brits, Bag o' Tricks, Roguery, Zollo, and other Northwest bands. Anita brings a large bag of tricks to her piano work, with influences from doo-wop, baroque, ethnic, and vintage dance music. Her playing is informed by her extensive experience as a dancer. In the afternoons and evening, music course participants will have opportunities to play for dancers and enjoy additional music and dance classes. They'll also have lots of time to dance, sing, swim, and be silly! All musicians with fluency in their instruments are encouraged to apply.

Hey Days will take place from August 21 to 28, 2011 at a lovely new location, the Bishop's Ranch in the rolling golden hills of the Sonoma Valley wine country. The Bishop's Ranch offers comfortable accommodations with private or semiprivate bathrooms, a spacious air-conditioned dance hall, and a pool. It also has a reputation for wonderful food!

To provide lots of individual attention, the musicians' course is limited to twelve participants. Needs-based and work scholarships are available. Please check the Web site (<http://bacds.org/eweek>) to see if there is still space in the course and for application forms and further information about *Hey Days* and the musicians' course.

Volunteer Thanks

Thanks to *Aleta Oryall, Charlie Fenton, Clark Cole, Diane Frank, Ellen Wall, Erik Ievins, Erik Hoffman, Jens Dill, Jim Saxe, Jody Distler-Dill, Kris Inman, Laura Rice-Hall, Marcia Rosenblatt, Maria Markoff, Susan Wageman, Tim Hall, Tom Sleckman, and Yale Rosenblatt* for attending the first meeting of the San Francisco Contra committee. Thanks to Tom for letting us use his house.

Thanks to *Rhonda Cayford* for taking charge of organizing the BACDS 30th Anniversary celebration. If you want to help, please contact anniversary@bacds.org.

Thanks to all the newcomers who showed up at the San Francisco Contra right after the meeting. It was pure serendipity, but 70+ dancers on the floor is a great bit of positive feedback for the committee effort.

Thanks to the summer camp committees (American Week, English Week, and Family Week) for getting their brochures ready for last month's Camp mailing. And thanks to all who came and stuffed envelopes. It was a very well-run mailing party. Thanks to *Ellen Eagan* for hosting.

Thanks to all who are working to help us track down traveling bands and put together special dances: *Jim Saxe, Eric Black, Alan Winston, Bill Ward, Jens Dill, Diane Zingale, Lynn Ackerson, Valerie Neer, Karen Fontana, Steve Rathman* have all been working on different ideas, some of which worked and some of which didn't.. There's one special dance in this quarter, with *Contra Sutra* and *Scott Higgs* on Monday, March 21 in Palo Alto. Look for even more in the summer quarter.

Thanks to our dance weekend committees: *Spring Fever* is in full swing, getting ready for a great weekend at Monte Toyon (March 18-20). **Are you signed up yet?** *Balance the Bay* (August 12-14) is already filling up. *Fall Frolick* is getting ready to announce its 2011 program (courtesy of *Kalia Kliban*). *Contra College* is looking for a new location. It may not happen if we can't find a site.

Thanks to *Annette Kindred* for her efforts as BACDS Membership Chair. Annette found herself in over her head when the rest of her life overwhelmed her. But she picked up the pieces and handed the job over to *Mary Luckhardt* in good order.

Thanks to *Mary Luckhardt* for coming to the rescue again. Now that Mary is both Dance Coordinator and Membership Chair, we need to find some understudies to be ready to take on the jobs she won't have as much time for.

Thanks to all for your patience with the Membership issues. Annette should have gotten back to you by now. If you still have an outstanding Membership concern, please send an E-mail to membership@bacds.org.

I can't possibly remember all the people who need to be thanked for their efforts. If I fail to mention someone, let me know, and I'll add them next time.

Other notes

Condolences to *Fred Perner* and many others on the recent loss of *Patsy Bolt* to cancer.

Best wishes for *Vanessa Schmatmeier* as she continues to recover from a pulmonary embolism.

Rita Morgin, contra dancer, morris dancer, and Palo Alto community gardener, is going in for a knee operation. Those who would like to help cover her very large co-pay should contact Amy Baldwin acxbaldwin@aol.com

And sympathy for *Beth and George Mills, Ric Goldman and Stewart Hall, and Bill and Cathy Brigg*, who have all lost beloved pets.

The President's Corner



From the President: One of my earliest realizations, when I began my first term as President of BACDS, was: “This organization really runs itself: I don’t have a lot to do.” Well, it’s never that simple, but that was a good starting point.

BACDS runs itself because a lot of people care about making our dances happen. And many of them have been doing what they do for a long time, so they are quite good at it. But there can be hidden cost to just letting things run as they always have. Once someone has been associated with an event or activity for a really long period of time, that person becomes the visible face of the activity. And that person tends to pick up all the other little jobs associated with running that activity, just because it’s easier to do them than to find someone else to do them. And that person gets overloaded from time to time, so he or she streamlines the work, focusing on the parts that are (a) essential, and (b) enjoyable. All the other bits get less attention, or drop off the radar. The activity goes on, but it gets into a rut.

And meanwhile, other people who have ideas for improving the activity tend to bring them to the “key player” for approval. And they often get the brush-off. Remember, the “key player” person is already putting in all the time that he or she can spare keeping the event running. And the “new” idea may have been tried before, and didn’t continue (because someone found it was more effort than it was worth). So, the automatic response is often “No, it’s not going to work,” when a more careful analysis might show that it could work if someone who was not already overloaded was able to take charge.

It’s hard for someone new to “take charge” of a piece of something that has been in someone else’s hands for so long that they seem to own it. And it’s hard for someone who has had the whole job on his or her plate for so long to figure out how to let go of some parts of it without feeling like they’ve now taken on the extra work of “supervising” the new person. We end up with the “owner” of the event feeling like he or she can’t get good help, and the potential helpers feeling like they had been brushed off.

Personalities play a role, too. The person who gets stuck being the “owner” of an activity is often someone who is naturally more authoritative and decisive. The person who comes forward to help or suggest an idea often takes a rather more meek and tentative approach. This can amplify the difficulties involved in establishing a working relationship.

I’ve come to see my role as President as a watcher and facilitator. I watch and listen to everyone who is telling me what needs improvement. I try to find a way to connect these people with the ones who can help them make the improvement, and to steer the conversation away from the above-mentioned pitfalls if I can.

A case in point is the Palo Alto Contra dance. Over the years, this became Eric Black’s domain. But a year and a half ago, Joyce Fortune organized a “Friends of Palo Alto Contra” committee with the goal of bringing the whole community in to help run the dance. It worked. The committee is running the dance. Eric is still there to advise and to connect with the past, and to do the things he likes to do, but he’s no longer at the center. The dance is being run as a true committee effort, and average attendance has close to doubled since the committee got its start. (Now we have to watch that Joyce doesn’t get sucked into “owning” the dance, but we can worry about that later).

This year, the San Francisco Contra dance is trying to see if a committee can come together to take some of the load off Charlie Fenton. This is a different set of personalities and a different dance series, so we can’t just take the Palo Alto example and run with it. For one thing, we haven’t found anyone like Joyce to take charge of the committee yet. But give us time. The progress at Palo Alto was gradual. The San Francisco committee will find its own way, and take its own time. Stay tuned.

I guess organizing a dance is a lot like dancing. If the dance is going to continue, we need to bring in new dancers. If we bring in new dancers, we have to be ready to help them learn and to help them gain the confidence to make their own moves. And we tolerate mistakes, especially because we notice that some of them are being made by old-timers. And we smile, find our places, and go on dancing. Organizing our dance events is the same. We need new faces and new ideas, and we need to allow those new people to make mistakes, and recognize that they are no worse than the mistakes we old-timers still make from time to time. We just smile, find our places, and do what we need to do to make the event a success.

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

Gender Balance Follow-up

Last year at this time, I wrote a long article on the subject of gender balancing for dance camps and special events. I outlined a plan that we were going to use for managing the waiting lists for *Balance the Bay*, and I promised to let you all know how it worked. Well, it worked, and it didn’t. We stuck to the plan, but the software aids I designed to help automate the process were too cumbersome to be useful. And the plan itself turned out to be nothing really new or different.

At some point in filling up an event roster, you reach a point where the majority gender has filled all the spaces available (50% of capacity if you’re doing exact balancing, a bit more if you’re allowing a controlled amount of imbalance). At that point, you really don’t have much choice. Your actions fall into the following standard sequence:

1. Admit as many singles of the minority gender as you can find. Couples and singles of the majority gender languish on waiting lists in the meantime.
2. If that doesn’t fill your roster, admit couples. At least the imbalance doesn’t get worse.
3. If that doesn’t work, start admitting singles of the majority gender, and let the balance go where it may, since the alternative is usually losing money.

If your event is popular, and you have lots of people of both genders on the waiting list, you can easily keep the gender balance under control. If you are struggling to fill your roster, you really have no control.

Gender Balance Follow-up (continued)

It doesn't appear to matter what system you use to manage gender balance, or even if you decide not to do any balancing. You are at the mercy of the applicant pool, and the popularity of your event.

Where does this leave us? The *Balance the Bay* Committee has gone back to a more traditional gender balance policy for 2011. Applications are running almost 2-1 in favor of women. It seems to be a common pattern. A real long-term solution to the gender balancing "problem" is to look for ways to make it go away. How can we encourage more men to register sooner? Or how can we encourage our dancers to be less concerned about gender balance? The gender-neutral dance community is pointing to one possible solution, but it will take a lot of social engineering to make gender-specific issues really disappear. I look forward to watching our culture evolve.

~ Jens Dill

More New Dance Series

We note with interest that some of our neighbors have added new dance series their calendars. Traditional Dancers of the Golden State, the sponsor of the Hayward Contra, has started a new Contra dance in Walnut Creek on 2nd Sundays. Check out <http://haywardcontradance.org> for details.

And the North Bay Country Dance Society is starting a new English Dance in San Rafael on 3rd Wednesdays. Check out <http://nbcds.org>.

BACDS 30th Anniversary Planning Begins

BACDS turns 30 this year. Rhonda Cayford is organizing a committee to plan an anniversary celebration, probably in September. If you are interested, go to <http://bacds.org/email?l=anniversary> to join the discussion.

Special Contra Dance in Palo Alto, Monday, March 21

Following *Spring Fever* weekend, the Palo Alto Contra dance is adding a special dance to the calendar. Come to Palo Alto on Monday, March 21, and dance to the calling of *Scott Higgs* and the music of *Contra Sutra*. Special location: the Palo Alto Masonic Temple, 461 Florence St. Special time: from 7:30 to 10:30. Special price: \$12 (member \$10, students \$6, or pay what you can). Special event: be sure to come.

Now is the time to sign up for Summer Camps (need we say more?)

Upcoming Events

March 5	Playford Ball Workshop, East Bay	Alan Winston
March 13	Playford Ball Workshop, Peninsula	David Newitt
March 17	St Patricks' Day in San Rafael	Latter-Day Lizards with Warren Blier (NBCDS)
March 18-20	Spring Fever	Scott Higgs, Kathy Anderson, Contra Sutra, Latter Day Lizards
March 20	Post-Spring-Fever dance in Felton	Kathy Anderson, Contra Sutra (TDSC)
March 21	Special Palo Alto Contra	Scott Higgs, Contra Sutra
April 1	Playford Ball Rehearsal	Cavalcade of Callers
April 2	Playford Ball	Bob Fraley
April 3	Playford Brunch	in Castro Valley
April 22-24	The California Morris Ale	(http://berkeley-morris.org/ale2011/)
May 1	May Day Morris events Dance the Sun Up at 5:30 am	Berkeley, SF, Palo Alto, Santa Cruz, Sebastopol, later: Oakland Zoo, Pelican Inn (Muir Beach)
June 11	Mad Robin Ball	Andrew Shaw (www.madrobin.org)
June 17 – 19	Faultline Frolic (www.nbcds.org)	Seth Tepfer with Dr. Groove
June 25 – 26	San Francisco Free Folk Festival	www.sffolkfest.org
July 3-8	American Dance and Music Week	at Jones Gulch Camp (bacds.org/amweek)
July 3-9	Family Week	at Foothill Horizons (bacds.org/familyweek)
August 12-14	Balance the Bay Contra Weekend	Steve Zakon-Anderson, Deb Comly The GrooveMongers, Contra Sutra (bacds.org/btb)
Aug 21- 28	Hey Days English Dance and Music Week	At the Bishop's Ranch, Healdsburg (bacds.org/eweek)

See bacds.org for more information. For events sponsored by neighboring organizations, see nbcds.org (NBCDS), scds.ca (SCDS), sffmc.org (SFFMC), santacruzdance.org (TDSC), haywardcontradance.org (TDOGS).

This issue was edited by Julie Thomas and Loretta Guarino Reid. Send corrections to <caljuliet@comcast.net>. Deadline for Summer *Dancer*: May 15. Send submissions to caljuliet@comcast.net. Please join the conversation.