



Bay Area Country Dancer

No.91– September 2012

www.bacds.org

Spring Fever Weekend is making new tracks

Jens Dill

By far the best-attended Spring Weekend Camp in the past ten years was the 2010 *Spring Fling*, featuring **the Syncopaths** (Ryan McKasson, Ashley Broder, Jeff Spero, and Christa Burch) as the headline band. It was a full two-track camp, where you could choose to do all Contra all the time, all English all the time, or mix them up to suit your tastes. It was a blast.

The Syncopaths are back in 2013, sharing the spotlight with **Goldcrest** (Daron Douglas, Paul Oorts, and Dave Wiesler). And the full two-track program is back, too. We tried a less-intensive, (and less expensive) blended program based on an East-coast model, and it wasn't as popular. So the two full tracks are back.

In fact, we've added a *third full track* of music, choreography, calling, and singing workshops. Irish dance workshops are back by popular demand, and we've added a Community Band.

Callers Sue Rosen, Susan Kevra, and Gary Roodman, along with other local workshop leaders, will lead you in a dance to remember. So remember to put it on your calendar:

Friday March 15 through Sunday March 17, 2013

Spring Fever is located at Monte Toyon Retreat Center, nestled among the coastal redwoods of Aptos, California. It's a full-service residential camp: your registration fee gets you two nights lodging, five meals, and all the dancing, singing, and late-night excitement you can wish for.



Sign up early. **Registration is open NOW.** The price goes up if you wait until December. Special pricing is available for youth (to age 30) and the underemployed. If time or money is a barrier to registration, talk to us.

<http://bacds.org/springfever>

Contra College is not just for beginners

Jens Dill

Contra College is one of the hidden gems of the Bay Area dance community. Most dance weekends are very consumer-oriented. You go there to dance, to hang out with your friends, and to show off your moves. *Contra College* is different. It is focused on learning. You go there to dance, to hang out with your friends (or make new ones) and to *learn* new moves you can show off at the next dance weekend.



Back to School! Contra College 2012

November 10, 11

Woman's Club of Palo Alto

Professors Susan Petrick and Nick Cuccia

Musicians Jim Oakden, Michelle Levy, and Ben Schrieber

Early Bird Registration ends September 15.

<http://www.bacds.org/camps/cc2012/>

Professors Susan Petrick and Nick Cuccia will help you polish your technique and become a better dancer, whether you are a complete newcomer, an intermediate dancer, or an experienced old-timer. There's always more to learn. And when learning is as much fun as this, who can pass it up?

Best Family Week Ever

by Vicki Solomon



Family Week Teens at their Reunion Dinner

The consensus of the families at 2012 BACDS Family Week was "Best Family Week Ever." It was the 20th anniversary, and we had an outstanding staff with many of our long-time attendees returning. There were family dances, adult/teen dancing, dance and crafts classes, family gathering and round-up, story time, and many other activities.

Highlights included a contra-dance on stilts in the meadow, the traditional pied piper bedtime parade, *Sasha*, tie-dying, and the teen sword dance. We also had a rousing game of rock, paper, scissors, anything.

There is a Facebook group; any of your family week friends can invite you to it. We post pictures and videos and play favorite camp games there. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/familydancecamp>. Bob Reid put together a highlights video that will soon be on the website: <http://www.bacds.org/familycamp>. We'd like to see another 20 people at the 2013 camp, so we're going to be stepping up our outreach. When you see family week handouts at the dances, please give them to people who would like to come to camp with or without their whole family.

Balance the Bay 2012: All about the Fun!

Julie Thomas

The 5th annual *Balance the Bay* delivered another great weekend of amazing music, expert calling, fabulous dancing, delicious food, and wonderful fellowship. As one dancer said, "Great Bear Trio is all about the groove, and Joyride is all about the tunes." The musicianship of Andrew, Noah, and Kim (from upstate New York) provided an irresistible riptide of musical currents pulling dancers into the swirls and eddies of dance figures up and down the river of dancers. Delightful tunes, played to perfection by Joyride (from Portland, Oregon), created a mesmerizing flow. It seemed that each new melody was the most beautiful or my favorite or some other superlative. I found myself exclaiming over and over, "I love this song." (Wish I knew the titles.)

George Marshall and Bev Bernbaum provided just enough teaching, and offered dance after dance that perfectly matched the flow of music. The workshops were also well designed, featuring all Becketts, lots of balances, complex patterns, and shadow interactions. The Black and White Boogie on Saturday night was a whirl of contrast, as suggested by the color scheme. The fashion show was delightful.

Everything about the weekend ran smoothly from picking up name tags to the hearty snacks to the delicious Brazilian-themed dinner on Saturday to the dance floor decorations. The committee had everything planned, organized, programmed, and scheduled to create a fun and supportive event with a full floor of marvelous dancers, outstanding calling, and amazing music.

From the committee:

*Thanks again to everyone who helped make the weekend a success. Kudos to our programmer, Susan Petrick, who brought together a great group of musicians and callers. See you next year for Balance the Bay 2013 featuring the calling of **Cis Hinkle** and **Erik Weberg** and the music of **The Moving Violations** and **Notorious**. August 9-11, 2013 Save the date!*

A Note of Thanks

Dear Board of Directors, BACDS,

I had a wonderful time at American Week! The learning, directly or by osmosis, was even more than last year! After camp, I played one Monterey dance with Laura, George, and Emil. A year ago I couldn't have done it. It's hard to describe how good that feels.

Your encouragement, financial support in the form of the Jude Biggs Scholarship, and friendship are so much appreciated.

Sincerely, Elizabeth Miranda

A Conversation with Melissa Running

By James Candlin

Melissa Running, the programmer for this year's Fall Ball, comes to us from the Washington, DC, dance community. We chat with her about dancing there and her own background in English Country Dancing.

Melissa, we're very happy to have you come and share your love and knowledge of English Country Dancing with us this Fall. How did you discover English Country Dancing?

I went to Swarthmore College for my undergraduate degree, and they had a P.E. requirement. I knew ball sports were generally not my thing, so I was wondering what else I could endure because-it-was-good-for-me. Then I saw the folk dance option: International, Scottish country dance, and English country dance, all in one course.

I was completely hooked. I took to going to Scottish and English dances off campus when I could, because as the four years progressed, it was so nice to know there was life after college, and in such a small school, it was great to get out and see other people. So I went to house parties with the Scots, and local weekly or monthly English dances. My first ball was undoubtedly one of the English-Scottish balls at Swarthmore, designed to be accessible to those who're in their first semester of dancing. However, these balls draw from the local dance community and from far-flung graduates, so the energy is high and the dancing can be excellent. Clearly I've been back often, since. :-)

What were your early dancing experiences like?

When I graduated, after a brief stint Elsewhere, I moved back to the Philly area, and attended dances when I could get rides, until I got a car. You can blame Jenny Beer for what happened next; she got me into organizing activities for the Germantown Country Dancers, and she talked me into playing for dancing at the Swarthmore class, which had just started to have live music. I'd played classical piano through college, but had stopped when I ran out of access to a keyboard. I got access again, and started wondering what to do with these tunes. (Ok, so they give you a melody and some chord names. How do you know what to do with the left hand? And how do you know what to do the second time through? What, IMPROVISE? In PUBLIC??) I've since become much more comfortable at the piano, thanks in no small part to having worked with some awesome fellow musicians over the years, both in class settings and just playing together.

What do you particularly enjoy about ECD?

I love that we create something together, all of us at the dance we make a shape on the floor, a shape in the air, a shape with the music, an expression of our connections. Something to which each contributes and from which each benefits, something far greater than the sum of its parts, and something we'll create again with each dance, each occasion. I love trying on the possibilities: what people might have been doing in 1651 or 1932 or 2007, what a modern choreographer had in mind, what I can do to match my own personal style to the style of each dancer I meet in line, how we all change when the music shifts. I love the way we take care of each other when we dance best.

And do you have an all-time favorite dance?

There are far too many fabulous dances out there for me to choose a favorite. They're all good for such different things, too.

Where is your home ground for dancing? What is an evening with your own group like?

I "grew up" (in dance terms) in the Philadelphia area, and I am only gradually shifting to think of the DC area as my new home base, where I've been dancing since 2008. I get back to Philly whenever I can (not often enough), and dance regularly at Glen Echo Town Hall of a Wednesday. I play at least a quarter of our dances, I think, and call when they let me we've quite a large stable of callers at present. I think our dances average about 50 dancers, with some wide swings depending on weather, vacations, post-ball burnout or pre-ball cramming, you know, the usual. Lately we've been on the tight side for space, which is rather a nice problem to have.

How did you get into calling and teaching?

*I am somewhat embarrassed to admit, but I found myself getting irritated by particular habits of some callers. I thought maybe I could do better, and maybe it would be better if I **did** better, and learned and faced the challenges involved, than if I kvetched on the dance floor. I found that I adore watching people*



Melissa Running
Programmer 2012 Fall Ball

“get” a dance; I enjoy problem-solving when something goes wrong in the teaching or on the floor; and being a part of the energy transfer from band to dancers and back again is a thrill.

Do you have a particular philosophy or approach to teaching?

My philosophy? I think people do this because it's fun, so anything I can do to facilitate that is what I'm supposed to do: pick dances I enjoy and communicate that pleasure, teach efficiently, prompt as much as needed and then get out of the way, choose dances that feel good to brain and body, choose dances the band likes whenever possible, help the band read the dances and the dancers so they know what to do.

You know some of the great musicians that we have lined up for the ball and you helped choose them what appealed to you about them and their music?

I've listened to Shira and Rebecca in person at Pinewoods (and in Shira's case, with the Folger Consort at the National Cathedral in DC), and I've called to and played with Judy. I love the early music influence in modern ECD, and these three handle both sides of that coin with nuance and verve.

Plus anybody who asks me for nyckelharpa lessons gets bonus points in my book. (Hey Shira, still thinking of buying one?)

We look forward to welcoming Melissa as the programmer and caller for the 2012 Fall Ball, which will be held on Saturday, November 17th, in the Masonic Lodge in San Mateo, CA. Shira Kammen, Judy Linsenberg, and Rebecca King will perform the music with “nuance and verve,” delivered by the sound technicianship of Erik Ievins. The Ball is preceded by an afternoon workshop to review the dances, also led by Melissa joined by musicians Ruth Anne Fraley and David Strong. Following a break for dinner good restaurants are minutes' walk away we resume for the evening's dancing and a community potluck. For more details, registration forms, and volunteer opportunities at the Ball, please visit our website at <http://bacds.org/fallball>.

26th Annual No Snow Ball

Dina Rosenblatt

A gala event, the No Snow Ball is held annually on the first Saturday in December at the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of the Ascension, just next door to the majestic lights of the Mormon Temple. Dancers will be greeted with music played by Star Thistle (Dave Kistler, David Wright, Lonna Whipple, and Cheryl McKinney) and enjoy the calling talents of Ric Goldman and Susan Petrick.

Dancing up and down 4-6 contra lines, you will see dancers from all areas of the local dancing communities as well as from Southern California and occasionally visitors from other states arrayed in their formal or festive attire for this evening of contra magic. While formal or festive attire is optional, this is every dancer's opportunity to cut a swathe through the dancers in that one outfit (gown, tuxedo, retired Halloween outfit, etc...) they never get a chance to show off. From lights and hats to Dickens Fair gowns and Scottish kilts, no accessory or outfit is too little or too much for this night. Find yourself lacking an outfit at the last minute, don't stay home; jeans or regular street clothing are fine too. Just don't forget your dancing shoes!

Delicious refreshments will be provided, but our buffet is made even more marvelous by the tasty potluck contributions from dancers. Please add one of your specialties to the table. Items for the special diets table (wheat free, sugar free, dairy free, gluten free, etc...) are especially welcome.

A limited number of work exchange discounts are available for help during the ball including: front desk greeters, food preparation, setup, cleanup, etc... Are you interested in being part of the NSB committee itself? For information on work exchange assignments or joining the NSB committee, please email nosnowball@bacds.org.

We encourage everyone to bring friends who are new to contra dancing, but be sure to get them to the hall by 7:00 pm so they can participate in the free introductory workshop led by Ric Goldman.

Once a year the dancing community comes together to celebrate with a gala night of contra dancing, friends, and good food! For more information, see the No Snow Ball flyer or go to our Facebook page. For questions or inquiries, email: nosnowball@bacds.org.

<p>26th Annual No Snow Ball Saturday, December 1, 2012 from 7:30 Midnight Beginner's Lesson 7pm Greek Orthodox Cathedral of the Ascension 4700 Lincoln Ave., Oakland CA \$30 General, \$25 members of CDSS and affiliates</p> <p>Ample free parking in the cathedral's large parking garage.</p>

The President's Corner



From the President: Summer is over, and what a summer it was. All of our summer camps were successful: full or nearly full attendance, top-notch music and dance, and loads of fun. Partly thanks to the generosity of the camps when it comes to sharing their staff, we've had quite a few touring bands and callers visit our regular dances. Attendance is picking up. I'm seeing more newcomers, more young people, and more happy faces at every dance I attend. Thanks to all of you.

We're less certain about the future of some of our upcoming weekends. Contra College, for instance, is a wonderful idea, and a wonderful experience. It's different from your usual dance weekend because it focuses on *teaching*. But because of the educational focus, it's hard to sell it. The hard-core dance gypsies don't think they need it. The newcomers who could really benefit from it don't know about it unless somebody tells them, and the rest of us are not necessarily thinking about how great it would be if we had some concentrated lessons and practice to improve our own dancing. Please, be pro-active. Let our newcomers know that Contra College exists. Tell them that if they *really* like this kind of dancing, this is a great way to become experienced in one weekend. And think about yourself and whether you'd benefit from time to improve your own dance skills. It's not expensive. It's lots of fun. And it really does produce better dancers. It's a valuable service to the community, and with your help, we can keep it going strong.

Our Spring Dance Weekend has also been struggling. Long ago, we had a Spring Weekend and a Fall Weekend, both at the Monte Toyon retreat center, and they were consistently so popular we had to have a lottery for admission. But now there are lots of other dance weekends around, and most of them are "urban camps," where you pay for the hall, the music and calling, and have to find your own housing and meals. A residential camp like Monte Toyon costs about \$200 more for the weekend than an urban camp. By the time you've paid for hotel rooms and restaurant meals, the residential camp comes out way cheaper. But then you could bunk with friends and eat fast food and peanut butter and save *lots* of money, and besides, if you do pay for a hotel room you are likely to get even posher accommodations than you'd have at Monte Toyon. So attendance dropped off as more urban weekends appeared on the calendar.

That's not the only issue. Both Monte Toyon Weekends were structured as mixed camps that offered both English and Contra dancing. There are a lot of people who like to do both, and it's nice to have a camp that offers both. But there are even more who strongly prefer one form over the other. And since all of the new "urban" weekends are Contra-only, there was an exodus of the contra-dance-only types from the Monte Toyon camps. The Fall Weekend committee "solved" the problem by switching to an all-English format and rebranding itself as "Fall Frolick." This model seems to work. There are fewer competing English-only camps, and it costs less to bring in staff, since you are only supporting one genre of music and dance.

Spring Weekend doesn't have that option. Its place in the calendar is not good for attracting an English-only crowd. If it went Contra-only, it would be too much like all the other Contra-only camps. There's a small but dedicated hard core of people who like *both* English and Contra, and the Spring Weekend Committee remains loyal to that crowd. But it's not enough of a crowd to support the camp by itself. For the last two years, we've tried to run a 50-50 blended program that appeals to those who are willing to do both forms, and attendance has dropped off again. The only solution (on this coast, at least) is to spend the extra money for enough musicians and callers to staff two full tracks of dancing, so you can have all English, all Contra, or some of each.

That makes camp even more expensive, compared to the urban weekends. But that's where the rebranded "Spring Fever" weekend is trying to go. Bring in a big, multi-talented staff. Put together a full two-track dance program (and more). Get the word out. And be creative about helping people afford to come to camp. This is where you can help, even if you can't come to camp this year. Spread the word. Let people know that Spring Fever is back to its full all-Contra/all-English/all-hot-dancing mix, that the bands and callers are terrific, and that a residential camp gives you a closeness and intensity that you can't get at an urban weekend where you go home every night.

Tell people we have scholarship funds to help those who can't afford the full price of camp. Our Youth Scholarship fund has been very successful in bringing young people to camp and into the dance community. Our need-based Scholarship Fund is there for the unemployed or underemployed. And there are the traditional work-trade scholarships. Oh, and if you have some money, or an auction item to *contribute* to our scholarship funds, please do. If 20 people chip in \$50 each, we can fund the entire Youth Scholarship program for this year's camp. If we take in more money, we can bring in more young people.

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

Volunteer Thanks (condensed)

- ♪ Thanks to all the Summer Camp committees (American Week, Family Week, and English Week) for all the work they did to make the camps successful. Thanks to all the volunteers who pitched in and helped.
- ♪ Thanks to the *Balance the Bay* committee for putting together another fantastic Contra Dance Weekend.
- ♪ Thanks especially to *Sarah Watts*, who orchestrated the grand Brazilian dinner for Saturday night.
- ♪ Thanks to the non-committee members who went several extra miles to help *Balance the Bay* even though they didn't attend: *Marty Brenneis* for the loan of his van and the stage; and *Clinton Gilbert* for his consultation on the lighting, *Phil Garrison* for helping with food shopping.
- ♪ Thanks to *Susan Petrick* for donating the cost of staff housing for *Balance the Bay*.
- ♪ Thanks to the *Spring Fever* committee for getting their planning done, staff hired, and registration open by July 1 (five months ahead of the usual schedule)
- ♪ 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.

Can you help us out?

BACDS runs on volunteer energy. Some of our long-time volunteers are doing multiple jobs. That's a recipe for burnout. Here are some jobs that can be handed off to fresh new volunteers with the right skills, to spread the workload a bit. Each of these jobs should be small enough to be manageable. If you're interested, contact Jens Dill at president@bacds.org, and we'll get you started. Don't feel you have to be limited to this list: if you see a job that needs doing, it probably does, so ask if you can do it. (And if you are already one of our heavily-loaded volunteers, think about what part of your job you can spin off for a new person to take on.)

- **Newsletter Layout Editor:** work with Julie Thomas to put this newsletter together four times a year (in February, May, August, and November). Requires layout skills in Microsoft Word or other word processing software.
- **Potions Master:** Manage the supply of fragrance-free soaps, lotions, shampoos, and conditioners we use for our dance camps and special events. Involves making sure we have supplies on hand, refilling the dispenser bottles, and coordinating with camp committees about getting them to and from camp.
- **Button Pusher:** Coordinate the handing off of the button machine from one event to the next. Take care of re-ordering supplies before they are desperately needed. Arrange for repairs when necessary.
- **Outreach Coordinator:** Re-convene the Outreach committee to brainstorm ways to publicise our dances and events to the general public, and not just to the dance community.
- **Board Member:** Seth Gorrin is off to college, so there's room on the BACDS Board. You need to have an interest and commitment to improving the dance community, and be available for meetings on the 3rd Thursday of each month.

Upcoming Events

Fri-Sun, Sept 14-16	Echo Summit Dance Camp	<i>Nils Fredland, Rebecca Lay with The Moving Violations and The Syncopaths (SCDS)</i>
Sat, Sept 29	ContraFusion dance in Palo Alto	<i>Susan Petrick with The Whoots</i>
Sat, Oct 6	Foggy Moon Ball in Monterey	<i>Lisa Greenleaf with Dr Groove (MCDC)</i>
Sun, Oct 7	Special Contra in San Rafael	<i>Lisa Greenleaf with Dr Groove (NBCDS)</i>
Fri-Sun, Oct 12-14	Fall Frolick at Monte Toyon	<i>Scott Higgs, David Newitt, Joanna Reiner, Jan Elliot, Randall Cayford, Kalia Kliban</i>
Sat, Oct 27	Halloween Contra in Palo Alto	<i>Joyce Miller with The Rosin Doctors</i>
Sat, Oct 27	Halloween Contra in Sacramento	<i>Jean Gorrindo with The Crabapples (SCDS)</i>
Fri, Nov 2	Special Sacramento Contra	<i>Joyce Miller with Tidal Wave</i>
Sat, Nov 3	Fall Has Sprung (Echo Summit)	<i>Joyce Miller, Tina Fields, Frannie Marr with Hot Cider, Tidal Wave, and KGB</i>
Mon, Nov 5	Special Palo Alto Contra	<i>Frannie Marr with KGB</i>
Sat-Sun, Nov 10-11	Contra College	<i>Susan Petrick, Nick Cuccia with The Whoots</i>
Sat, Nov 17	Fall Ball	<i>Melissa Running with Shira Kammen, Judy Linsenberg, Rebecca King</i>
Sat, Nov 17	Special San Francisco Contra	<i>Erik Hoffman with The Syncopaths</i>
Sat, Dec 1	No Snow Ball	<i>Susan Petrick, Ric Goldman with Star Thistle</i>
Sat, Dec 16	Special San Rafael Contra	<i>Jean Gorrindo with Sassafras Stomp (NBCDS)</i>
Wed, Dec 19	Special Berkeley Contra	<i>Erik Hoffman with Sassafras Stomp</i>
Fri, Dec 21	Palo Alto English Holiday Party	<i>Alan Winston, Bob Fraley, Mary Luckhardt with The Nonesuch Country Dance Players</i>
Sat, Dec 22	Special Palo Alto Contra	<i>Susan Petrick with Sassafras Stomp</i>
Sat, Dec 22	Berkeley English Holiday Party	<i>Cavalcade of callers with Ruth Anne Fraley, Shira Kammen, Judy Linsenberg</i>
Mon, Dec 31	New Years' Eve in Palo Alto	<i>Lynn Ackerson with StringFire</i>
Mon, Dec 31	New Years' Eve in Santa Rosa	<i>Joyce Miller with The Whoots</i>
Mon, Dec 31	New Years' Eve in Sacramento	<i>Susan Petrick with Swing Farm</i>
Fri-Sun, Mar 15-17	Spring Fever Weekend	<i>Sue Rosen, Susan Kevra, Gary Roodman with The Syncopaths and Goldcrest</i>

See bacds.org for more information. For events sponsored by neighboring organizations, see nbcds.org (NBCDS), sactocds.org (SCDS), sffmc.org (SFFMC), santacruzdance.org (TDSC), haywardcontradance.org (TDOGS), montereycdc.webs.com (MCDC)

This issue was edited by Julie Thomas and Jens Dill. Send corrections to [<caljuliet@comcast.net>](mailto:caljuliet@comcast.net).
Deadline for Winter *Dancer*: November 15. Send submissions to caljuliet@comcast.net. Please join the conversation