Contra Dance, Then and Now
Part 2

By Erin Neff

When you look around the dance floor on a typical Saturday contra dance night in Portland, you will find a range of ages, abilities and experience. Depending on the time of year, you might see a large group of college-age dancers or a few more grade-school dancers. Overall, however, the majority of contra dancers are in their 40’s, 50’s, and 60’s. Although I have only danced on the West Coast, this would seem to be a nationwide trend as evidenced by recent efforts to bring more young people into the contra community.

As we saw in “Contra Dance, Then and Now, Part 1,” Dudley Laufman was instrumental in welcoming young people into the contra community in the 1960’s and ’70’s. Laufman excited the younger generation of the era by calling simpler dances, not intricate complicated ones that made dancing feel like work. The current trend pulling the next generation towards contra is what is known as ‘crossover contra.’

Crossover contra, modern urban contra, traditional contra: what does it all mean? In December of 2009, I interviewed Dudley Laufman by phone. Modern urban contra, according to Laufman, is what goes on at most urban contra dances these days, namely dancing recently composed dances where “everybody is doing something all the time;” few if any old-time dances are called. Old-time dances on the other hand, sometimes called ‘chestnuts’ if they are associated with a particular tune, generally have an active and an inactive couple and often do not have a neighbor swing. Money Musk (which doesn’t even have a partner swing), Chorus Jig, Lady of the Lake and Petronella are examples of these more traditional dances.

Crossover contra uses modern urban contra dance figures set to non-traditional music such as techno or hip-hop. An excellent example is a video (go to www.vimeo.com/1786406) that has likely landed in your inbox in the last year or so. At the 2008 Youth Dance Weekend in rural Vermont, dancers grooved to Adam Tensta’s “My Cool,” a Swedish hip-hop tune. According to the video’s director, Forrest Oliphant, “the progression is based on contra,... [but] the dancers pull from swing, hip-hop, sexy, tango, dirty... anything goes really, as long as it is on the rhythm.” With the YDW video currently at 16,548 views on YouTube, it’s clear that crossover contra is generating widespread interest across the U.S. It even has its own Facebook page, which currently has over 400 members.

In December 2009, an eager, energetic Seattleite decided to organize the first-ever Techno Contra West Side. With no connection to the Seattle contra community and one month to plan, Chelsea Co was able to get a decent dance hall and 50 experienced dancers to show up. Marlin Prowell called the dance with a DJ mixing the techno, black lights flashing and a wide range of ages and attire.

There certainly are some challenges to this new form of contra. First, the techno, hip-hop or pop song has to be mixed.

Northwest Passage 2010

By Dave Goldman

It’s not too late! There are still spaces available at PCDC’s Labor Day dance and music weekend – but they’re going fast!

You won’t want to miss this year’s camp, with lots of contra and English country dance, and workshops for musicians and singers, led by nationally renowned callers Joseph Pimentel and Sue Dupré, with the astounding music of Goldcrest and Night Watch.

You can find more details and an application form at www.NWPassageDanceCamp.org. Or contact Karsten at info@NWPassageDanceCamp.org. Now that we’re past the lottery cut-off date, applications will be handled first-come, first-served.

New PCDC Board Elected

By Laurel Thomas

The annual general meeting of the PCDC membership took place at the Dusk till Done Dance on June 12, 2010. Many, many volunteers were thanked for their efforts and the new board members were approved by acclamation. Carmen Doerge and Chris Mullooly were re-elected to the board and will serve as co-chairs. Tim Gojio will remain on the board as a member-at-large. Lani Townsend was elected to the board and will serve as the board’s representative to the Contra Committee, replacing Kim Appleberry, who will leave the board but continue as committee chair. Sarah Goss, Diane Hunt and Jon Neff were also re-elected to the board. For more about recent PCDC Board activities, see the article on page two.

English Country Goes Retro

Submitted by “The English Country Dance Group”

We have another English Country Dress-Up Dance planned. Get ready to rock at 7:30 PM on Friday, July 23rd under the Burlingame Water Tower. Make this dance neat, cool, and groovy by wearing an outfit from the FIFTIES, SIXTIES, or SEVENTIES. Dig out the clothes you saved, or waltz into your local vintage shop to deck yourself out. Our caller for this night of nostalgia will be Mary Devlin.
A Note from the PCDC Board

By Diane Hunt

Your PCDC Board members have been slaving away, thinking of every possible way to make the regular English country and contra dances and the special dance events such as the Raindance, the Northwest Passage Camp, the English Country Ball, the Megaband Dance, and the ever-popular Dusk till Done Dance as exciting and enjoyable as ever. A LOT of people pitch in a little bit each, here and there and over yonder, to bring you, our esteemed dancers, the absolute best in mood, moves, and music. Thank you for all the warm applause you gave to this fantastic team of volunteers while dancing your heart out at this year’s Dusk till Done. ’Twas much appreciated!

Ya know, we volunteers have a blast as we gather to dream and scheme on the happy theme of dancing. Perhaps.....

....maybe just maybe....
....you might possibly....
....be interested in having a blast too.

All it would take is your coming forward, on your knees, and begging profusely to be allowed in on the action. After a show of such deference, there would almost certainly be a board or committee seat that could have your name engraved on it!

Truly dancers, the Portland Country Dance Community is alive, well, and the envy of the nation. We do things no one else does (it’s Portland after all!) and we have successes that no one else has. It’s a pretty cool feeling to be the creator/sustainer of that well-deserved reputation. Because we are on such good footing, the work involved to keep it going at full throttle is actually quite minimal. Let this little note serve as your own personal crowbar to get you up and engaged, as you volunteer to serve on the PCDC Board or any of its committees (English, Contra/Raindance, Outreach, NW Passage). The work is shared, it’s easy, it’s rewarding, and the feeling is terrific!

Dear dancers: you snap your fingers, you tap your toes, you swing your hips, you flash your smile...now present your heart to your PCDC Board and ask “how can I give back?!”

We’ll squeeze you in.

[Diane Hunt is the secretary of the PCDC Board.]

Danciquette Queries

By Laurel Thomas

Q: I notice that some couples look only at each other when doing a hey for four, even if it means one of them has to walk backwards! What do think of this practice?

A: Certain experienced dancers enjoy adding a bit of challenge and flirtatiousness to the hey by maintaining eye contact with each other throughout the move. However this does change the feeling of the move from one of inclusion—all four dancers interacting with each other—to one of exclusion. When contra dancing, you are meant to interact with each new couple as you meet them in the line. It’s part of what makes contra dancing such a community oriented activity. If you only look at your partner during a hey and ignore the person you are passing left or right shoulders with, that person is not getting their share of your attention. And of course walking backwards increases the chance of inadvertent collisions, and may cause confusion, especially when one of the other dancers in the hey is a beginner. On the other hand, if you are heying with another couple who is also maintaining eye contact with each other, everyone is happy, especially if you manage to avoid bumping into each other. In fact there’s a certain satisfaction involved in the successful negotiation of a double backwards hey! So what’s the answer to your question? I would say on the whole that it’s more community minded to give a little eye contact to everyone in a hey. But that being said, I confess that I do engage in an exclusionist hey every now and again...because it’s fun! Tell you what, if you indulge, do penance by asking a newcomer to dance the next dance!

NW Passage Work-Trades

PCDC’s Northwest Passage Dance Camp will offer several work-trade positions this year. In return for a few hours of help with essential camp tasks, work-traders receive a $75 discount off their camp fee and the satisfaction of helping make NWP a great camp. Work-trade tasks are arranged for minimal overlap with scheduled events.

Especially needed is one person who can come early, about 4 PM on Friday, to help organize/manage the parking lot.

Work-trade positions are open to anyone attending camp: you need not be a PCDC member to apply. Check the box on your registration form or call Rich Goss at 503-327-6582 to apply.

If you are a PCDC member, don’t forget that when attending any dance or music related camp or workshop, you can apply for a scholarship. See the PCDC website for details.

Reflections of Raindance 2010

Drumroll please....Raindance 2011 will be held on April 22-24. Save the date!!

Photo by Rob Hoffman
Contra Dance, Then & Now

(continued from page one)
to last the 10-12 minutes of a typical contra dance. In addition, there must be a consistent tempo of 112-126 beats per minute. If the song has lyrics, the caller has to compete with the singer and it is not always easy to match calls to the song.

As a participant in Techno Contra West Side, I noticed there weren’t any defined breaks. One techno song melted into the next so you essentially had to find a way to gracefully end the dance with your current partner to find another one. Halfway through the evening the DJ had to leave so the caller was left to operate the mixing board as well as call the dance moves. It was clear that, despite the challenges the techno organizers faced on their initial attempt, everyone seemed to be having a wonderful time and seemed enthusiastic about continuing this cutting-edge trend.

Contrary to what you might expect, the crowd at the Seattle Techno Dance was not predominantly young people—experienced contra dancers were definitely the norm. Will crossover contra make it to Portland some day? Possibly. Will it take the place of the modern urban dances we all know and love? Unlikely. According to Dudley Laufman, crossover contra is just another “gimmick.” “Trends come and go... crossover is a result of dancers asking for faster and more complicated dances. Crowds are waning at the regular contra dance scene, you are losing the older crowd and the new crowd wants something new and fancy to keep the young people coming. These things run in cycles,” says Laufman.

Linda Mrosko, a member of Crossover Contra’s Facebook page, seems to agree. She commented, “It’s the modern version of what happened to square dancing in the 50’s—they danced to traditional, but found some modern show tunes and country & western was fun to dance to as well, so they began their own crossover.”

While some will feel exuberant at the idea of an alternative crossover dance coming to their local community center, others may be disheartened. Regardless of your feelings on the subject, I am quite certain that modern contra is likely to continue to thrive in its own right.

[Erin Neff is a member of the Contra Committee.]

Upcoming Events

Compiled by the Editor


8/6-9 Orcas Summer Camp on Orcas Island, WA. Participant run camp with dancing, hiking, boating, swimming and of course, cross-country croquet. Accommodations in cabins; communally prepared meals; family friendly. Info at: www.januscom.com/summercamp/Welcome.html

8/15-21 Lady of the Lake Family Week at Lake Coeur d’Alene, ID. Dance, music, arts & crafts, swimming, inter-generational community building, and this year: Bollywood dance instruction. Cabins, camping, meals. Info: www.ladyofthelake.org/lol2010/Family_Week.html

9/3-6 Northwest Passage Dance & Music Camp in Rhododendron, OR. Contra & English country dancing, workshops, concerts, gorgeous setting, fine cuisine. Info at: www.NWPassageDanceCamp.org

9/4-5 Tumbleweed Music Festival in Richland, WA. 100 acts of acoustic music and dance on six stages in Howard Amon Park. Info at: www.3rfs.org/tmf.htm

9/10-12 Simcoe Mountain Music and Dance Camp in Goldendale, WA. Informal jamming and participant organized workshops: dancing, calling, singing, storytelling, fiddle, banjo, etc. Cabins, camping, vegetarian food. Cost: $65 Info: www.community.gorge.net/mcfs/simcoe.htm

9/14-19 OvertheWater Hurdy Gurdy Festival in Port Townsend, WA. It’s all about the hurdy gurdy: classes, workshops, concerts, jam sessions, dance party. Dorm accommodations at Fort Flagler State Park. Info: www.overthewater.org/festival/general.html


10/1-3 Silver Falls Musical Gathering at Silver Falls State Park near Salem, OR. Celebration of traditional and emerging folk music and dance. Participant organized, family friendly, rustic accommodations. Cost: $85 Info: www.cfs.peak.org/silverfalls

Who is that guy anyway?

By Laurel Thomas, Footnotes Editor

In keeping with the PCDC tradition of taking the opportunity at this time of year to thank our many volunteers for their service, and of course to seek out new volunteers, please take a look at the upper left hand corner of the cover page of Footnotes. See the guy with the bare feet, the sword and the drumstick? I don’t know his name (shall we call him Morris?) but I do happen to know that he would like to spend more time with his family. In short, the staff of Footnotes is looking for a replacement. Perhaps a line drawing of a couple doing a swing, a balance or a post-swing twirl? Barefoot or not, the dancers’ feet should be visible in the drawing – this is Footnotes, after all—but they should look like they are doing contra or English country dancing. Any artists out there? Please, Morris has been doing double duty all these years (look at page 5!) and he deserves an honorable retirement. Submit your work to the editor: in person at any Saturday contra dance or via email (see back page of this newsletter). Thanks!
Note: Unless otherwise noted all contra dances begin at 7:30 PM with a 30 minute teaching session, and end at 11 PM. All English country dances begin at 7:30 and end at 10:30 PM.

July

1st Thu Waltz Eclectic at FCC, every Thursday, 7:30-10 PM; waltz and other couples dance to CD music; $5
2nd Fri PCDC English Country Dance at BWT Caller: Cynthia Stenger Music: Open band w/ Dave Goldman & Jon Neff
3rd Sat Cats & Dogs Contra Dance at FCC Caller: Gordy Euler Music: UnLeashed!
5th Mon Random Waltz at LB, every Monday 8:30-11 PM; waltz and other couples dance to CD music; $5; open band 4th Mon.
9th Fri No English Country Dance
10th Sat PCDC Contra Dance at FCC Caller: Laura Me Smith Music: Tunestruck
14th Wed Square Dance at PFC, every 2nd & 4th Wed., 7-9 PM; live music & callers; free
16th Fri PCDC English Country Dance at BWT Caller: Dave Macemon Music: Erik Weberg, Fred Nussbaum, Marjorie Millner
17th Sat Third Saturday Contra Dance at FCC Caller: TBA Music: George Penk, Heather Pinney, Deborah Lindsay
23rd Fri PCDC English Country Special Dress-Up Dance at BWT Caller: Mary Devlin Music: Sean Nolan, Syd Newell, Lanny Martin, Dave Goldman
24th Sat PCDC Contra Dance at FCC Caller: Sam Rotenberg Music: Sue Songer, Lanny Martin, Lori Prime
30th Fri PCDC English Country Dance at BWT Caller: Erik Weberg Music: Skay Lessley, Jon Neff, Carl Thor
31st Sat PCDC Fifth Sat. Contra Dance at FCC Caller: Open mike w/ Steve Barlow Music: Open band w/ Sue Songer, Keith Moe, Dave Hamlin
31st Sat Special Newport Contra Dance at NHS Caller: Sue Baker Music: Jerry & the Backsliders

Aug

2nd Mon Norske Runddansere: Scandinavian Dancing to CD music every Monday at FML, 7-10 PM, $3
6th Fri PCDC English Country Dance at BWT Caller: Elinor Preston Music: Open band w/ Sue Songer & Lanny Martin
7th Sat Cats & Dogs Contra Dance at FCC Caller: Sam Rotenberg Music: Calico
13th Fri PCDC English Country Dance at BWT Caller: Sam Rotenberg Music: Lori Shaffer, Laurel Koran, Sarah Goss, Dave Goldman
14th Sat PCDC Contra Dance at FCC Caller: Woody Lane Music: Lift Ticket
15th Sun CFS/EFS Contra Dance at FirstICC, 7:30-10:30 Caller: Woody Lane Music: Lift Ticket
20th Fri PCDC English Country Dance at BWT Caller: Nan Evans Music: Sean Nolan, Skay Lessley, Sue Songer
21st Sat Third Saturday Contra Dance cancelled this month
27th Fri PCDC English Country Dance at BWT Caller: Dave Macemon Music: Betsy Branch, Fred Nussbaum, Lisa Scott
28th Sat PCDC Contra Dance at FCC Caller: Jay Finkelstein Music: Dan Compton, Fran Sifer, Mick Doherty

Welsh Folk Dance Workshop

Submitted by Chris Jones

The North American Festival of Wales will take place in Portland this year over Labor Day weekend. One of the festival’s featured events is a workshop on Welsh folk dancing scheduled for Sat. September 4th from 3-5 PM at the Doubletree Lloyd Center Hotel. Live music will be supplied by the local band, Beltaine; Sian Frick, a certified instructor of Welsh folk dance, will provide instruction and calling. Participants of all ages will take part in a real Welsh Twmpath, or barn dance, as Sian teaches a number of spirited but light-footed Welsh dances. The cost of the workshop is $5 and a warm Welsh welcome is promised for all. Info at: www.wngga.org.

Uh oh. A dangerous black hole has formed in the newsletter. Why? Because the Editor did not receive enough dance-related copy or photos to fill up this issue! Coincidentally, there has been a suspicious dearth of information lately from CERN about what’s going on at their Large Hadron Collider. But fear not, CERN’s website yields this helpful list of the many possible nightmare scenarios that we do not have to worry about: cosmic rays, microscopic black holes, strangelets, vacuum bubbles, magnetic monopoles and runaway fusion reactions. According to CERN, “there is no cause for concern,” “LHC is absolutely safe,” “there is no risk.” To be sure, the first attempt to start the collider, almost two years ago ended with an explosion, which closed the place down for months. But CERN’s head magnet man, one Lucio Rossi, comfortingly explained that this was due to a “lack of adequate risk analysis.” In other words my friends, keep on dancing!
Dance Locations

BWT  Burlingame Water Tower Dance Hall, 8936 SW 17th Ave (between Spring Garden and Taylor’s Ferry Roads)— no street shoes permitted on the dance floor

CCS  Cesar Chavez School, W. 14th Ave & Chambers St., Eugene, OR

FCC  Fulton Park Community Center, 68 SW Miles (off Barbur, traffic light just east of Terwilliger)— must wear shoes in this venue

FirstCC  First Congregational Church (Gatton Hall), 4515 SW West Hills Road, Corvallis, OR

FML  Friendship Masonic Lodge, 5626 NE Alameda, Portland

LB  Lenora’s Ballroom, 615 SE Alder (across from PPAA), Portland, OR

KG  Kinton Grange Hall, 19015 SW Scholl’s Ferry Rd, Beaverton, OR

NH  Norse Hall, 111 NE 11th & Couch, Portland (1 block north of Burnside)

NHS  Newport High School, 322 NE Eads St, Newport, OR

PFC  People’s Food Coop, 3021 SE 21st & Division, Portland

PPAA  Portland Police Athletic Association, 618 SE Alder St.

Regular Portland Dances

Unless otherwise stated, all dances are open to everyone—experienced or not, with or without partners—and feature live music. All dances are taught. PCDC encourages sit-in musicians (unmiked) at regular PCDC dances at the discretion of the hired band and caller.

Regular PCDC dances cost $9/$7/$6 for non-members/members/seniors & students.

PCDC Friday English Country Dance Series. Every Friday at BWT, 7:30 to 10:30 PM. Tea and cookies at the break!

The first Friday of each month is an open mike dance for callers and open band for those who would like to play (bring a folding chair and a music stand). Contact Paula Hamlin, 503-691-1758, for more information.

Cats & Dogs First Saturday Contra Dance. The UnLeashed! and Calico bands alternate months with guest callers. FCC, 8-11 PM, beginners’ workshop at 7:30. $8/$6 students & seniors.

PCDC Second Saturday Family Dance (Oct–Apr). Fun dancing for kids and families. FCC, 5 to 7 PM, with potluck following.

PCDC Second Saturday Contra Dance. The longest continuously running contra dance in the state. FCC, 8-11 PM, beginners’ lesson at 7:30.

Portland Ceili Society Third Friday Dance (Sept.–May). Traditional Irish music, dance and drink. PPAA, 9 PM-12:30, lesson at 8. Cost $10/$8 students & seniors.

Portland Waltz Eclectic. Waltz Brunch, 3rd Sunday of the month, Norse Hall. Lesson 10:30-11:30 AM, open dancing until 2:30 PM. Also: Weekly waltz, swing, latin, and other partner dance practice, Thursdays, 7:30-10 PM, Fulton Community Center, 68 SW Miles.

Third Saturday Contra Dance is organized by Jigsaw. FCC, 8 PM, beginners’ lesson at 7:30. $8/$6 students.

PCDC Fourth Saturday Contra Dance. FCC, 8-11 PM, beginners’ lesson at 7:30.

PCDC Fifth Saturday Contra Dance is an open-mike session for callers and musicians. FCC, 8-11 PM, beginners’ lesson at 7:30.

Joyride First Wednesday Contra Dance is organized by the band Joyride with guest callers. October–June at Polish Hall, 7:30-10 PM. $7/$6 students w/ ID.

Check out PCDC’s website: www.PortlandCountryDance.org

Norske Runddansere Monday Scandinavian Dance. Friendship Masonic Lodge, 7-10 PM, ongoing lesson 7:30-8:30 PM, $3. Website: www.norskerunddansere.org

Out of Town Dances

Astoria 3rd Sat. Country Dance: Oct.–Nov., Mar.–May at the Netel Grange, 8 PM. For more info contact Craig at 503-325-8207 or craig.holt@oregonstate.edu.

Bend 2nd Saturday Contra Dance: October through May at Highland School Kenwood Gym, 7:30 PM. For more information contact Kate at 541-330-8943 or katebeardsley@hotmail.com.

Corvallis 1st & 3rd Saturday Dances: Sept.–June at FirstCC, 8 PM. (Bring non-street shoes). For more information, contact William at williamcallscontras@gmail.com.

Eugene 2nd & 4th Saturday Dances: Sept.–June at CCS, 8 PM. For more info contact Christie or Eric at enthurston@hotmail.com.

Hood River 2nd Saturday Dance: October–June at Rockford Grange, 7:30 PM. For more info contact Keith at 541-352-7550.

Scandia of Salem’s 4th Friday Dance: KOC, 8 PM. For more info contact Sharon at 503-364-6713 or sharonmooree@comcast.net.

Get weekly email updates about dances in the Portland area. E-mail <kluberg@kluberg.com> and ask to be put on the list.
PLEASE let us know immediately if your address changes. We get charged 44¢ for each newsletter that is returned. And worse yet, you won’t get your newsletter. Please provide your old and new address to: Sue Songer, PO Box 2189, Portland, OR 97208-2189, 503-293-1446, songer@portcoll.com.

This newsletter, Footnotes, is published every other month. If you have a dance announcement for the newsletter, please contact the newsletter editor, or send it to PCDC, PO Box 2189, Portland, OR 97208-2189. Give a concise description of your event, including featured band and callers, date, time, place, cost, and phone number for further info. The information provided here is as accurate as we can make it, but late changes and/or cancellations may not be reflected. We encourage submission of letters and articles that might be of interest to the community. Letters and articles become the property of Footnotes on publication and may be edited. The DEADLINE for submissions for the next issue is the 5th of the previous month.

Portland Country Dance Community is a consortium of dancers, musicians and callers promoting country dance and music traditions through regular dances, workshops and other events. Everyone is welcome. Our interests include American, English, Celtic, Scandinavian, and related traditions, expressed through live performance and participation. With this newsletter we hope to exchange information and share concerns about traditional music and dance. We publish the newsletter every other month and distribute it to members of PCDC and to other folk organizations. Membership is $15 a year for individuals, $12 for students and seniors (65+), or $25 for households. Membership provides a $2 discount at all regular PCDC dances, and a subscription to the newsletter. Donations in excess of membership fees are tax deductible. Correspondence may be sent to PCDC, PO Box 2189, Portland, OR 97208-2189. We are an educational nonprofit corporation and also a Center of the Country Dance and Song Society, a national organization whose address is 132 Main St./PO Box 338, Haydenville, MA 01039-0338.

The PCDC board is an elected body of volunteers from the community. Meetings are held approximately every six weeks. Community members are welcome to attend. Help, ideas and feedback from the community, in whatever form, is necessary to make PCDC events happen. Your contributions of time and support are appreciated. Call any board member for further info.

The current PCDC Board members are:

- Carmen Doerge (Co-Chair, NWP Rep)....503-287-8468
carmendoerge@comcast.net
- Tim Gojio (Member-at-Large).............253-831-0963
ggojio@yahoo.com
- Sarah Goss (Treasurer)....................503-927-7777
sfgoss@comcast.net
- Diane Hunt (Secretary)....................503-977-2917
dianehunt@yahoo.com
- Chris Mullooly (Co-Chair, English Rep)....503-774-6531
mullooly@comcast.net
- Jon Neff (Outreach).........................503-381-9981
jon@jonneff.net
- Lani Townsend (Contra Rep).............206-499-1814
lanitownsend@yahoo.com

Other major PCDC volunteers:

- Mailing list & membership: Sue Songer
  503-293-1446 or songer@portcoll.com
- Contra dance booking: Gordy Euler
  503-289-8669 or euleromi@pacificer.com
- Contra Committee Chair: Kim Appleberry
  503-319-1717 or pbxapple@comcast.net
- Northwest Passage: Karsten Kelly
  503-236-3089 or karsten@technotop.com
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