

# THE MILFORD CONTRA DANCE

*Physically Distanced Yet Socially Connected!*



NEWSLETTER #10

MAY 2021

## MESSAGE FROM SANDY, PETER, RICH, KATE, AND BILL

This month we have another delightful article from fiddle player, Paul Lizotte, and it's about one of my favorite tune forms - the hornpipe. Several years ago, on a lark, I started the "NH Hornpipe Preservation Society", to call attention to the plight of hornpipes which often get played too fast and at that speed have a tendency to lose their dotted rhythm. In other words, they get "reelized" - turned into reels. After explaining this from the stage at a New York festival I taught at, I was approached by musicians wanting to join the "NHHPS" except that they lived in NY and VT and weren't keen on joining a NH organization. At that point the "NHPS" - "National Hornpipe Preservation Society" was born!



All this talk about the timing of tunes and the speed with which they are played is bouncing around in my head with the concept of timing and the speed with which we are emerging from this pandemic. The tunes played by musicians (playing together and staying together), the prompts made by the caller, and the steps of the dancers are all about timing. When you stop and think about it, it is a pretty amazing and complex thing that is happening - minute adjustments are being made on the fly! When it comes to dancing, and returning to dancing, we want to get this right; and we will. Everyone, please do what you can so that we can gather safely again to dance. Please get vaccinated. ~ Sandy



## VISUALIZE THIS DANCE

Submitted by Luke Danforth

Tell Me More - Written by Luke Danforth in March 2013

First called May 2013 at Catapult in Atlanta, GA

In 2013, I'd been accepted as a caller at Catapult. At the time, it was a relatively new festival that sought to bring together callers and bands that were ready to tour nationally with organizers looking to book new acts. It was a labor of love by Rob Harper, and I was absolutely jazzed to be going.



One of the bands that I was going to be working with was the Free Raisins – Audrey Knuth, Amy Englesberg, and Jeff Kaufman. I got together with them ahead of time to work out specific dances and tunes. They had a set that quoted the music from Grease, specifically “Summer Nights”. After listening to them play through it and discussing the music and the movie with them, we wanted a reunion dance, where you left your partner only to be reunited later.

Starting at the top of the hall, take hands in groups of four. Introduce yourself to your partner if you haven't done so already, and then introduce yourself to your neighbors. In those little groups of four, circle to the left one place so you're on the side of the set with your partner. Swing that partner! And negotiate who is dancing which role (for now), and end facing across the

set at your neighbors. Larks are on the left, robins are on the right, as after every swing.

Here's the start of the dance, it's tricky because you're in Becket but it's NOT a circle left. The larks allemande left once and a half over to your neighbor. Swing your neighbor in a way comfortable to all.

End that swing staying cozy with your neighbor, because as a couple you're going to promenade across the set. Turn as a couple, and turn a little past facing back in so that you're looking on the left diagonal. The robins are going to chain on that left diagonal to their shadow. Everyone introduce yourself to your shadow. (Note, if there wasn't anyone there on that left diagonal, your shadow is your current neighbor; reacquaint yourself to them in this duplicate job.)



Take hands in long lines, with your shadow on one side of you and a trail buddy on the other side. Your partner is far away, but don't worry. Long lines go forward and back. Then, with your shadow and the dancers across, take hands in a ring of four. Circle to the left all the way; low elbows and firm arms make that enjoyable for everyone, and you don't want to be late. When you get back where you started, pass your shadow by the right shoulder and surprise! There's your partner.



You and your partner make eye contact and walk around by the right shoulder, then turn that gyre into a swing.

You've progressed counterclockwise around the Becket oval; and have new neighbors across from you to start over with the larks allemande left. If you've popped out at the top or bottom, you'll want to stay lively for that chain to shadow.

You can see the world premier of the dance, with the music it was written for, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=94sU4x-Vdvs>



(Note, as part of the living tradition, the language I was using in 2013 does not reflect how I teach and call this dance now.)

## TELL ME MORE

by Luke Donforth

Contra/Becket-CCW

### A1 -----

- (8) Larks allemande left 1-1/2
- (8) neighbor swing

### A2 -----

- (8) promenade across the set
- (8) left diagonal Robins' chain (to shadow)

### B1 -----

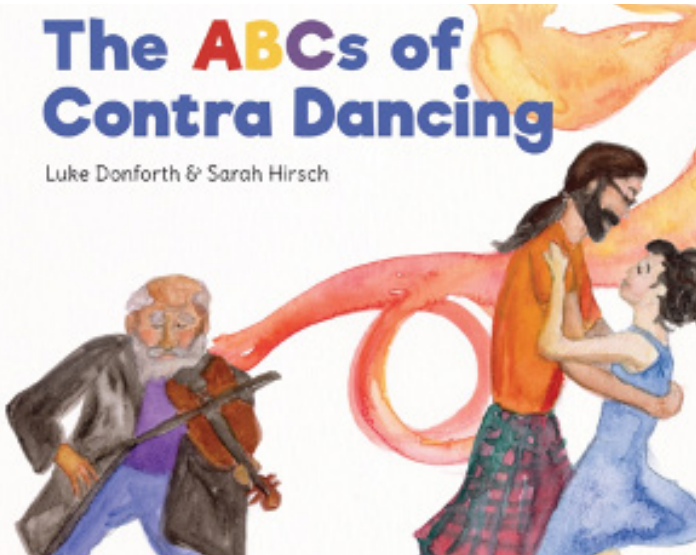
- (8) Long lines, forward and back
- (8) Circle Left 1X
- Pass through

### B2 -----

- (16) partner gyre and swing

## The ABCs of Contra Dancing

Luke Donforth & Sarah Hirsch



LUKE DONFORTH is a contra dance caller based in Burlington, Vermont. With illustrator Sarah Hirsch he created and published the book "The ABCs of Contra Dancing."



## “THE RIGHTS OF MAN” HORNPIPE

by Paul Lizotte

First of all, there is such a thing as a hornpipe—literally it’s a single-reed instrument with a cowherd bell that “is often converted into a bagpipe ” (Britannica).

The instrument itself gave its name to the dance and the tune. The hornpipe, as a tune, usually has a distinctive dotted rhythm, unlike the smooth, even rhythm of a reel. And it is usually played much more slowly than a reel (after all, the name—reel—suggests dancers “reeling” about).

According to papers delivered at the National Early Music Conference on the Hornpipe (there is such a thing!), the hornpipe originally did not have any connection with sailors. In fact, it’s doubtful that sailors danced it at all. However, through stage performances it soon became associated with sailors and some of the dance’s distinctive moves imitate typical actions by sailors: “Movements were those familiar to sailors of that time: ‘looking out to sea’ with the right hand to the forehead, then the left, lurching as in heavy weather, and giving the occasional rhythmic tug to their breeches both fore and aft” (Wikipedia).

As it evolved, the hornpipe often became a showpiece for musicians, demonstrating their command of ornamentation and bowing, sometimes without the dotted rhythm. “The Beeswing” hornpipe, for example, is often a competition piece. If you Google “The Beeswing Hornpipe” you’ll find both examples—played with and without the dotted rhythm.

The origin of THE RIGHTS OF MAN hornpipe is somewhat mysterious. The name, of course, is

that of an immensely popular book of that title written by Tom Paine in 1791. Paine had gained notoriety in America earlier in 1776 for his widely influential pamphlet *Common Sense*. The book had a tremendous impact on public opinion in the colonies and helped turned the tide towards independence. What Paine did for America in 1776, he subsequently did for France. The *Rights of Man* (1791), published two years after the French Revolution, defended the rights of the French people to overthrow the monarchy and affirmed the “radical” ideals of the French “Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen” in 1789. The book sold over 200,000 copies in England—a phenomenal number for that time—and in response Paine was often burned in effigy and a Royal Proclamation prohibited the sale of his work (Traditional Tune Archive).



The tune itself is usually attributed to James Hill (1811-1853), a Scottish fiddler and composer of many hornpipes (including *The Beeswing*). But that’s often disputed. Instead, the tune seems more connected to a later poem written by James Connolly, a hero of the Irish independence movement. In it he has a vision of a possible future: “They shook hands like brothers and kissed each other . . . / And as day was breaking poor Shiels awaking, / Cried still be true unto the Rights of Man.” Connolly, a leader of the Easter



Rebellion of 1916, was later arrested by the British and executed for his role.

But if the tune specifies the “Rights of MAN,” it’s important to note that the Irish Independence proclamation of 1916 included a guarantee of equal rights for both Irish women as well as men. According to Connolly, “Of what use to such sufferers can be the re-establishment of any form of Irish State if it does not embody the emancipation of womanhood. As we have shown, the whole spirit and practice of modern Ireland, as it expresses itself through its pastors and masters, bear socially and politically hardly upon women.” (<https://socialism.com/fs-article/james-connolly-irish-rebel-and-feminist-firebrand/>).

After the failure of the Easter Rebellion, the Irish Free State had to wait until 1937 to be declared free and independent.

Thus the Rights of Man hornpipe, with its hypnotic E-minor rising and falling, seems more in keeping as a lament for failed Irish hopes at the time than as a celebration of revolutionary ideals. When you play it, think not only of the dreams of 1916 but the continuing hopes and struggles of many today to attain those same rights.

## THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF RED WING

Submitted by Kate McClure

When we last saw our intrepid young lass in the February issue of the newsletter, she had grown from a happy farmer (Brahms), to a young woman of nature (Red Wing) to a cheery



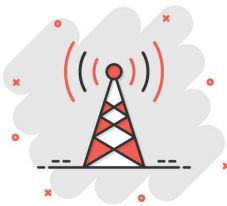
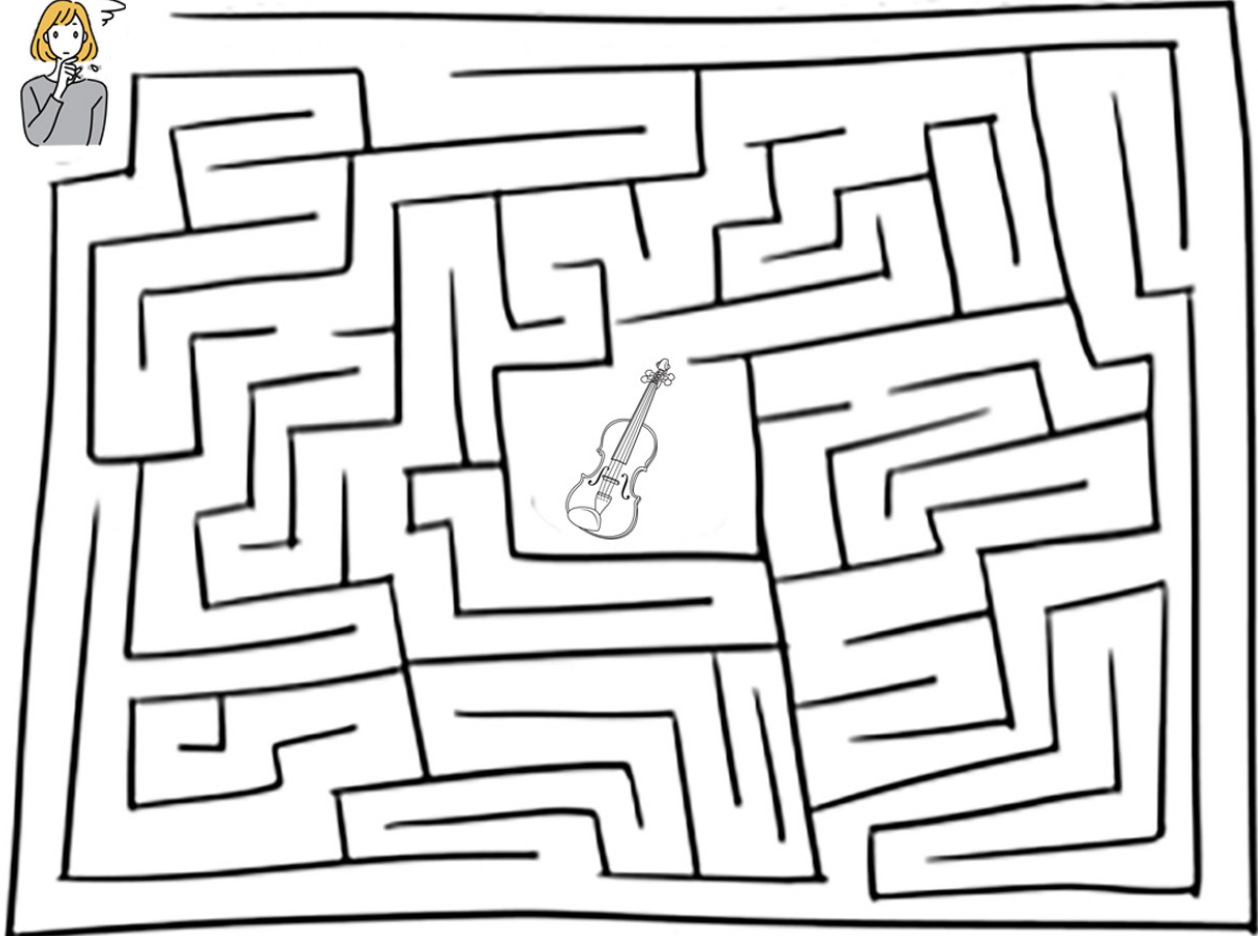
midwestern teen (Wizard of Oz). But she had one more incarnation to go: union maid.

In 1940, during his time with the Almanac Singers, Woody Guthrie was asked to write a union song from the woman’s point of view. At the time Guthrie, with Pete Seeger, was in Oklahoma to perform for striking oil workers. Seeger wrote “Woody got to the typewriter and hammered out the first two verses of “Union Maid” set to a European tune that Robert Schuman arranged for piano (“The Merry Farmer”) back in the early 1800s. Of course, it’s the chorus that really makes it – its tune ‘Red Wing’ was copyrighted early in the 1900s.” (The Incomplete Folksinger” by Pete Seeger, 1972). [Here](#) is Woody Guthrie performing the song.



# PUZZLE MAZE

Help Frankie find her Fiddle!



## SUGGESTION BOX

Forward your feedback, article ideas, and personal updates to Sandy Lafleur at [strumma@aol.com](mailto:strumma@aol.com). Prefer the phone? Call Kate at 654-9854

**The Milford Contra Dance is sponsored by the Milford New Hampshire Recreation Department**

