



PCDC Footnotes

January-February 2024

In this issue...

- **For dirt-cheap—only \$15 a year—you can be a vital part of PCDC and all it does.** Read Kathy Story's inspiring article, "[President's Corner: The Importance of PCDC Membership](#)," and then get your friends to sign up!
- **You may have noticed a new admissions sign at our dances...** In "[Breaking Even](#)," Kelly Tabor breaks down admission prices and how they translate to the success and long-term financial health of our dances. This one is a must-read before you get to that admissions table on Saturday!
- **The Portland Megaband season is upon us.** Get fired up for the Saturday, March 9th dance! See "[Portland Megaband 2024: Full Steam Ahead](#)" by Sue Songer.
- **You can recover from the Portland Megaband dance the next day with the hair of the dog:** The Portland Roadhouse is on this year! See "[Save the Date for Portland Roadhouse 2024](#)" and plan your Megaband weekend—or your extended trip up and down the I-5 corridor for Cascade Promenade, a week in which dancers up and down the I-5 corridor experience the diverse dancing that the PNW has to offer.
- In "[From Versailles to Victoria. A Calling Career](#)," **Kathy Story interviews David Macemon**, our talented and über-experienced local caller, as he prepares to call the Seattle English Country Ball.
- See **David Macemon's tips for helping new dancers** in "[On the Dance Floor](#)."
- **Did you miss the lovely Portland English Country Ball?** See the review ("[Highlights from the 2023 Portland English Country Ball](#)") and plan ahead for next year.
- In "[The Woodshed](#)," Augie O'Riordan describes **how you can participate in the creative process** of local dance callers, choreographers, and musicians.
- **Calling all musicians:** In "[Upcoming 2nd Thursday Dance Tune sessions](#)," Betsy Branch fills you in on the latest goings-on with the dance tune teaching sessions and jams.



Come on out to the Pub after the dance!

Stop by Buffalo Gap Saloon after the contra dance and get to know your fellow dancers better! Everybody is welcome—just pull up a chair!



(L to R) Katt, Claire, Adrian, Delta, and Yosef enjoy themselves at the Buffalo Gap Saloon after the contra dance.

President's Corner: The Importance of PCDC Membership

By Kathy Story, PCDC Board President

Being a member of PCDC brings many tangible benefits. As a PCDC member, you have the opportunity to vote on PCDC leadership and provide input to the PCDC Board on important decisions affecting the whole community. You get our *Footnotes* newsletter delivered to your inbox. And after just six months of membership, you're eligible to [apply for a grant](#) to attend events that not only are great fun, but also increase your skill level and benefit the entire community. (Grants are up to \$75 for weekend events, \$100 for four-day weekend dance camps, and \$150 for workshops and camps five days or longer.)

Just as important, you get the satisfaction of knowing you are an active partner in our diverse, welcoming, and fun community. Membership is about creating and sustaining a thriving folk dance and music community for all to enjoy, both now and for years to come. Your membership makes a difference for the entire community. Your dues help our dance community provide a steady stream of weekly dances, annual dance camps and picnics, special events for all skill levels, caller workshops, and musician sessions. When a dance does not break even, membership dues help cover the cost of providing quality musicians, callers, and sound technicians.

Make a New Year's resolution to join for the first time or renew your membership, and encourage your friends to be members, too. Membership is \$15 a year for individuals, \$12 for students and seniors (65+), \$25 for households, and \$20 for senior households. All donations above basic membership levels are tax-deductible and allow PCDC to offer additional grants and sustain and expand our programs. If you're already a member, you can [donate directly to PCDC](#). In addition, if you're an Oregon resident, you are eligible for Oregon's Cultural Tax Credit because PCDC is now a Qualified Cultural Nonprofit. Donors who contribute to PCDC and other Oregon cultural nonprofits are eligible to make a matching donation to the Oregon Cultural Trust and receive a 100% tax credit for their Trust donation (up to \$500 for an individual, \$1,000 for a couple filing jointly, and \$2,500 for a Class-C Corporation). Learn more about the Oregon Cultural Trust at <https://bit.ly/41i9HOs>. 🦶

Breaking Even: That Long, Uncomfortable Talk About Money

By Kelly Tabor, Contra Committee Chair

You may have noticed a new admissions sign at our dances...

I am your Contra Committee Chair, and I have a confession: The first PCDC board meeting I ever attended was this past summer. I was driving down I-84 with a board member attending via Zoom in my passenger seat. PCDC's fiscal year had just ended and our treasurer was going over numbers. ECD made a profit of \$700 or so. Contra *lost* \$1800. This was no surprise to anyone. We had taken a loss at every single dance from April to New Year's Eve, and at most dances since then.

We'd hoped we could outrun the money problem by boosting attendance. We didn't necessarily need people to pay more to dance, just more people to attend. That didn't work, ultimately. The very well-attended Thanksgiving contra dance, for example, made a profit of only \$30, with an average admission of \$11 per person. But this small profit evaporates when you look at our other looming concern: we haven't given our talent a raise this century.

We pushed off that concern long enough that we need to address it right now. All the surrounding cities pay about 30% more. The board has approved increasing the minimum talent pay and will continue to discuss other aspects such as sound engineer pay (that could fill an entire article) and travel reimbursement (gas costs more than \$1.15 per gallon now—who knew?). Starting January 1, PCDC will pay callers and musicians an extra \$20 each, **bringing the total pay to \$90 for ~5 hours** of specialized work on the night of the dance (and many more hours in rehearsal). For perspective, we would need to pay our talent \$150 to keep pace with the inflation since the 1990s.

And that well-attended Thanksgiving dance? With the raises for talent, that would be a *loss*, and once we settle sound and travel pay, our losses will be much higher. The thing is, we need our better-attended dances to do more than break even: they need to make up for the lesser-attended dances that do not break even.

How are other organizations managing all of this?

They charge more: \$12 to \$15 is a common minimum.

They dance less: They dance every other week with summers off, compared to Portland's 6 or 7 dances per month.

They have cheaper halls: Many are in lower-cost cities or have smaller halls or sweetheart deals. At \$330 per night, Fulton is the cheapest hall we can fit into at pre-pandemic attendance numbers. If we give up this hall now while attendance is lower, we won't get it back.

How are our sliding scale admissions working?

PCDC instituted sliding scale admissions a few years before the pandemic. Admission went from \$11 for members and \$12 for nonmembers to a \$6–15 sliding scale. It worked pretty well. People kept paying what they'd been paying or threw in more if they could. People who wouldn't otherwise attend could now pay less. Post-pandemic, the scale is \$6-20. The committee very specifically didn't want to increase the minimum, so we changed the suggested ceiling. We fully expected losses regardless in the post-pandemic world, but at the time, we expected it to be a temporary state of affairs.

But inflation has been rough. Wages are stagnant (just ask our talent!). These are not temporary obstacles. We don't want to raise the minimum price or get rid of our sliding scale. But our dances cost a bare minimum of \$815 to put on for a 3-person local band with no travel expenses. A local 4-person band is \$905. An out-of-town band costs us more. With 50 dancers paying admission, that's an average of \$18.10 each to bring in a small local band—and more for a larger or out-of-town band. Once we implement sound and travel increases, this cost will be higher.

Money taken in at the door covers only that one dance—extra proceeds are split with the talent. Our pay structure affects our available talent selection and their willingness to play for us. To offer some perspective as a newer caller: I made more, even after gas, calling *half* a summer evening in Seattle than I do calling a full evening in Portland.

About that new admissions sign...

Our new admissions sign suggests a price of \$15. Below this, our sliding scale is still there, still with the \$6 minimum. This is our final attempt to break even before we have to increase the minimum. **Please pay \$15 if you can.** If you can comfortably pay more than that, by all means, please do so. Your presence is the most important thing, so if \$6 is what keeps you able to dance, \$6 is perfect. 🦶



Portland Megaband 2024: Full Steam Ahead!

By Sue Songer, Past PCDC President



The 2024 Portland Megaband is back to pre-pandemic strength, powered by 75 musicians who are already working on the music. Fiddles (30 or so), whistles, flutes and winds, plectra, percussion, and, of course, the horn section will be working as a tight unit to provide tons of energy—energy that will go through the roof once dancers add their own mighty energy to the mix!

For more good news, we will be back in the Smith Ballroom at PSU, the perfect venue for our event with its beautiful wood floor, lovely foyer, and plenty of space for socializing. The venue is convenient to public transportation and has ample parking in the structure across the street.

Our showcase of Portland callers will be driving the train. What a ride it will be—hop on!

Here are the details:

When: Saturday, March 9, 2024, 7:30 to 10:30 pm. Newcomers' session at 7:00, prior to dance.

Where: Smith Ballroom at Portland State University, 1825 SW Broadway, Portland 97201

Admission: \$25 suggested price; sliding scale \$15–\$40. Please pay what you are able. All performers are playing and calling pro bono for this PCDC benefit event.

Callers: William Watson, Laurel Thomas, Rich Goss

Music: The Portland Megaband, 75 musicians playing with precision and enthusiasm

More info and advance admission sales (recommended): <https://portlandmegaband.com>



The annual Portland Megaband dance is a PCDC benefit event. The proceeds support dancer, musician, and caller development.

Save the date for Portland Roadhouse 2024!

By Dave Hamlin

First, a big thank you to all the folks who offered to help keep the Portland Roadhouse going! We would not be here without your support.

We still have some details to work out, but we're happy to announce that the Portland Roadhouse will happen this year on March 10, 2024, at the Milwaukie Community Club. We plan to start at noon, with five bands and five callers, each having a one-hour slot. Keep an eye on www.portlandroadhouse.org for further information.

The Portland Roadhouse is the culminating event of the Cascade Promenade, nearly a week of dances planned up and down the I-5 corridor. In Portland, Joyride kicks off the event with their Wednesday dance, followed by Seattle's Lake City and Phinney dances, English Country dances, and other regional dances. Meanwhile, in Portland, both local and visiting dancers attend our PCDC Friday night English Country dance and then gather en masse for Saturday, when the Portland Megaband performs for hundreds of contra dancers from the I-5 corridor and places far beyond. Sunday brings more dancing, with multiple callers and bands at the Portland Roadhouse. 🦶

The Woodshed: A Community Space for Creativity

By Augie O'Riordan

Calling all dancers, musicians, choreographers, tunesmiths, and budding callers!

Introducing "The Woodshed," a concept based on the place out of sight and earshot where we can practice and try out new ideas. When you're out in the woodshed, you know that an unexpected note or innovative combination of moves will not be disparaged. Likewise, the Woodshed Creative Space is a fun and relaxing space for developing new dances before trying them out in front of a large group at a regular dance. It's a low-stress environment in which to practice calling or share a tune for others to choreograph.

Other communities schedule these events if and when there seems to be enough interest. For example, if you want to try out a new three-couple dance, you probably want a minimum of six people, and hopefully, at least one musician!

We have created a form for you to express your interest in participating. If you have a new dance or tune to share, great! If you're a dancer who wants to help choreographers visualize their dance with real dancers (rather than with salt and pepper shakers), we need you! Likewise, we need dance musicians to play tunes that may not yet be recorded or published, so that we can dance to them. Come out of the woodwork and join us for some creative fun and maybe some food!

Please let us know your interest by filling out the [Woodshed Creative Space Interest Form](#). Questions? Contact Augie O'Riordan at ecd.augie@gmail.com. 🦶

Upcoming 2nd Thursday Dance Tune sessions


By Betsy Branch



Greetings, dance musicians! Here is our schedule for upcoming 2nd Thursday dance tune sessions. Session leaders George and Betsy (pictured in photo below) will lead an open band on June 29, so tunes we learn this winter and spring will show up at the June dance.

- January 11, 7–9 pm: Tune session led by Betsy, at Betsy's home in SE Portland
- February 8, 7–9 pm: Jam session led by George and Betsy, location TBA

To sign up for these free dance tune sessions, email Betsy at fiddlefrau@gmail.com or Sharon Allen at sharonjeanallen@yahoo.com. You can also email Betsy or Sharon to be added to the email list for 2nd Thursday tune sessions.

For more information, including recordings and lists of tunes taught over the years, visit the [PCDC Dance Tune Session website](#). 



Portland's Fiddle Hellions:

The Fiddle Hellions are George Penk, Betsy Branch, and Sue Songer, here fresh off playing a Saturday night contra dance at Fulton Hall. George and Betsy also teach the Second Thursday Tune Teaching sessions.

Highlights from the 2023 Portland English Country Ball

by David Macemon, PCDC Board Secretary, ECD Committee Member, and English Ball Committee chair



The Portland English Country Ball Committee and a group of committed volunteers delivered a wonderful English ball weekend November 3rd and 4th at the Oaks Park Dance Pavilion.

The Friday night dance was well-attended by out-of-town guests, as well as quite a few local dancers. David Macemon called to music provided by George Penk, Laura Kuhlman, and Rich Scher.

On Saturday afternoon, ball dancers attended a workshop at which they practiced the ball dances. Local ECD callers had been teaching ball dances throughout the year at regular Friday night dances and then again at special workshops leading up to the ball. Those prior lessons plus the Saturday afternoon workshop enabled Erik Weberg, the caller for the Saturday night ball, to put on a program at which there was very little teaching.



Erik Weberg (far left) planned and executed a delightful program for the Saturday night ball. Fine Companions (L to R: Erik Weberg, Bill Tomczak, Betsy Branch, and Lisa Scott) provided music that was second to none. And as always, John Oorthuys delivered excellent sound for both days.

Sunday brunch was held at the Burlingame Water Tower Dance Hall, with a potluck providing yummy food and Ric Goldman managing the open mic dancing.

Thanks to all who attended and performed, and a big thanks to all the volunteers!

For 2024, we look forward to being at Oaks Park again on November 1st and 2nd. Registration will open in July 2024. You can find more information at <https://portlandecdball.info/>. 🦶



Spotlight on David Macemon

From Versailles to Victoria: A Calling Career

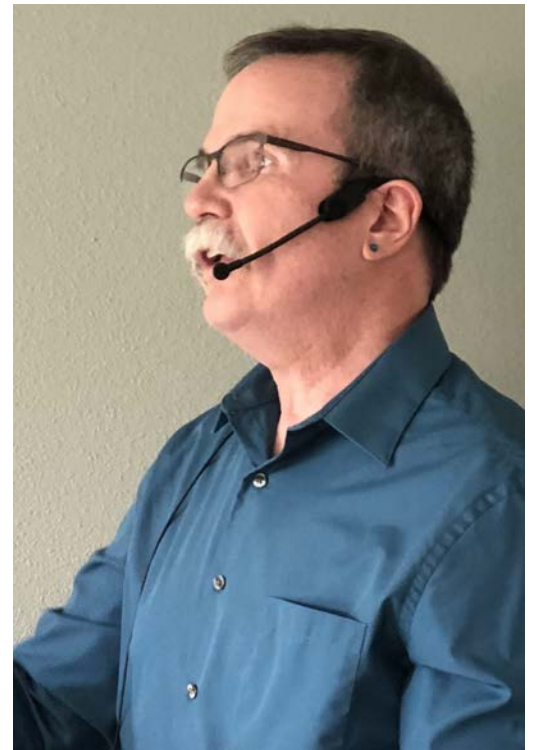
by Kathy Story, PCDC Board President

I enjoy English Country Dancing and at a recent PCDC ECD dance, I learned that David Macemon will be the caller at the Seattle English ball in February. I've never been to a ball and I wanted to learn more, so I sat down with David to talk about dancing, calling, and the Seattle ball.

Kathy Story: How did you begin dancing?

David Macemon: I've been dancing for 50 years. I started in high school in Versailles, KY, a small town in Woodford County. A middle school music teacher organized a performing dance group with high school students. My first year, we had 12 students and we became the Woodford County Dancers. By senior year, we had a team of 24, performing English, Contras, Appalachian big circles and squares, Danish, Morris, and Sword dances. We performed at schools, education conferences, and the Yulefest in Tennessee. You could even letter in dance at my high school, which I did for 4 years.

I also attended the University of Kentucky weekly dances. Back in the day, we went to "the dance"—weekly dances that included lots of forms, including English, contra, square, Appalachian big set, and Danish. Highlights of the year were attending the Berea Christmas Country Dance School, where I've recently been asked to be on staff, and the Berea Mountain Folk Festival weekend, a gathering of middle and high school students from around the region. Pre-COVID, I was thrilled to be able to take groups of students from Portland's Renaissance School of Arts and Sciences to the Berea Mountain Folk Festival. Dancing has changed my life.



KS: When did you start calling?

I started in high school, and then more through University of Kentucky dance. I started attending the Christmas School in Berea College as a sophomore in high school. They had a very vibrant teen program with a class on calling and my teacher, Jane Britton, sent me to calling class.

KS: Where have you called?

At first, I would show up at a dance in central Kentucky or John C. Campbell Folk School in North Carolina and call a dance or two. While I was living in Baltimore, I called weekly dances, was an organizer for ECD, and ran the rapper sword and Morris teams. Then I started calling at weekend dance camps, and called at the Berea Christmas Country Dance School for many years.

I've called Vancouver BC's English ball, Hands Across the Water in Victoria, BC, the San Diego English Ball, various Pinewoods dance weeks, Buffalo Gap (CDSS camp in Virginia), the Bay Area Country Dance Society (BACDS) spring dance weekend, and the BACDS Hey Days ECD week. While Cynthia and I were living in Austin, Texas, we helped restart the ECD program there. Cynthia and I called and Mike and Bonnie Voss played music and danced. Of course, I can't forget our local dances: the weekly PCDC Friday Night English Dance, the experienced dancer series, and the Portland English Country Ball.

I've really focused on calling for the last 15 years. I wanted to figure out how to express things in a way that would resonate with others.

KS: You and your wife Cynthia Stenger are both dancers and ECD callers, you serve on PCDC committees and the board, and now you're secretary of the board after being treasurer. Why do you do all this for our community?

We both enjoy the opportunity to help. Cynthia started calling and organizing dances right after college with a friend. I enjoy calling. I enjoy taking something complex and communicating about it in a way that the audience can understand, execute, and find joy in it.

Calling involves lots of decisions and you're always looking for trouble spots. Are dancers getting a pattern? Should I worry about 1 or 2 dancers not getting a pattern, or rely on the community to help them? Demonstrations can be very helpful. I talk while I walk, and then everyone walks. Timing is very important. How can I help dancers end the figure with the music, and not early? I try to help dancers hear the beat by the timing of the calling.

KS: For those of us who have never been, what is an English ball anyway? How is it different from a regular Friday night dance?

Several things:

1. Though typically not required, dancers dress up more: Fancy or formal dresses, and ties jackets, in the past. Dancers may wear historical costumes, depending on the region.
2. Less teaching. In the past, some balls had no teaching—no caller, even. But that was stressful. Now, the caller walks the dancers through the figures without teaching. Then the caller calls the figures for a

little while once the music starts. Some balls feature “For those who know” dances that have no calling. At the Portland Ball, we typically include one or two no-walkthrough dances that have prompting only.

3. Fancy snacks, sometimes meals. The St. Nicholas Ball in Southern California this year featured dancing, a catered dinner, and then more dancing to finish the evening.
4. Different venue and decorations: The venue is different because ball attendance is larger, and the hall is usually decorated.
5. More time. At the PCDC ball, waltzing starts at 7 pm, with ECD from 7:30 to 11 pm.
6. Practice in advance. In Portland, we get the ball list of 18 or so dances from the caller who is calling our ball. Local callers decide which dances to work on and call those dances at weekly dances. We also do three ball workshops a year to work on style and get experience with some of the ball dances. Instructions for dances are online on our Ball website with links to videos. For the Portland ball, the caller sets the program of dances. Some communities set the program themselves. SF Bay area balls even have themes in the decorations and dances.

The first Portland English Country Ball, organized by Nan Evans, was in 1993. We’ve been doing them for 30 years, minus two years due to COVID. In 1996, the CDSS executive meeting was here and the execs called dances at the ball. Since then, we’ve hired local callers or callers from California.

KS: As the caller, how do you prepare for a ball?

My prep starts as soon as I’m asked. I begin by asking how the community does their ball. Do they walk through once, prompt, and drop out as soon as possible? I ask for a history of their ball dances. Are they difficult/easy, old/new, familiar/unusual? The local community suggests the specific language they use for dance terms.

Then I plan the structure of the evening to figure out the flow. I need to look at the dance music: the key, the time signature, the mood. Is it lyrical or driving? At the end, do I want to rev up the dancers or send them away calm and floating? For a ball, I submit a list of dances to get feedback from the band and community organizers. I also send my directions to them. On the Seattle English ball site (see <https://seattleball.org/> – there is still space available), there is a list of the dances, with dance instructions and links to videos. The local community often publishes a ball booklet with the instructions for each dance; the dancers receive their booklets about a month in advance so they can study the dances and carry them at the Ball, if desired. On our ball website, we also provide a full-size version of the dance booklet that contains a lot more information than is contained in the smaller printed booklet.

If the organization does not know a specific dance I plan to call, I provide the original dance instructions, my interpretation of the original dance instructions, the sheet music (when not included in the Barnes books), and a link to a video. For the Seattle ball, I included a few dances that I could not find a video for, so with permission from the Second Sunday English Dance for Experienced Dancers, I recorded the dances on video and posted them online.

After all the preparation, it comes down to this: How does calling a ball with more than 100 dancers differ from calling a typical PCDC Friday Night English Dance with 30 to 40 dancers? Not surprisingly, there's a different level of anxiety for me when there are many, many more dancers in attendance, each with their own expectation of what the evening should be like. One of the things I always try to accomplish is to expand my presence so that even dancers in the back of the hall are engaged.

KS: What do you hope to achieve/create at the Seattle ball?

For the Seattle Ball and, honestly, any dance I call, I want to create an event at which everyone has a good time and dancers are challenged enough but not too much. I want to create opportunities to smile and laugh and be elegant and suave—and also to make and celebrate mistakes. In other words, I hope to facilitate fun. 🦶

On the Dance Floor

Welcoming and Helping New Dancers

By David Macemon, PCDC Board Secretary, ECD Committee Member, and English Ball Committee chair

We can all admit it, we LOVE to dance. It could be contra, English, or both—and lots of other styles. And what is more fun than sharing our love of dancing with others? This can be a challenge when our enthusiasm for dancing meets new dancers who have no idea what they're getting into.

I think we can all agree that we need to create a welcoming environment that encourages new dancers to return and become experienced dancers. There are many factors involved in striving for that goal; one thing we can all do is be conscious of how we help new dancers. Here are my thoughts about helping new dancers, based on 50 years of dancing and nearly as many years as a caller. *[David started calling very young; see his interview "From Versailles to Victoria: A Calling Career," in this issue. -Ed.]*

Invite your friends to come dance, and encourage (insist?) that they show up on time for the teaching session. In fact, you should show up for the teaching session too. Stress levels will be lower for new dancers if they know someone.

What is your role in a teaching session? The caller is teaching, so the role of teacher is taken. An experienced dancer's role in a teaching session is to model being a good student. What does that mean? Doing what the caller asks, but only *when* they ask you to do it. Do not anticipate what the caller is instructing. If there is confusion, an experienced dancer should get the caller's attention and ask for clarification. This helps the new dancer understand that instructions and direction will be coming from one person, the caller.

When the teaching session is over, chat with the new dancers and welcome them to the community. Ask how they found out about the dance. Be friendly. Once the dance starts, ask new dancers to dance. Quietly chat with them until the caller starts teaching. This is another great moment for modeling being a good student. Pay attention to the caller and move only when the caller is ready for you to move.

What should you do if your new dance partner gets confused during the walk-through? Lots of options here, but the best is to alert the caller and let them know there is confusion so they can provide clarity. In addition, keep eye contact with your partner if they are comfortable with that. In many dances we move in parallel with our partner, so movement of the eyes or a subtle tilt of the head can indicate the direction to go. Smiling at your partner provides reassurance that things are going well. You can provide gentle leads from either role position: for example, after an allemande or hand turn, gently let them go once they are headed to the correct place. For figures where we pass through other dancers, pointing at your own shoulder to guide which way to go is often helpful.

What should you NOT do? I don't want to create a list of Do Nots, but here are a few moves that can be physically harmful and not very welcoming:

- Do not push or pull others into place.
- Do not physically move people to where you think they should be.
- Do not tighten your grip on your partner's hand, even if they are letting go at the wrong time.

After you've successfully learned the dance from the walk-through, what then? Continue to model good dancing. Be where you need to be at the right time. Smile, keep eye contact. Avoid embellishments, tricks, and flourishes that may leave the new dancer confused. The goal with new dancers is to provide an environment that they want to come back to. There will be plenty of time to teach your favorite trick on the third or fourth time they attend. And remember, mistakes—everyone's mistakes—can be occasions to laugh and celebrate. We don't want to be perceived as blaming a new dancer for not accomplishing something that is completely new to them. As a wise dancer once said, It's only a dance!

Once a dance is over, what's the experienced dancer to do? Thank your partner for the dance. Quickly look at the dancers near you and introduce your partner to another experienced dancer. ("Hello Alex, this is River, it's their first time at the dance.") Ideally, Alex will happily ask River to dance and then introduce River to another experienced dancer at the end of their dance together.

Keep an eye out for new dancers who end up sitting on the side during a dance. New dancers often don't know the rules about asking others to dance—and even if they have been given permission to ask others, it can be a scary thing. Make sure they get asked to dance. Dance with them again. While I don't have scientific data, a new dancer who wants to dance but is left to sit on the side for multiple dances is not likely to become an experienced dancer: they are not likely to come back to the dance.

A resource I have found useful is [this video](#) that Don Bell made of Brooke Friendly's workshop, "Do's and Don'ts of Helping Other Dancers," at the Adirondack Dance Weekend in September 2019. The comments section contains a good list of Do's and Don'ts. Have a look and see what you might be able to incorporate as you help new dancers to learn to love the dances you love. 🦶