



Bay Area Country Dancer

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Balance the Bay 2012: A Contra Dance Experience You Don't Want to Miss

by Julie Thomas

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 **August 10 – 12 at the Janet Pomeroy Center in San Francisco**. This year, our programmer, Susan Petrick, has arranged for wonderful bands and callers: The Great Bear Trio, Joyride, George Marshall, and Bev Bernbaum are coming to San Francisco to help us create a contra dance extravaganza!

Registration opens March 1. You can register on line: go to www.bacds.org/btb and select "Registration" from the menu. Or you can fill out a printed registration form and mail it on March 1. Be forewarned: Last year's Balance the Bay was a sell-out, so the word in the contra community is "Register early!"



The **Great Bear Trio**, from central New York State, is a wonderful family ensemble of two brothers and their mom, making irresistible dance music on a wild variety of instruments. Kim Yerton, a classically trained pianist and piano teacher, holds the beat and provides a foundation from which her talented sons soar to imaginative heights on a variety of instruments. Both Andrew and Noah Van Norstrand play a wild variety of instruments, which allows them to infuse their original compositions and arrangements with surprising improvisations. So, don't be too startled when your dreamy dance trance is suddenly interrupted by an electric guitar solo or a digerido percussion. There *will* be a whoop and a holler.

Joyride is a contra dance band of friends from Portland, Oregon, playing for contra dances, dance camps, weekends, and festivals. Known for tight ensemble work, skilled play, fun energy, and inventively arranged tune sets, Joyride plays old and new dance tunes from New England, the British Isles, Appalachia, French Canada, and right here at home. George Penk's richly-danceable fiddle is joined by Erik Weberg's flute, harmonica, and bombarde, Sue Songer's lilting piano and Jeff Kerssen-Griep's ebullient guitar and percussion. Sue also joins George to drive twin fiddles.



George Marshall's specialty is teaching and calling the New England-style contra dances he has collected throughout the country. He is renowned for his knack of matching music to dance and for his smooth, concise teaching and presentation. Also a talented musician, he plays concertina and bodhran and has recorded on eight albums. You may know George from his work with other national touring bands, such as Wild Asparagus, Swallowtail, Nightingale, and several others. In addition to performing and teaching, George produces music and dance events including a week-long dance vacation in the Caribbean.

Bev Bernbaum, from Toronto, has been addicted to all things contra since she was first introduced to it at the Falcon Ridge Folk Festival (Albany, NY) in 1996. Since then, Bev has been in demand as a regular caller in her home town of Toronto, and at other dances and dance weekends in Ontario and many points south of the border. Bev's philosophy is to call the dances that she likes to dance herself. She's always on the lookout for interesting figures or formations to mix things up. Her clear voice, calm manner, and straightforward teaching style make contra dancing a pleasure for both beginning and experienced dancers.



Photo by Jane Steitz Parsons

Every year we've had a special color theme for the Saturday night dance.

This year we're holding a **Black and White Boogie!** After our sit-down Saturday dinner (a culinary delight you won't want to miss), we'll return to the dance floor in black and white attire to dance the night and all those delicious calories away. Now, don't start fussing about "dressing up." This is not a formal, black-tie event. We're looking forward to seeing everything from elegant gowns and tuxedos to zebra prints on the dance floor.

Besides the wonderful music and dancing, the bounty of the San Francisco bay area provides a wonderful vacation destination. Come a few days early or stay the following week to experience the beautiful sights and interesting, entertaining recreational opportunities that surround us. Plus, there are sure to be some special pre- and post-weekend dances in the area.

As has become our tradition, the weekend will build on the best of our past experience and the considered feedback from participants. Our organizing committee is comprised of dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers who are committed to making this Balance the Bay the best one yet! Come and help make that a reality; be sure to register on March 1 for your best chance to secure your place!

American Week – It's Not *Just* for Dancing Anymore

By Jim Oakden

OF COURSE American Week is about dancing! With Carol Ormond and Nils Fredland doing contras and squares, and Eric Erhardt and Lori Pimental teaching couple dances, the dancing will be exciting and sublime.

But American Week is also about music.

This year, for the first time at a dance camp, the music offerings will reach full parity with the dancing opportunities. In addition to at least one music class during every period during the day, there will now be staff-led music sessions every night – during the evening dances. This will not detract from the dance experience at all; it will allow people who are more interested in performing music to enjoy the complete camp. If you have a spouse or friend who loves to play music, *this* is the camp for them.

In addition to helping musicians refine their general skills and techniques, the musical program will focus on how to play for *dances*. Playing for dances requires a specialized set of skills that aren't often taught. The American Week staff was hired specifically to fill this gap – in addition to being some of the most exciting dance musicians around, they're also some of the best instructors in the business.

Rodney Miller is the universally accepted grand master of New England fiddling (and was designated as such all the way back in 1983 by the National Endowment for the Arts). He's gotten better since then, having taught at hundreds of music and dance festivals, but he's not jaded, and still loves to sit around and play. His daughter Elvie Miller grew up steeped in the tradition, received a Thomas Watson Fellowship to travel the world studying the accordion, and is the current All Ireland champion backup musician. To say "She's good," is a huge understatement. Clyde Curley is a wonderful, down-to-earth teacher (he actually *was* a school teacher) and a walking tune encyclopedia, being the co-editor of the contra-tune bible *The Portland Collection*.

Then there is the Seattle Group... Dave Bartley and Clyde Ginsberg, who play with KGB and too many other groups to list, are both experts in a variety of genres, and excel at passing on their skills. Anita Anderson, known for her musician's intensive courses and inventive piano playing, is adept at explaining what she does to bring contra rhythms and chords to life. The ever-popular Avant Gardeners (Laura Light and George Paul) will use their amazing techniques and skills to make the campers' band an enjoyable learning experience for the musicians and an exuberant experience for the dancers. And George, composer of innumerable memorable tunes, will be teaching his craft in a tune-writing class. This class has been a big hit at camp for the last three years; it's become a tradition!

So pass the word to your musician friends: it's not necessary to go all the way to Fiddle Tunes to find the best musicians and instructors the contra world has to offer—they can come to American Week.

We'll be jamming all night...

Musicians' Course at Hey Days English Dance and Music Week

By Brooke Friendly

BACDS Hey Days English Dance and Music Week presents an English Dance Musicians' Course with the fabulous Shira Kammen, August 19-26, 2012. Co-sponsored by the Country Dance and Song Society, this is an intensive opportunity to refine skills and get feedback from a master.

English dance music can use skills from a variety of musical backgrounds—contra, classical (especially chamber music), jazz, even choral part singing. This course will give you the tools to take what you already know and transform it into music that enhances English dancing. Regardless of the type of music you've been used to playing, if you have command of your instrument, can parse written music, and are willing to devote three hours a day to this effort for the week, you will emerge a better and more sensitive dance musician.

You will spend the whole morning with Shira. The course will contain practical musical theory, demonstrations, instruction in arranging, and intensive work in small groups, supervised and unsupervised.

After lunch you will take a class in English country dance—either one for advanced dancers or an ECD core curriculum class. Then you have your choice of another ECD class, a band workshop open to the whole camp, longsword, improv comedy, practicing on your own, or relaxing. Opportunities to play for dancers include the daily open mic session and Campers' Night.

The course is limited to twelve musicians to provide a lot of individual attention. For more information, check our website at www.bacds.org/heydays

Family Week: bring a child to dance camp (even if it's just your inner one)

By Randall Cayford

Family Week celebrates its 20th year July 1-7, 2012, in Sonora, CA. Bring your children and grandchildren, or come on your own, and join us for a fun and relaxing week playing music, dancing, singing, and being part of a warm and welcoming community. This is a chance to share something you love with the people you love.

Programmer Kathrine Gardner has brought together a staff that includes many long-time favorites along with some exciting new faces. The full brochure can be viewed on the camp website (www.bacds.org/familyweek). *Prices have been reduced for this special anniversary year!!*

For more information please email us (familyweek@bacds.org).

It's time for all of us to sign up for Summer Camp!

Say "Oui!" to French Dancing, March 10

By Gary Breitbart

Transform yourself into a 19th century French peasant at a weekend *bal*. The festivities include dancing the two-time *bourrée* from Berry while gazing longingly into your partner's eyes. We will include several improvisational variations of this universal French dance. Whet your French palette to include other typical dances such as the scottishe, mazurka, polka, and rondeau danced in today's folk *bals* as in yesteryear. Saturday, March 10, 6-7 pm, before the Palo Alto Contra. Admission, \$5.

The Walnut Creek Contra returns, March 11

For everyone who's been wondering when the next Walnut Creek Contra will take place (and those few who haven't), here's your answer: Sunday, March 11th, from 4-7 pm. We've been looking for just the right dance hall in Walnut Creek, and this might be the one. The gym of the Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church, at 1801 Lacassie Avenue, is spacious and airy, with a wall of windows and a wood floor. It's just off the Ygnacio Valley Road exit from 680, and best of all, it's walking distance from the Walnut Creek BART station.

Susan Michaels is driving all the way up from L.A. to call the dance, and it will also be the premiere night of a new local band, the Whoots (Michelle Levy, Ben Schreiber, and Jim Oakden). This dance is sponsored by the Traditional Dancers of the Golden State, which also runs the Hayward Contra.

Gender-Free Dance with Chris Riccioti and Perpetual E-Motion, Monday, April 2

The Palo Alto Contra Committee is cooperating with the organizers of the Queer Contra Dance Camp to bring their headline staff to Palo Alto right after camp, on Monday, April 2. Perpetual E-motion (Ed Howe and John Coté) is one of the hottest bands in the countra, and Chris Riccioti is *the* leading caller of gender-free dancing. Come try it out, and discover the new energy and freedom that comes from relaxing the traditional gender roles. Special prices; \$12 non-members, \$10 members, \$6 students.

ContraFusion in Palo Alto, April 14

By Michael Diamond

Ever been dancing to a tune where you couldn't quite catch the beat? Well, we guarantee you won't have that problem at ContraFusion! ContraFusion combines the contra you know and love with a synth beat and some smooth lighting to create a truly sublime dance experience. You get all the benefits of an experienced contra band, including fully-phrased music and musicians who know how to work with a caller. Then you mix in a deep beat you can feel in your bones and some fun lighting to spice up the hall and you get a truly unique dance experience. Dance the night away to lively tunes from the Whoots, featuring Michelle Levy and Ben Schreiber on fiddle, Noel Cragg on synthesizer, and Jim Oakden on everything else, with calling by Spider Vetter!

Google Dancing

Thanks to a number of dancers who work for Google, there is now a contra dance on the Google campus. It's not yet open to the public, just to Google employees and their guests. Googlers Susan Petrick and Bob Carragher have been calling, and *Uncle Farmer* (Ben Schreiber and Michael Sokolovsky) provides the music.

The President's Corner



From the President: We had low expectations for the San Francisco Contra on Saturday, February 18, Presidents' Day Weekend. The westbound Bay Bridge was closed all weekend for construction, and we didn't expect a lot of East Bay folks to make the long detour north to the Golden Gate or south via San Mateo. We went south-about, ourselves, and had a gorgeously scenic trip up Skyline Boulevard. But we left early and took our time. Not many others did.

The San Francisco Contra has been struggling to boost its attendance over the past year, and has had some nights with fewer than 30 people on the floor. Tonight's dance featured Wildcat Canyon with Eric Black. Solid local talent, but probably not worth the extra hassle of sitting in traffic for twice as long as usual. We had low expectations. Would we get a dozen people? Sixteen?

It came to be 7:30, and a couple of guys wandered in and asked about the newcomers' lesson. Eric took them onto the floor, and I wandered off to the lavatory. When I came back, Eric was working with a circle of twenty or so, and a whole crowd is lined up at the door. By 8:00, the newcomers' group had over 40 people in it and the circle filled the room. Eric got us into two lines for the first dance, took us through the walk-through, and was huddled with Marty trying to figure out whether to go with recorded music when the band walked in (they had been stuck in traffic on the Golden Gate), sat down, and started playing right off. Like magic.

We couldn't ask for a more auspicious start. We were up to three lines by the second dance. The third was a circle mixer, and by the fourth, we had enough experienced dancers on the floor to absorb the newcomers smoothly, and it just got better from there. The band was in top form, and Eric tailored his program nicely to bring the newcomers up to speed and keep the old-timers interested. His only bobble was his choice for the very last dance of the evening, which was too complicated for our remaining brain cells. After two false starts, he tore up the card and called "Lady of the Lake."

Total attendance by the sign-in sheet was 72 people, and I counted that many on the floor before the break. Most of the newcomers stayed to the end, and at least 6 of them came back the next Friday for the STEAM dance.

What made the difference? Apparently, the word is getting out. The largest group of newcomers came with Arielle, who has celebrated her past several birthdays by taking a crowd of friends to the SF Contra. And at least one other group was a church social group (not St. Paul's) looking for a fun night out. There may have been another church group as well. But the key thing is that local people are finding the dance, and coming back to it

Let's continue spreading the word.

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

Volunteer Thanks (*condensed*)

- ♪ Thanks to all who put together the band tours and workshops last quarter. We hosted Tidal Wave, Elixir, the Great Bear Duo, Roguery, and STEAM, and we had special workshops with Bruce Hamilton and Brooke Friendly. And thanks to all who attended. Every single one of these special events was a success. Thanks to *Jim Saxe* for wrangling the upcoming Notorious Tour in June.
- ♪ Thanks to the *Spring Fever* committee, who has put a lot of extra effort into encouraging people to come to camp. There's still room, in case you are interested. If time or money is a constraint, let the committee know. They'll try to work something out for you.
- ♪ Thanks to our dance programmers, and all those who book the bands and callers months ahead, and put together our regular quarterly calendar on schedule. Special mention to *Erik Hoffman* for wrangling, *Eric Black* for typesetting, and *Jim Saxe* for proofreading.
- ♪ Thanks and welcome back to *Vanessa Schmatmeier*, our Publicity Coordinator, who has been struggling with serious medical issues and is now on the mend.
- ♪ Thanks to *Arielle* and others who have helped our recruiting by holding their birthday parties at our dances.
- ♪ Thanks to *Karen Hamme*, who graciously donated a grand piano to BACDS, and to *James Candlin*, *Mary Luckhardt*, and all the others who helped get it moved, set up and tuned in the hall at Christ Church Berkeley.
- ♪ 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. I can't even fit everyone in, because of all the events they create.

Upcoming Events

Sat. March 3 (2 pm)	East Bay Playford Ball Workshop	<i>Kalia Kliban</i> and the <i>Humuhumunukunukapua'a</i> and <i>Strathspey Society</i> band
Sat. March 10 (4 pm)	French Dance Workshop in Palo Alto	<i>Gary BreitBard</i> and <i>Jena Rauti</i> (before Contra)
Sun. March 11 (2 pm)	Peninsula Playford Ball Workshop	<i>David Newitt</i> and the <i>Glory of the West</i>
Sun. March 11 (6 pm)	Walnut Creek Contra Dance returns!	<i>Susan Michaels</i> and the <i>Whoops</i> (TDOGS)
Fri.-Sun. March 16-18	Spring Fever at Monte Toyon	<i>Erik Weberg</i> <i>David Newitt</i>
Fri. March 30	Playford Ball Rehearsal	Cavalcade of callers with <i>the Guppies</i>
Sat. March 31	Playford Ball	<i>David Newitt</i> with <i>Shira Kammen</i> , <i>Charlie Hancock</i> , <i>Danny Camahan</i> , <i>Patti Cobb</i> , <i>Doug Olsen</i>
Sun. April 1 (10 am)	Playford Brunch	
Fri.-Sun, Mar 31-Apr 1	Queer Contra Dance Camp	<i>Chris Riccioti</i> and <i>Perpetual E-Motion</i>
Sun, April 1 (7 pm)	Special Felton Contra	<i>Chris Riccioti</i> and <i>Perpetual E-Motion</i>
Mon, April 2 (7:30 pm)	Special Palo Alto Gender-Free Contra	<i>Chris Riccioti</i> and <i>Perpetual E-Motion</i>
Sat. April 14	<i>ContraFusion</i> at Palo Alto	<i>Spider Vetter</i> and the <i>Whoops</i>
Sat. June 9	Mad Robin Ball (NBCDS)	<i>Sam Weiler</i> with <i>Shira Kammen</i> , <i>Charlie Hancock</i> , <i>Wayne Hankin</i>
Sat.-Sun. June 9-10	SF Free Folk Festival	(SFFMC)
Fri.-Sun. June 15-17	Faultline Frolic (NBCDS)	<i>Cis Hinckle</i> with <i>Notorious</i>
Sun. June 17	<i>Aftershock</i> in San Rafael (NBCDS)	<i>Cis Hinckle</i> with <i>Notorious</i>
Wed. June 20	<i>Notorious</i> in Berkeley	<i>Erik Hoffman</i>
Fri. June 22	<i>Notorious</i> in San Francisco	<i>Jean Gorrindo</i>
Sat. June 23	<i>Notorious</i> in Palo Alto	<i>Eric Black</i>
Sun. June 24 (4 pm)	<i>Notorious</i> in Hayward	<i>Susan Petrick</i>
Sat. June 30	Pre-AmWeek dance in Palo Alto	<i>Carol Ormand</i> with <i>Contra Fresco</i> (<i>Rodney Miller</i>)
(Sun.-Fri. July 1-6	American Dance and Music Week	<i>Carol Ormand</i> , <i>Nils Fredland</i> , ...
Sun.-Sat. July 1-7	Famiy Week	<i>Susan Michaels</i> , <i>Kalia Kliban</i> , <i>Bob Reid</i> , ...
Fri. July 6	Special post-AmWeek dance	AmWeek staff
Sat. July 7	Post-AmWeek dance in SF	AmWeek staff
Sun. July 8	Special dance in San Rafael (NBCDS)	TBA with <i>Contra Fresco</i> (<i>Rodney Miller et al</i>)
Thur. August 9	Special dance in San Rafael (NBCDS)	<i>George Marshall</i>
Fri.-Sun. August 10-12	Balance the Bay	<i>George Marshall</i> , <i>Bev Bernbaum</i> with the <i>Great Bear Trio</i> and <i>Joyride</i>
Sun. August 12	<i>Counterbalance</i> dance in SF	B-t-B staff
Sun.-Sun.. Aug 19-26	Hey Days English Dance/Music Wk	<i>Bruce Hamilton</i> , <i>Paul Ross</i> , <i>Mary Devlin</i> , ...

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 Jens Dill. Send corrections to <caljuliet@comcast.net>. Deadline for Summer *Dancer*: May 15. Send submissions to caljuliet@comcast.net. Please join the conversation