

THE MILFORD CONTRA DANCE

Physically Distanced Yet Socially Connected!



NEWSLETTER #4

OCTOBER 2020

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

We Can't See You But We Know You're There!!

Thank you to those who submitted "proof" of that; it is wonderful to see your smiling faces. Also shown are some photos from previous October Costume Ball Contra dances, reminders of the fun we have shared together, and will again once the pandemic is behind us. Until that time, please stay safe and do send us your comments and feedback on our newsletter. Got an idea for an article? A memory from one of our dances? A favorite dance? A favorite tune? We would love to hear about it!!



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

by Charlene Ledoux

The tune composed by Irish composer Turlough O'Carolan (1670-1738), Sheebeg Sheemore has many, many spellings....to say the least. This was the first composition out of 200 tunes written by the blind harpist. Si Bheag Sir Mor is an ancient pagan burial ground in South Country Leitrim, birthplace of O'Carolan. "Si" means fairy mound, "mor" means small and "bheag" means big in Irish Gaelic. (Aliisaacstoryteller.com)

(Continued on page 4)



CHECK OUT OUR AWESOME SLIDESHOW!



Here's the slide show with pictures from past Costume dances. Check it out at <https://www.milfordnhcontradance.org>



THE MOST CHALLENGING CONTRA I EVER DANCED, BY PETER KINGSLEY

Reflections

- A1. Balance and swing next neighbor
- A2. Gents allemande left 1.5x, swing partner
- B1. Half promenade across the set, ladies half chain
- B2. Pass through across the set, 1s face down and 2s face up, circle left once, pass through up/down to progress.

Cary Ravitz is known for creating some of the most unusual contra dances around. His Reflections is the most difficult contra dance that I have ever danced, at the Mind Bending session of the NOMAD festival in Connecticut in 2001. No individual figure is difficult – balance and swing, allemande, swing, half promenade, ladies half chain, pass through, circle, pass through – but the way they’re put together creates interesting results. ([Here is the Micro Robot Dance Version](#), [here is the real people version](#), and for pure speed – [a slight variation of the dance](#).)

The tricky thing is that the dance begins improper and ends reverse improper (“indecent”) with double progression and the next time it begins reverse improper (indecent) and ends improper with single progression. Thus, it can be considered two dances in one. Beginning improper, after B1 everyone has progressed and is on their home side of the set. After passing through, 1s face down to NEW neighbors and 2s face up to NEW neighbors, circle and pass through again for the second progression. The next time through, everyone begins on the opposite side compared to the first time (“reverse improper” or “indecent”). This time after B1 everyone is back on the side where they began this cycle, but not progressed. After passing through, 1s face down and 2s face up to the SAME neighbors, circle and pass through for a single progression. It gets tricky at the ends, because it may not be clear whether the couple waiting out joins improper or reverse improper (indecent), so they



Cary Ravitz (photo by Ted Crane)

need to be ready to switch sides (or dance roles) as the next couple approaches them. It has been suggested that when calling this dance, dancers may forget whether they are 1s or 2s, because they keep switching sides of the set each cycle of the dance, so it may help for the caller to say “Face NEW neighbors” or “Face the SAME neighbors” after passing through, rather than “1s face down and 2s face up”, but then the caller must keep track of the cycles.

On a kinder note, Cary offered a simpler variation:

B1. Long lines forward and back, ladies half chain
This way, beginning improper, after B1 everyone is on the opposite side of the set from where they began and not progressed. After passing through and facing up or down to the SAME neighbors, circling left once and passing through produces a single progression dance.

~Peter Kingsley, is a Milford Contra Dance Committee member, dance caller and much appreciated dance angel.



OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

PAUL CALZADA



Paul Calzada is a long time dancer and loves to contra dance throughout New England. Using his enthusiasm, skills and kindness, Paul is a dance angel at the Milford Dance helping new dancers navigate through the evenings. Something you might not know about Paul: He served in the Peace Corps and now works for the Conservation Law Foundation.

PAUL AND CYNTHIA LIZOTTE
AT THE RALPH PAGE DANCE
WEEKEND



Paul Lizotte is a cornerstone member of the Milford Contra Dance Band playing lead fiddle and literally calls the tunes for the dances. Paul is the lead fiddle player in the the group JumpStart and a force behind the Mill City (now Derry) Contra Dance. Paul loves to sail and is a retired English Professor.

JIMMY OTIS



An exceptional piano talent Jimmy Otis quickly learned to play "for dancers" and is a highly valued member of the Milford Contra Dance Band. Jimmy plays in a number of bands with the true love of playing ragtime music. A teacher and a keen photographer, Jimmy lives with his family in Lowell, MA.

*Count Your Age by Friends, Not Years, Count Your Life by
Smiles Not Tears ~ John Lennon*



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

(continued from page 1)

According to Andrew Kuntz from The Fiddlers Companion, we would use Shi Bheag, She Mhor. Maybe you prefer Dr. Andrew H. Dabczynski's version from Fiddlers Philharmonic: Si Bheag Si Mhor.

How about- Si Beag, Simor, from TheSession.org site. Or Sigh Beg Sigh Mor from the Irish site 45cat.com. This one is my favorite, Sidh Beag Agus Sidh Mor, from the [Ibiblio Fiddler's](http://IbiblioFiddler's) website.

Despite the various spellings of this Irish air, sometimes danced as a waltz, I think we would all agree that it is a beautiful tune. Here is the song as an [Air with harp](#), [a Waltz with accordion](#), and Sandy's Lafleur's [heavy metal dulcimer version](#).

If anyone is interested in pursuing more interesting information regarding this tune, you may want to consider some of the adaptations



that were mentioned by the many sites referenced above, those being: The Hills of Habersham, The Bonny Cuckoo, The Cuckoo and The Irish Cuckow.


Hold me,
I'm a fermata!



CHARLENE LEDOUX

The Inner Piece Cellist

Charlene is currently a member of the Renaissance group "Sir Robin's Minstrels", the Strathspey and Reel Society NH, the RAKES and performs in a recorder/cello ensemble at coffee house open mics. She provides cello music using her specialized training & experience as a CMP. The program provides memory care with music and conversation encouraging audience participation.



CONTRA DANCE CROSSWORD BY AMANDA RAFKIN

Amanda Rafkin is a concert pianist, turned therapist, turned musical theater pianist and crossword puzzle constructor. Her puzzles have been published by the NYT, WSJ, LAT, USA Today, Universal, AVCX, The Atlantic, and The Inkubator, as well as on her indie puzzle site Brain Candy (amandarafkin.blogspot.com). She can be found talking about puzzles on Twitter at [@amandarafkin](https://twitter.com/amandarafkin).

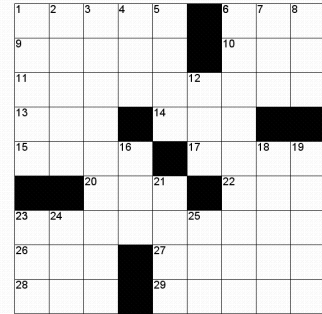


ACROSS

1. Broadway groups
6. "The L Word" ainer, for short
9. "Very sexy!"
10. Body part that becomes its function when a letter is added
11. Contradance move where dancers walk forward hand in hand as couples
13. Took a course?
14. Response from the unimpressed
15. Org. whose members often stare into space
17. Ripped, as wrapping paper
20. "You've got mail!" company
22. Best ___ Album (Grammy category most recently won by Tyler, the Creator)
23. Genre that is "by the people, for the people"
26. Baa-ed girl?
27. "Am not!" retort
28. Anderson who directed "The Royal Tenenbaums"
29. It's a start

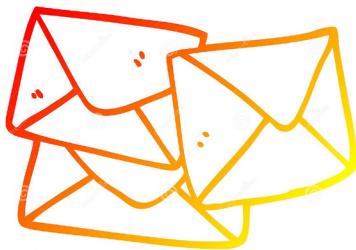
DOWN

1. Debate ainer
2. Blood line



3. Events where you may find affordable flats
4. Male cat
5. Flower holder
6. Small marine fish whose males bear the unborn young
7. Gave birth to
8. Unrefined find
12. Fisherman's need
16. Just peachy
18. Ideal result of an annual review
19. Theme park represented by Spaceship Earth
21. "That's hilarious!!," to a texter
23. Not many at all
24. Be in the red
25. Spot for your average joe?

VISIT AMANDA'S SITE
amandarafkin.blogspot.com



WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

William Faulkner summed it up: "Get it down. Take chances. It maybe bad but it's the only way you can do anything really good." Please send submissions to: strumma@aol.com

Milford Contra Dance is sponsored by the Milford New Hampshire Recreational Department

For contra dance crossword solution grid click [here](#)
"Courage doesn't always..." is from the poem by Mary Anne Radmacher

