



# Bay Area Country Dancer

No.92– December 2012

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

## Dance Photography at American Week

By Doug Plummer



Workshops formed my sensibility as a photographer early on, when I was a student at the Sun Valley Center for the Arts in Idaho in the late 70's. I still draw on the lessons I learned from Sam Abell, over a decade ago, at the Santa Fe Workshops. I thought the pinnacle I would reach as a photographer was leading workshops myself and joining that august company. Little did I realize that I would find that fulfillment at a week-long contra dance camp.

*How to Take Dance Photos that Don't Suck* was the ambitious title I gave to a workshop I added to the 2012 BACDS American Week schedule (I'm on the planning committee). It seems everyone takes pictures at contra dances now, and I thought there might be some interest in how to improve the results.

I have a few ideas on how to take good dance photos, to the point that I'm self-publishing my second calendar of contra dance photos. That particular body of work appears destined to become my legacy as a photographer, if I acquire any degree of fame at all before I die. I've been photographing this subculture for over 25 years, which is as long as I've been a dancer.

I found out that I really like teaching. I'd never taught at this sustained level before, meeting every day for a week, and I had a blast. My students also had a blast, and they grew as photographers right before my eyes. I liked sharing what I know, and I liked supporting these budding documentarians and photographers, regardless of their skill levels when they came to the class. Mostly, I liked infecting them with my bias toward imagery, which I consider significantly more crucial than content.

But conveying how to exploit the technology you have, regardless of its limitations, to capture great dance pictures became a real focal point of the workshop. Two people shot with iPads, and four shot with their cellphones. I shot one night of dancing with my iPhone to demonstrate what was possible. There were just two DSLRs in the bunch; only one person knew what RAW capture meant.

So obviously, this was not a technical workshop; it was a “how to see” workshop. It was a “how to be conscious of the moment” workshop. The equipment didn't matter; this workshop was about finding the *image*. I started each session with a brief talk about an issue, which I extemporaneously based on students' questions and daily results, and then we looked at each other's work.

My biggest fear was that people would copy what I did, or become discouraged about not being able to get similar results. After the second day, I stopped using my own work for examples and turned to the students' photos for instruction and inspiration. As it turned out, I had no need to worry. What became illustrative for everyone was how individualistic their work was.

I believe that every photograph is, in some measure, a self-portrait. Beyond recording a memory, photographers respond to how their internal thoughts, feelings, and visions are reflected in the outside world, and the compelling drive for coherence is what drives technical and creative growth. This artistic drive certainly showed in the images we captured during the workshop, and everyone grew as an image maker. You can see examples on my blog at <http://dougplummer.blogs.com/dispatches/2012/07/the-workshop-report.html>.

I am very excited about leading the Dance Photography workshop again this year at BACDS' American Week during the week of June 30 – July 5. If, in addition to dancing to the glorious music of Notorious!, the Syncopaths, and the Avant Gardeners, you would like to explore and expand your artistic skill and creative vision as a dance photographer, please join us. (For more information about American Week, go to <http://AmWeek.org/>.)

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# HEY DAYS English Dance and Music Week!

by Brooke Friendly

It's not too soon to start planning your summer! Here are some of the reasons you will want to put August 18-25, 2013 – Hey Days English Dance and Music Week – on your calendar.



Adrienne Simpson,  
photo by Paul Bestock

## Talented Dance Staff

- Andrew Shaw, a sought-after caller from England with a passion for dancing well and a dry wit, will return by popular demand.
- Scott Higgs, from Pennsylvania, will bring his clear teaching and joy of dance.
- Local favorite, Kalia Kliban, will complete our English country dance staff with her patient/ supportive teaching style and inexhaustible sense of humor. Kalia will also teach a daily longsword class and a single session clogging workshop.
- Adrienne Simpson, a beautiful dancer from northern California, will teach couple dances.

In addition to a wide range of English country dance classes, we will have longsword, couple dancing, dance reconstruction, and an open mic. Off the dance floor, you can join Adrienne for a singing class or Paul Bestock for a photography workshop.

## Inspiring Musicians

- *Childgrove*, from Michigan, will make their west coast premiere. Featuring Debbie Jackson on piano, Anne Ogren on violin and viola, and Martha Stokely on oboe, pennywhistle, and recorder, *Childgrove* brings a fluid, eclectic approach to their spirited and danceable music.
- Wayne Hankin, a leading artist of period woodwinds, is popular at camps around the country.
- Charlie Hancock (piano and accordion), a mainstay of the Bay Area dance scene, plays with brilliance, drive, and clarity.
- *Persons of Quality*, Andrew Shaw's favorite band, will round out the musical staff with Jon Berger (fiddle, melodeon), Rebecca King (piano), and Jim Oaken (multi-instrumentalist).



Longsword dancing from 2012,  
photo by Paul Bestock

## Skill Building for Callers and Musicians

Callers with two or more years of experience can apply for an intensive workshop with Scott Higgs. Limited to twelve callers to provide individual attention, the course will cover finding materials, selecting dances for the flow of an evening, honing teaching skills, and using a microphone, among other topics. You will spend the entire morning with Scott and other members of the class. In addition to Scott's tips and examples, you will practice calling with a musician and receive coaching from Scott and feedback from peers.

Sharon Green will lead a beginning callers' workshop. This course is open to all and is designed for people with little or no calling experience.

We will have music workshops for all levels, including a band workshop and a slow jam. Special one-day workshops on individual instruments such as piano and recorder will give you concentrated instruction from our talented staff. All callers and musicians may participate in the daily Open Mic and at Campers Night. We also encourage callers and musicians to help create late-night dance and music parties. The Jude Biggs Scholarship supports a musician to attend Hey Days. Look on our website for more information.

## Welcoming Community

We will have many chances for additional fun outside the workshop schedule, including pool parties, a plethora of late night dancing and jamming opportunities, and a daily Gathering featuring staff and camper performances, stories, jokes, and more. We will have a few planned social hours and after-dance parties and lots of room for camper-led events and activities.

## Fabulous Location

The Bishop's Ranch in Sonoma County has comfortable accommodations, delicious meals in a spacious dining hall, beautiful views, a pool to cool off in, hiking trails, and local vineyards to visit. The air-conditioned main dance hall is lovely, with high ceilings and lots of natural light.

## Opportunities for Youth

We are delighted to continue our successful matching scholarships from the Country Dance and Song Society. Targeted for campers age 18-30, CDSS will match three local groups who want to send a budding caller, musician, or community leader to camp.

Check out the website ([www.bacds.org/heydays](http://www.bacds.org/heydays)) to get details now and a registration form (available in January 2013). We hope to dance, sing, and play with you at camp!

## American Week – Let the fun continue!

by Jim Oakden

AmWeek has yet another stellar staff lined up for next summer. The dancing will be led by national favorites Seth Tepfler and Gaye Fifer, and Gaye will also be teaching couple dancing. There will be three hot bands. The Syncopaths (who don't really need introduction) includes all-world fiddler Ryan McKassen, stellar mandolinist Ashley Broder, singer/percussionist Christa Burch (whose voice will melt you), and innovative pianist Jeff Spero. Notorious! seems to be everywhere, and there's a reason. With newly matriculated Dr. Eden MacAdam-Somer on violin, tunesmith Larry Unger on guitar and banjo, and wild man Sam Bartlett on mando, they are a consummate dance band and hugely entertaining. We also welcome back the Avant Gardeners (Laura Light and George Paul), who have become camp favorites, joined again by multi-instrumentalist and Program Director, Jim Oakden.

**BACDS American Dance  
& Music Week**  
June 30–July 5, 2012  
Registration is now open  
Info and online registration at  
<http://AmWeek.org>




Last year we instituted a music track that was equal in number of classes to the dance track (including during the evening dances), and it was wildly successful. The sessions were incredibly fun, and they spurred the dancers to late-night explosions of merriment. They are designed to be inclusive, so you don't have to be a tune encyclopedia to join the fun. A very communal atmosphere results when half the camp alternates between playing and dancing. The entire music staff will be giving music workshops, and Michelle Levy will give fiddle tutorials and teach a class in music sight-reading. Let your musician friends know: this is the place to jam and learn to play contra and square dance music.

In addition to the core of contra and square dances and music, we'll be offering a class in flatfoot clogging, led by the irrepressible Kalia Kliban. Clogging hasn't been offered at AmWeek for a number of years, but we think the energetic dancers at AmWeek are going to love it.

We will round out the week with classes in sound by our wonderful sound dude, Marty Brenneis; dance photography (Doug Plummer); yoga (Laura Light); traditional crafts (Lea Smith); tune writing, dance calling, and more.

Camp Managers Eric Black and Diane Zingale have been working with the Jones Gulch management to make the facilities even better for our purposes, including refinishing the dance floor over the winter.

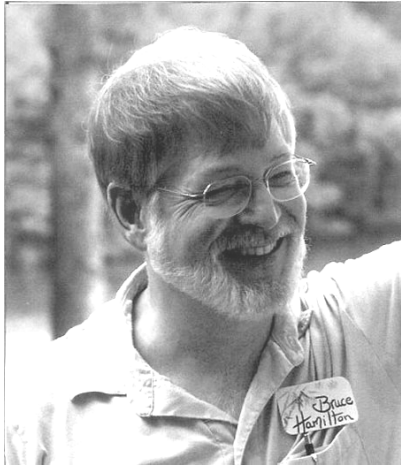
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## Styling with Bruce Hamilton – February 16, 2013

by Loretta Guarino Reid



Bruce Hamilton has taught English and Scottish country dancing in the San Francisco Bay Area for many years. One of the country's most popular English dance leaders, he is featured at many festivals and summer dance camps each year. Lately he's been focusing on non-choreographic elements of English Country Dance (ECD): how to move well, how to be musical, how to recover from slips, how to be a good partner, body mechanics, and the social and mental aspects of dancing.

On Saturday, February 16, Bruce will share his knowledge with us in a special afternoon English dance styling workshop at St Mark's Episcopal Church in Palo Alto from 2 to 5 pm, with music by Bill Jensen and Stan Kramer. The cost of the workshop is \$15. Workshop attendees should have familiarity with the standard ECD figures, be able to do a dance of modest difficulty from a single walk-through, and be able to move quickly (or be willing to sit out the occasional dance requiring that).

## Dancing Through the Year

by Shirley Worth

The traditional "social season" for parties and balls began in autumn and ran through spring, with a break when families retreated to their summer vacation homes – not so different from today. But today's dancing season often lasts all year round, and when some dances break for the summer, complaints are often registered!

At the upcoming Playford Ball (March 30, 2013), M.C. Sharon Green will offer the opportunity to dance through the year, all in one evening. Beach Spring, Indian Summer, Autumn in Amherst, and Winter Dreams Waltz will be among the dances to delight your feet. The Ball Committee was pleased to invite Sharon to call the lovely Golden Green, a dance written by Phillippe Callens to music by Jonathan Jensen honoring the Greens' 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Music will be provided by *Persons of Quality* (Rebecca King, Jim Oakden, and Jon Berger). Special guest Mindy Rosenfeld will join the band on flutes, fifes, crumhorn, Hummelchen, and other instruments ancient and modern.

The BACDS Playford Ball has long been regarded as the peak event of the English Dance season in the Bay Area, drawing dancers from San Diego to Seattle, and from points east as well.

Like all BACDS events, the Ball is powered by the volunteer engine. If you love English dance, and especially if you love attending this ball, please check the "I can help..." box on your registration form, enclosed in the December mailing and online at [bacds.org/playford](http://bacds.org/playford).



Hummelchen: German small pipes

## I want to sponsor a dance for my birthday. How can I do it?

There have been a number of special birthday celebrations at BACDS dances in the past few years. Recently, Ellen Eagan and Bob Ashforth celebrated their birthdays at the San Francisco Contra. On January 26, Lynn Wilde will celebrate hers in Palo Alto. Each of these has a different flavor. Ellen's was a free dance: she paid everyone's admission and covered all the costs. Bob and Lynn helped arrange for the band and helped cover transportation costs: so there was still an admission charge at the door to pay the band. Other people celebrate their birthdays at our dances without giving us any notice at all: they just show up with their friends and family at a regular dance. That's as it should be. A birthday celebration is an individual thing, and you can arrange it the way that works best for you.

If you want to celebrate your birthday at a BACDS dance, and if you want to make special arrangements, get in touch with the programmer well ahead of time (5 to 6 months is a good lead time). If you want to arrange a special band or caller, you need that much time to get them on the calendar. Financial arrangements are flexible; you can pay for the whole think, or contribute to costs, depending on your resources and inclinations. Again, arranging in advance is preferred. Or you can just show up with your friends. If Jim Saxe gets wind of it, he may just run out and get a cake to serve at break.

### Vanessa Schnatmeier 1954 – 2012

Died suddenly, November 21, from complications of endometrial cancer.

Plans for the memorial service are still being made. Check with Alan Winston on Facebook or watch the BACDS-Announce mailing list for updates.

## The President's Corner



**From the President:** The recent passing of Vanessa Schnatmeier (see box, page 4) reminds us of the fragility of life and the value of each person. It also reminds me of how invisible some of our key volunteers can be. Vanessa has held a lot of key volunteer positions with BACDS over the years, but recently you seldom saw her on the dance floor. In her case, it was the progress of her illness that limited her mobility and therefore her dancing. She did keep dancing as long as she could, but her priority was her commitment to *Mad Molly* and the Morris circuit.

You don't have to be ill or at Death's door to be an invisible volunteer, however. Our dance community, as small and tight-knit as it is compared to the Bay Area as a whole, is fragmented in a number of ways. If you just attend your local dance series, or the dances on your side of the Bay; if you do English but not Contra or *vice versa*, or if you are strictly a Morris Dancer, you may never meet some of the people who are, have been, and will be instrumental in making your favorite dance happen.

Think about this from time to time. Notice the people who are helping run the dances and events you attend, remember to thank them, and think about the folks behind the scenes who are supporting them. Think about getting out to some other dance events (on the other side of the Bay, in another genre, or whatever) to meet some of the people you wouldn't ordinarily meet. Think about joining a dance or event committee to learn how things get done. Attend a quarterly mailing party. Do a term or two on the Board of whichever dance organization you are part of. BACDS is not the only game in town. There's a lot of crossover with TDOGS, NBCDS, BAERS, TSDC, MCDC, SCDS, Brassworks, and the Dickens and Renaissance Faire groups. Some key BACDS volunteers are actually more involved in our neighbor organizations than with BACDS stuff. Stacey Carr, co-programmer of the San Francisco Contra, is on the Board of the North Bay Country Dance Society. I'm betting a lot of BACDS folks who dance at the SF Contra regularly wouldn't recognize her.

And some jobs are just invisible by nature. The BACDS Archivist, for example, is responsible for making sure that meeting minutes and supporting documents are saved somewhere where they can be found when needed for legal purposes. Lise Dyckman's been doing that job for at least 10 years, but who would notice? This month she came to the Board meeting and persuaded us that since the minutes are all done online now, the Secretary is perfectly capable of saving them into an online folder that is indexed and backed up automatically. So her job got so invisible it went away. If you see Lise, remember to thank her. It was a valuable contribution in its time.

As Joyce Fortune likes to remind us at the Palo Alto Contra, it takes a village to raise a dance. Dance, then, enjoy yourself, enjoy the company, and remember that life is precious and that you get out of it what you put into it.

Happy Holidays to all of you.

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

## Volunteer Thanks

- ♪ Thanks to the Fall Frolick Committee. The weekend got rave reviews, and they are already planning to do even better next year. Thanks to all the bidders who went with the spirit of generosity and frivolity and helped the auction raise so much money for the Scholarship program.
- ♪ Thanks to *Les Addison, Susan Petrick, Nick Cuccia* and all their helpers who produced Contra College this year. There's nothing quite like Contra College for helping the dance community grow and improve.
- ♪ Thanks to the Fall Ball committee for producing a simply fabulous Ball. When it came down to the event, they had to coordinate everything with their chair, *Ric Goldman*, on the other side of the continent. They made it look easy.
- ♪ Thanks to *Chris Folger* for volunteering to join the editorial staff of the *Dancer*.
- ♪ Thanks to *Stewart Hall* for taking on the job of looking after the button machine.
- ♪ Thanks to *Sharyn Peterson* for becoming our new Potions Master, caring for the Fragrance-Free supplies.
- ♪ Thanks to *Michael Diamond* for pulling the strings to get *dJ Improper* to swing through the Bay Area and give us a real taste of East-coast Techno Contra.
- ♪ Thanks to *Michael Sokolovsky, Margaret Pigman, and Laura Gorrin* for putting together a plan to revive the second Friday Berkeley Contra as a gender-free dance. We wish they'd chosen to keep it within BACDS, but we're glad it's happening, whoever sponsors it.
- ♪ Thanks in advance to *Derya and Deniz Aiken* and *Ruth Ann Fraley* for forming a new contra dance band. We can't wait to hear the new sound.
- ♪ Thanks to *Alan Winston* for his care and support of *Vanessa Schnatmeier* in what turned out to be her last days. And thanks, posthumously, to Vanessa, for all she did for the dance community.
- ♪ Thanks to all the volunteer door sitters, dance managers, and so forth who keep our regular dances running smoothly. Thanks especially to *Mary Luckhardt* who accounts for all the money afterwards.
- ♪ Thanks to all the invisible volunteers who keep things going behind the scenes.
- ♪ 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.

## There's still room for you at Spring Fever!

Spring Fever Dance Weekend is a not-to-be-missed experience. It's a three-track weekend, with a full track of Contra, a full track of English, and a full track of music, singing, choreography, callers' workshops and more! Learn for yourself how hot Contra dancers can spice up an English dance, and how hot English dancers can take a Contra dance to a whole new level. It's a residential weekend, so you don't have to be sidetracked with worries about finding accommodations or where your next meal is coming from, and you don't miss anything commuting back and forth to the site. The environment, among the coastal redwoods at Monte Toyon Retreat Center, is as relaxing as you want it to be, even if it rains or the power goes out. Don't miss it!



**This year's staff: Sue Rosen, Susan Kevra, Gary Roodman, the Syncopaths, and Goldcrest**

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



### Upcoming Events

Saturday, Dec 1	<b>No Snow Ball</b>	<i>Susan Petrick, Ric Goldman with Star Thistle</i>
Saturday, Dec 8	<i>Sassafras Stomp</i> in Sacramento	<i>with Lynn Ackerson (SCDS)</i>
Saturday, Dec 15	<i>Sassafras Stomp</i> in Monterey	<i>with Jean Gibson-Gorrindo (MCDC)</i>
Sunday, Dec 16	<i>Sassafras Stomp</i> in San Rafael	<i>with Jean Gibson-Gorrindo (NBCDS)</i>
Wednesday, Dec 19	<i>Sassafras Stomp</i> in Berkeley	<i>with Charlie Fenton</i>
Friday, Dec 21	Palo Alto English Holiday Party	<i>Cavalcade of callers</i>
Friday, Dec 21	<i>Sassafras Stomp</i> in Santa Rosa	<i>with Susan Petrick (NBCDS)</i>
Saturday, Dec 22	<i>Sassafras Stomp</i> in Palo Alto	<i>with Susan Petrick</i>
Saturday, Dec 22	Berkeley English Holiday Party	<i>Cavalcade of callers</i>
Monday, Dec 31	New Years' Eve Contra, Palo Alto	<i>Lynn Ackerson with StringFire</i>
Monday, Dec 31	New Years' Eve Contra, Palo Alto	<i>Joyce Miller with the Whoots (NBCDS)</i>
Saturday, Jan 5	San Fran Contra 30 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary	<i>Charlie Fenton with the Hillbillies from Mars</i>
Fri-Sun, Jan 18-20	<b>Contra Carnivale Weekend</b> (sold out)	in San Luis Obispo (CCCDS)
Monday, Jan 21	<i>The Retrospectacles</i> in Palo Alto	<i>Susan Petrick</i>
Friday, Jan 25	<i>Techno-Live Contra</i> in San Francisco	<i>Jean Gorrindo w/Julie Vallimont, Jon Cannon</i>
Saturday, Jan 26	<i>Lynn Wilde's birthday</i> in Palo Alto	<i>(as above, plus Cedar Stanistreet)</i>
Saturday, Feb 9	<i>Hambo Workshop</i> before Palo Alto Contra	<i>Erik Hoffman</i>
Friday, Feb 15	<i>Special Barn Dance</i> in San Francisco	<i>Erik Hoffman with KC and the Moonshine Boys</i>
Saturday, Feb 16	English Style Workshop (Palo Alto)	<i>Bruce Hamilton</i>
Sat-Sun, Feb 16-17	<b>California Twirl Weekend</b>	<i>Cavalcade of local talent (TDOGS)</i>
Friday, Feb 22	<i>Special Gender-Free Contra</i> in SF	<i>Dean Allemang with Uncle Farmer</i>
Saturday, Mar 2	<b>Playford Ball Workshop</b> (East Bay)	<i>David Newitt</i>
Wednesday, Mar 6	<i>Hambo Workshop</i> before Berkeley Contra	<i>Erik Hoffman</i>
Sunday, Mar 10	<b>Playford Ball Workshop</b> (Peninsula)	<i>Lise Dyckman</i>
Fri-Sun, Mar 15-17	<b>Spring Fever Weekend</b> (Monte Toyon)	<i>Susan Kevra, Sue Rosen, Gary Roodman</i>
Wednesday, Mar 20	<i>Hambo Workshop</i> before Berkeley Contra	<i>Erik Hoffman</i>
Saturday, Mar 23	<i>Techno Contra</i> in Palo Alto	<i>Eric Black with dJ Improper</i>
Friday, Mar 29	<b>Playford Ball Rehearsal</b>	<i>Cavalcade of callers</i>
Saturday, Mar 30	<b>Playford Ball</b>	<i>Sharon Green with Persons of Quality</i>
Fri-Sun, Apr 5-7	<b>Epicenter Contra Dance Weekend</b>	<i>(NBCDS)</i>

See [bacds.org](http://bacds.org) for more information. For events sponsored by our neighbors, see [nbcds.org](http://nbcds.org) (NBCDS), [sactocds.org](http://sactocds.org) (SCDS), [sffmc.org](http://sffmc.org) (SFFMC), [santacruzdance.org](http://santacruzdance.org) (TDSC), [haywardcontradance.org](http://haywardcontradance.org) (TDOGS), [monterevdc.webs.com](http://monterevdc.webs.com) (MCDC), [cccds.org](http://cccds.org) (CCCDS).

This issue was edited by Julie Thomas and Jens Dill. Send corrections to <[caljuliet@comcast.net](mailto:caljuliet@comcast.net)>. Deadline for Spring *Dancer*: February 15, 2013. Send submissions to [caljuliet@comcast.net](mailto:caljuliet@comcast.net). Please join the conversation