



The American Dance Circle

December 2020

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THE LLOYD SHAW FOUNDATION

The Lloyd Shaw Foundation is a non-profit organization with the following mission statement: “The Lloyd Shaw Foundation will

- share a diverse range of dance and music with a broad intergenerational audience,
- develop leadership in dance and music to ensure its continuity,
- retain records which document the past, present, and future of our American dance, and
- promote fellowship and enjoyment through the production of dance events, music, and dance materials; all of which emphasize the spirit and dances of Lloyd Shaw.”

Membership in the Foundation is open to all who are interested in these goals. (See Membership Chair, back inside page.)

Square dances, contra dances, round dances, mixers, and quadrilles are chief among the kinds of dance the Foundation seeks to preserve and foster. The Foundation engages in a wide variety of activities, including:

- training teachers and dance leaders,
- producing records, kits of dance materials, and other materials for dancers and dance leaders,
- sponsoring recreational dance weeks,
- publishing books and other printed materials pertaining to dance, and
- preserving dance material of historical interest through its Archives.”

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

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Submit ads and articles to:

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Bill Litchman

This is certainly a time for elections! As I write this, the presidential election is finally announced. By the time you read this, many of the residual problems will have cleared and our new president will have progressed toward a new term.

For those of you who responded to the election for members of the Board of Directors of the LSF, thank you. It was wonderful to hear from you, especially for the voter who included a small cartoon for my enjoyment. All three candidates were elected to continue to serve and we all thank Anne Fuller (also secretary of the LSF), Beth Harvey, and Kappy Lanning for being willing to serve again.

Now we can forge ahead to heal the country and to build the Lloyd Shaw Foundation and our outstanding activities and projects.

As you may know we are replacing Senda as our membership chair. We certainly thank her for her valuable service and wish her well in the future. We are urgently requesting you to consider volunteering to help fill this important position. Not only will you get to know the membership of the LSF, but you will be materially assisting in supporting the great work the Foundation is doing. You will be helped all along the way to learn the ropes of this activity. Please let Allynn Riggs or myself know if you have an interest.

May the blessings of this holiday season be satisfying to you and your family even in this time of universal pandemic. We will get through all of this.

Bill Litchman
President, LSF

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

By Allynn Riggs

A lot of interesting items in this issue. Check out the interesting interview Vice President, Nancy Kane, contributed on Genderless Calling. This topic has and will continue to impact our beloved dance and music activities. You are invited to keep an open mind on the topic – you may not even recognize when the caller or dance teacher is using genderless terms, because you are just having fun dancing and the words “make sense” – that is the hallmark of a good caller – they are entertaining you. We want to thank each of the contributors for letting us publish their articles. Check out the poem, “I Miss Camp” from Jenni Inglis – it is quite apropos as well.

Plus I received permission to print an article from John Sweeney from England on “The Dance is Not the Tune!” You will enjoy his knowledgeable and insightful take on how it is okay to change the tune or the dance.

How did you dance or make music during this Covid-19 “Stay At Home” and “Safe At Home” environment? How are you planning to return to the dance floor? We encourage you to find ways to keep the spirit of Pappy Shaw alive and well. Soon enough we will be able to gather in our circles, squares, and lines to share the joy of dance and music with our communities once again. Let’s be ready!

As always, we encourage you, our members, to share your dance experiences with the LSF membership by sending an article, photo, dance, lead sheet etc. to me via email at Allynn.riggs@gmail.com. Please be sure to send photos and/or ads in Word or .jpg format.

2020 Board of Directors Election Results

We are pleased to welcome Anne Fuller, Beth Harvey, and Kappy Laning back on the Board of Directors. Each will be serving the Lloyd Shaw Foundation and YOU for the next three years. Their terms will be complete in 2023.

We thank all three for giving the Foundation of their time, energy, enthusiasm, and knowledge.

We thank all those who participated in this year's voting cycle as well.

Membership Chair Position is Open



ABOUT THE POSITION: Currently the membership is managed on Google Sheets and involves regular updating at least once a month for any membership changes. The Membership Chair will become an editor of this list along with the Treasurer and the ADC Editor. The Membership Chair is responsible for sending electronic or snail-mail notices of yearly dues, acknowledgement for payment of dues, and welcome letters to new

members.

If you are interested in serving the Foundation membership in this position, please contact Bill Litchman at wmlitchman@yahoo.com. Please consider sharing your talents and love of our dance activity by stepping up to this very important position.

I Miss Camp

Dedicated to the 2020 Camp Season by Jennie Inglis

I Miss Camp

Walking along, singing a song

I miss camp.

In the sun, having fun

I miss camp.

The woods are deep, such great sleep! Good friends are near,
the time is dear.

I miss camp.

Gather at night, the music is right

I miss camp.

Meals together, in any weather

I miss camp.

The night creatures sing, the class bell rings. You're on your
own but never alone.

I miss camp.

Hot and sticky, never too icky

I miss camp.

Rain comes, too, mud in my shoe

I miss camp.

We go for a swim, dive right in. Embrace the laughter; it's
what we're after.

I miss camp.

Chores to do, campfires, too

I miss camp.

Dancing's great, stay up late

I miss camp.

We gather round making glorious sound. Sweet sights and
smells, time will tell.

I miss camp.

Days roll by, say good-bye

I miss camp.

Joyful days, memory's haze

I miss camp.

It's a special place. I know your face. In summer's glory, we shared a story.

I missed camp.

An Interview with Gender-free Dance Leader: Chris Ricciotti

by Nancy Kane and Chris Ricciotti

Historically speaking, many couples' recreational dance forms have grown out of courtship rituals and fertility dances, so it is no surprise that they reinforced traditional binary (male/female) gender norms.

However, as Bob Dylan sang, the times, they are a-changin'. Sure enough, many of us are accustomed to dancing both sides of partner dances, due to gender imbalances at dances or other reasons. However, it's time to question our overall assumptions about males, females, the "opposite" sex, the prevalence of binary calling traditions, and inclusivity in our dance events.

Sex is genetically determined, but science now recognizes that variations in genetic makeup can form people who are not easily categorized by binary labels. On the other hand, gender identity and expression are even more complex, with at least 72 gender identity designations in current usage.

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How do I become a member and subscribe to *The American Dance Circle*?

Sign up on the website: www.lloydshaw.org. Click on the **Join/Support** tab, select **Join**, scroll to the chosen membership category and click on the **Pay Now** button. Follow directions from there.

If you must use snail mail, please use the following form:

<i>Member Information</i>			
Mark One: <input type="checkbox"/> New Member(s)		<input type="checkbox"/> Renewing Member(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Change in Contact Info
Name:			
Address:			
City:	State:	Zip:	Country:
Phone:	Email:		
<i>Spouse/Family Information – If joint membership</i>			
Name(s):			
Phone:	Email:		
<i>Membership Type (Please check one)</i>			
<input type="checkbox"/>	Individual Member (\$25) per year	<input type="checkbox"/>	Family Member (\$40) per year
<input type="checkbox"/>	Patron Member (\$250) per year	<input type="checkbox"/>	Supporting Member (\$50) per year
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	Sustaining Member (\$100) per year
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	Life Member (\$1000) 1 time pmt
<i>Interested in paying Multiple Years?</i> <i>How many years would you like to renew? _____ years</i>			

<i>Email preferences</i>	
Would you like to receive Membership Information through E-mail instead of through mail? (Check here)	
<i>CallerLab Liability Insurance (Dance Leaders Only)</i>	
Yes, I want to sign up for Liability Insurance \$35/year – April 1-Mar 31 <i>See below for payment requirements</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Please send me information on liability insurance.
<i>Payment Method</i>	
Pay Online (PayPal) – Visit website: http://lloydshaw.org/join.html	Click on the <i>Buy Now</i> next to the designate membership type. This will direct you to PayPal for checkout.
Pay by Mail: Lew & Enid Cocke, 2924 Hickory Court, Manhattan, KS 66503	Check # _____ Total Amount _____ <i>Payable to Lloyd Shaw Foundation</i>

Sustaining, Patron, and Life members (names only) will be listed near the back of each ADC issue.

Liability Insurance, How to get it

Caller Liability Insurance

The Lloyd Shaw Foundation, as an affiliate member of CALLERLAB, is pleased to be able to offer LSF members “callers” personal liability insurance coverage for only **\$35**. The **term of the insurance begins April 1 and ends the following March 31st. It must be renewed annually by April 1 to remain in force. The member is responsible for renewing this annual coverage.** The price for succeeding years may increase, and if so, this will be updated on our web page.

As a member of The Lloyd Shaw Foundation, callers, cuers, and prompters calling in the United States have access to group liability insurance through the Foundation's affiliate membership with CALLERLAB. You do not need to be a member of CALLERLAB. However, **you must be a current member of The Lloyd Shaw Foundation.** Please note that this is **NOT** music licensing. The yearly cost is **\$35.00** and covers personal liability only. It is your responsibility to renew this annually before April 1st of each year.

Send checks, payable to "CALLERLAB," to Lew Cocke, 2924 Hickory Court, Manhattan, KS 66503. Write **"INSURANCE"** on the envelope to alert treasurer to verify your membership and send information to CALLERLAB for processing.

(Chris Ricciotti Interview continued from page 5)

The notion of an "opposite" in gender has become irrelevant in a nonbinary climate. As leaders in the dance world, are we potentially alienating or even excluding dancers who might want to participate in our events?

Enter Chris Ricciotti, who has been dubbed as the "Queen Mum" of the gender-free contra dance world by his community, but that does not begin to encompass the breadth of experience of someone who has performed with the Gay Blades Rapper Sword Team (the world's only known LGBT identified Rapper Sword Dance team in the world), who is a caller and dance leader, and has written dance choreography and information about Contra & Square dancing, English Country dance and other folk dance forms, and who has been a musician for Morris, Contra and English Country dancing.

Chris formed his love of dancing when he was 6 years old, as part of the square-dancing curriculum that was part of the Phys. Ed. Program in the Coventry, RI school system. In 1979, he joined a local 4-H group who practiced dancing old traditional Squares three times a week for competition with other 4-H groups. The leadership noticed how passionate Chris was about dancing and asked if he would be interested in calling for competition. That became the seed for what has become 40 years of leading dances in a variety of communities, including a number of groups he started on his own. After leaving 4-H, he joined a Modern Western Square Dance (MWSD) group in 1983 under the leadership of well-known and respected caller, Dick Ledger. In 1985, while a part of this group, Chris attended a weeklong callers' class under Dick's leadership which helped cement his love of calling and greatly improved his calling style. Soon thereafter, Chris began calling dances for the LGBTQIA community in 1987, and eventually founded the Lavender Country and Folk Dancers (LCFD) (<http://www.lcdd.org>) in 1988. LCFD has been affiliated with the International Association of Gay Square Dance Clubs (IAGSDC) since 2010.

Among Chris' accomplishments is the excellent introduction, *Gender-free Dancing: A Historical Perspective*, available through the LCFD website. Chris has been an inspiration to many thousands of dancers, and shares some of his insights here in Nancy's interview:

How do you explain gender-free (AKA gender-neutral or role optional) dance to traditional dance clubs and dancers?

We use non-gender based terminology to identify each role within the dance, substituting (Gents/Ladies or

Boys/Girls) with alternative terms that identify what each role will do. This is particularly necessary with contra and square dancing where often times the two roles are doing different things, especially in modern choreography. With English and Scottish Country dancing, the dances are much more symmetrical in nature, so we use global terminology to identify who does what and where (i.e. rather than saying 1st man and 2nd woman, we would say 1st Diagonals, or for lines, left file and right file.)

Who benefits from gender-free dance environments, and why?

I was of the mindset at first that this was something that would help make an old dancing tradition that I grew up and loved, much more accessible and appealing to a greater audience than what was available when I started calling for the LGBTQIA community. This is a NEW tradition that grew out of our community asking for change in the language terminology so that this old tradition would feel relevant and comfortable for them, so they could comfortably dance in any role, with anyone they chose. However, after many years of encouraging, advocating and inviting cross over between our community of dancers and the more conventional communities of dancers, I feel everyone can benefit from gender-free dancing as it fosters the philosophy of everyone dancing together, with whomever they choose, in a safe, warm and welcoming environment. I also feel that this new tradition has a great deal of potential of helping to keep this wonderful old tradition of dancing, alive, vibrant and appealing to a wider audience of younger folks for generations to come!

Do you encounter resistance to teaching and leading dance in this way? If so, how do you overcome it?

Typically, I have not, because most of my focus over the years has been within my own communities. I do frequently call for both conventional and gender-free dance communities, and I will honor the traditions and expectations of both. There have been some communities who have stated that gender-free, or traditional calling, will not work for them. If people are on the fence of it it's a family group, or community dance with a lot of different ages, I will typically call without any reference to gender, or roles, and provide fun dances that people can do together. In those situations, typically, people are having way too much fun to even take notice of this.

How can someone learn to call in a gender-neutral way? Are there workshops for that?

Yes, anyone can learn how to call in this manner. There have been a few callers who have told me they like what I'm doing but it's not for them. They have been doing traditional style calling for too long to change now. However, I've also had long time die hard traditional callers tell me that it is much easier than they expected, and adapted very easily to it. I think some of it depends on how rigid people are about word associations and meanings.

There are no official workshops that I know of, but I have lead workshops on calling, and when I do, gender-free terminology is what I use. I guess I'm it for now, unless someone else wants to add to this rich diversity of education.

What is the biggest challenge for people learning to call dances without reference to male/female roles?

The biggest challenge is coming into this with expectations that may not fit the group you are working with and the fear of being vulnerable and making mistakes. If you are new to this, approach this with an open mind, know you will make mistakes, and know that the community who is trusting you will also support you in this effort if you are new to gender-free calling. Go into this with the desire to meet the needs of the community who is trusting your leadership. Be open to constructive dialog, be prepared to meet in the middle, put the needs of that community first, as you are of service to them, not the other way around. And above all, your role is to help your dancers to have fun, and the best thing you can do for them is to help them achieve their greatest potential for fun and building community with others as a part of this age old tradition of lovely music and beautiful dancing together.

Should role optional dances replace traditional male/female dancing?

Oh man, is that ever a good question. I'll give you my take on this. I just want people to be comfortable dancing. I love dancing in all communities. I want to see people being less rigid about who is dancing with whom and in what role they are dancing. I want dancing to be a safe warm and inviting experience for EVERYONE who enters its doors and to have such a good time, they will want to come back. Not everyone is comfortable with rigid gender-roles and the expectations that go with that. And I know many who are not comfortable or on board with dancing with someone of a perceived same gender, or are using what they are perceiving as

someone's gender to help them identify where they need to be at any one time in the dance. Culture changes with each generation. Our dancing will need to do that as well, or risk becoming less relevant and dying off. For the most part, I feel very comfortable dancing in gender-free communities, and I also feel very comfortable dancing in very traditional communities. What I am not comfortable with is people who have a rigid or disrespectful attitude about how we treat others on the dance floor or have expectations that are purely their own. I would like to see people meeting in the middle on this, and finding ways to bridge and understand differences, so that we can all find ways to have a good time together, and help keep these wonderful dancing traditions alive and flourishing. Each of us has an important role in its future.

How can people contact you if they want to learn more about LCFD or gender-free dance?

By mail at:

Christopher Ricciotti
MayApple Farm
144 West Street
Stoughton, MA 02072-2265

By email at: Ricciotti@aol.com

By phone or text at: (339) 204-7644

Anything else you would like to add?

Yes! If there are any communities out there who would like a workshop on this, and like to try out this new tradition in their own community, in a safe, inclusive and nonjudgmental environment, I would be happy to lead this in their community, and to have discussions afterwards about what they liked about it, what they

found challenging, and what the take-a-ways would be for their community after trying this out for themselves.

I'm also very happy to share and pull together the history of our community and how it evolved over time and how that impacted and changed our calling terminology and how that impacted not only our community but our neighboring communities as well.

DANCE CENTER CALENDAR

By Donna Bauer

With the dance center being closed I thought I would send you some interesting stories of happenings that tend to occur. I will try to come up with different ones each quarter.

A few months ago, we began to experience some slippery floors in the large studio. The source was unknown, but it needed to be addressed to prevent dancers from falling. We thought we had pinpointed the problem, but it was incorrect.

After some meetings with the leaders of each group we came to the conclusion that we really needed to sweep the floor after each use. It had been recommended to do so but probably not happening each time. We decided on a couple of changes to solve the problem. I purchased large bath towels at the Thrift Store to place under the large cloth mop. When we finished the sweeping the clean towel picked up a lot of fine dirt from the floor. We also implemented another plan and folks needed to bring in another pair of shoes to change into either in the lobby or kitchen area and not the dance hall. We included a chart for folks to fill out to track which groups had swept the floor. Also, we have

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Terpsichore Update

Terpsichore will sadly not be an actual in person camp at the beautiful Claggett Center this year due to ongoing Covid-19 restrictions.

As of the printing of the December issue of this publication, Terpsichore will be online with a gathering on December 27 and 29th from 7-8 pm. On New Year's Eve, December 31, there will be a gathering at 7:30 - 8:30 pm and a special program that will run from 10:30 to midnight.

Please check our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/TerpsichoresHoliday/>

and our website: www.danceholiday.net for more info!

The team is Bob Mathis, Jonathan Whitall, Kappy Laning, Meg Dedolph, Sonya Kaufman and zoom support by Joel Bluestein and Steven Bluestein.

**Sadly, this year's event has
been canceled due to the
Covid-19 virus – Plan to join
us in person in 2021**

Continued from page 14

lots of towels and each leader takes the towel home to clean. It was extremely important to make these changes to prevent serious injuries to any dancer. We have all ages coming to dance starting at age four to older adults and any injury could be serious. I was very pleased to see that all folks that come to the center were on board with the new procedure!

Donna

CONTRA CORNER

Have you called, danced, choreographed a dance, or written a piece of dance music? Send us the cue and/or lead sheet so we can share with the membership. Not just contras either – send us squares, quadrilles, patter sequences, round dances, mixers, etc.

In this time of Covid-19, many dance leaders are getting creative and experimenting with choreography that enables smaller numbers of people to dance together. Here is one from Wendy Graham:

A note from Wendy: "I'm writing LOTS of new dances for singles and couples. Here's one that uses square dance moves. There is a listserv that anyone is welcome to join: AltChoreo mailing list:

<https://www.sharedweight.net/lists/altchoreo>,

Toronto Two-fer

Author: Wendy Graham

Formation: Doublet (For a group of 4 dancers- and up to 3 may be ghosts)

Orientation: Top couple crossed over, facing down the hall

Progression: No progression

- A1. (8) Walk forward to partner, push off right hands, loop R back to place
(8) Partner right-hand turn once around to a short wave across A2.
(4) Balance the wave right and left (4), slide or spin right (as in Rory O'Mohr)
(8) Left-hand turn once to face partner across, keeping left hands connected
- B1. (8) Partner left-hand balance, square thru two (Partner Left, Neighbor Right)
(8) Partner See Saw
- B2: (4) Balance the ring
(4) California twirl* across the set
(8) Partner swing back to home starting positions

*As you arch to swap spots and turn a 1/4, turn a quarter more to face partner, bring free hands to partner's back to swing partner in closed ballroom position.



The Dance Is Not The Tune!

By John Sweeney

Many dance books provide a tune to go with each dance. BUT ... in many (most?) cases the tunes are only provided as examples, guiding the reader towards the style of tune that the choreographer envisioned when they created the dance.

In reality:

- You can do the same dance to multiple tunes.
- You can use the same tune for multiple dances.
- You can change the tune halfway through a dance.
- Actually, you can change the dance halfway through the tune as well! I have heard callers start with an original version of a dance, then part way through switch to calling a newer version, changing seamlessly from one to another (and of course dance medleys are very common in contra dancing).

Tune medleys are very common in country dancing in England. If there is a tune closely associated with a dance then the band will often start and finish with that, but play different tunes in between. Sometimes hearing the original tune coming round again lets you know that this is the last time through.

A nice, recent example is Albireo's recording of "Hole in the Wall". Steve Hodgskiss wrote a new tune called "Hole in the Roof" which they switch to part way through, then back to Purcell's tune at the end.

Country dancing encompasses all the traditional/folk/country dances from England and the (former) colonies for the last 500 years, including all the specialized variations such as Contra Dance, ECD, eCeilidh (that is English Ceilidh), Modern Western Square Dance, lots of other Squares, and all the other wonderful genres. It is difficult to generalize about this wide spectrum of dances and tunes, but, in general, I believe that most dancers are, and always have been, happy to dance whatever dance the MC announces or calls, to whatever music the band plays.

I sometimes call the same dance twice in a row. But I do it to two completely different tunes: different speeds, different styles, different feel. The dancers love seeing how the choice of music can make it feel like a completely different dance.

Did every musician, from the 17th century on have every tune book? Could every musician read music fluently? (I wish I

could!) Or did they just play a suitable tune so that people were able to dance?

Did they even always have music? Cecil Sharp, in "The Country Dance Book Part 5", describing Kentucky Running Set (Appalachian Big Set) said:

"At Pine Mountain there was no music at all."

- "Throughout the dance the onlookers and the performers also, when not actually dancing, should enforce the rhythm of the music by "patting", i.e. alternately stamping and clapping."
- As an accompaniment to the dance, the "patting" is almost as effective as the music; so effective, indeed, that at Pine Mountain, where the dancers were wholly dependent on it, the absence of instrumental music was scarcely felt."

17th and 18th Century

On his [Web site](#), Colin Hume says, "I know of four dances with exactly the same figures – this happened quite a lot in the eighteenth century."

One example of four identical dances with four different tunes is:

- The Sailor's Delight (Dancing Master 1696)
- Katherine Street (Dancing Master 1710)
- Sadler's Well (Dancing Master 1728)
- Easter Thursday (Caledonian Country Dances c. 1733: John Johnson)

The last one is even in 3/2, a completely different musical signature from the other three.

Cecil Sharp, when interpreting the Playford dances, started out trying to keep the tunes and dances together as they were published. In "The Country Dance Book Part 2" he says, "It has already been pointed out (see Part 1) that the Country Dance ordinarily consisted of a series of figures arbitrarily chosen to fit a given tune, and that it was only rarely that any of these became stereotyped by usage and achieved universal acceptance.

"Naturally I found that many of the best tunes were attached to dances which for one or other of these reasons had to be excluded; while, per contra, dances otherwise free from objection were often allied to poor tunes. My selection had, therefore, to be a compromise. I might, of course, have transferred the good tunes mated to indifferent dances, to the good dances set to bad tunes. And remembering the arbitrary way in which Country Dances were often compounded, I should have had ample justification for

adopting such a course. On reflection, however, I decided, so far as this book was concerned, to print for each dance the tune with which it is associated in "The Dancing Master". In future I may, perhaps, act differently."

And indeed, he did act differently! In his later volumes many of the dances were matched to tunes that he selected for their quality, rather than for just being published with the dance originally. For example, he published "The Geud Man of Ballangigh" to the tune of "Hunt the Squirrel".

19th Century

A typical early 19th century example is the [College Hornpipe](#). In the preface to one of his books Thomas Wilson states, "it contains all the good old Dances that have stood the test of time, such as "The College Hornpipe" and "Haste to the Wedding"". He then proceeds, in this and later volumes, to give at least five different versions of the dance. One can only assume that he meant that the tune was popular, not a particular set of figures; his books teach you how to create dances to fit any tune.

In Wilson's 1820 "Companion to the Ballroom" he gives multiple versions of dances for most tunes, often as many as five different versions, some 16-bar examples, and some 32-bar examples. I assume this is because, rather than recording existing dances, he was actually providing samples for the ladies to use when they called or lead a dance at their next assembly.

The leading couple would devise a set of figures that fitted a certain length of music; this would be known as the "Figure". Then, "The couple about to call the Dance, should inform the Master of the Ceremonies of the Tune and Figure, that he may give directions to the different Sets, (if more than one) and direct the band accordingly".

This is one of the reasons that Jane Austen doesn't give the names of the dances in her books; they didn't have names - they were just sequences of figures that a couple chose to lead when it was their turn: "On entering the Ball Room, each Lady intending to dance, must be presented by the Master of the Ceremonies with a ticket, on which is inscribed the number of her call."

Likewise GMS Chivers in "The Modern Dancing Master" (1822) says, "The Figures are so arranged, that any New Tune, or one particularly wished to be danced that is not in the collection, can be easily selected, observing that the tune contains the same number of bars as the Figure requires."

Quadrille were extremely popular in the 19th century. Paul Cooper says, [here](#): "Hundreds of Quadrille Sets were published in England in the 1820s (though often as music without dance figures)." and [here](#): "It's important to understand that the choreographies of the First Set were danced to many different tunes."

It is my distinct impression that, historically, there was much less emphasis placed on making one figure flow into the next, especially at the point where the end of the sequence transitions into the next time through. There is much more focus on this in 20th century choreography. Also, because, in many cases, any set of figures went to any tune, there are far fewer examples of the movements matching some special characteristic of the music. I am not convinced about the concept that "the music will tell me what to do". At Morris dancing, one Foreman would often say, "Play the music so that it reminds me how the stick-clashing goes". Unfortunately, the music told him something different every week!

20th Century

Check out the dances from [English Dance & Song](#) - quite often there is no tune, and if there is a tune it is usually just a suggestion.

Community Dances Manual 1 (1949): "Some of these melodies are attached to particular dance figures but most of them can be used at will for a whole heap of dances." The examples give in the original publications are often different from the ones provided in the modern reprint compilations.

For most modern genres, such as Contra Dance, eCeilidh, Barn Dance and MWSO, the caller suggests the feel that they want for the dance, and the band selects the tunes and medleys that they wish to use. This freedom has allowed the bands to experiment with different styles and genres of music and bring innovative music to the dances.

Yes, there is a modern American genre, known by Americans as ECD, for which the majority of new choreographies are designed to go with specific tunes. But that is only a small part of the totality of English country dancing. And, sorry guys, not all of those new tunes are wonderful!

One dance I remember was falling apart completely until the band asked the caller if they could play a different tune. They did, and the dance went perfectly. The original tune is not necessarily the best tune!

I quite often find a new choreography that I want to call, but can't find a good recording of the music. I hope the composer of the dance doesn't mind that I call it to a different tune. Surely it is better to be able to enjoy the dance to any tune, rather than not dance it?

I was challenged by some dancers when I called the late Wendy Crouch's wonderful "Winter Solstice" to a tune of my choosing. They had somehow got it into their heads that the dance has to be danced to a specific tune. No. I have been told emphatically by Wendy's husband that she wrote it without a tune in mind, and despite it often being danced to certain tunes, she was always happy for anyone to dance it to any tune. I currently call it to "On the Danforth" by Wild Asparagus. It feels great and builds to a wonderful climax.

When I am calling I would much rather that the band play a tune that they know and love and have practiced, rather than trying to make them learn some obscure tune. The end result is usually much more enjoyable for the dancers and the band.

Yes, some dances require other than 32 bars, so it may be easiest to stick to the specified tune. Yes, some tunes have some characteristic that makes certain moves feel better. Yes, some tunes are so closely associated with a dance that it is great to start and finish with that tune. But, over the last 500 years, I would suggest that these are the exception rather than the rule.

Experiment and have fun! :-)

Editors Note: The above article was printed with permission from the author, John Sweeney. If you'd like to contact John directly or visit his website: His e-mail address is john@modernjive.com and his web site is www.contrafusion.co.uk

STIR THE BUCKET

news from around the membership

**Do you have news you'd like to share with
our members?**

Send to Allynn.riggs@gmail.com

Events of Note

If you are interested in attending any dance or music events in the coming months please be sure to check the individual website information or contacts for updates on whether or not the event is still being held in light of the Covid-19 virus. The LSF is not responsible for any misinformation due to the timing of publication.

December 27, 2020-January 1, 2021 Terpsichore Dance Holiday, Frederick, MD. **CANCELED** see website for more information: www.danceholiday.net

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