

ContraDancing

Contra dancing is a form of social dancing that both easy to do and lots of fun. It began in New England, is fairly popular in the US and Canada, and has spread to New Zealand (and the rest of the world). Contra dancing is especially popular with computer nerds. Some people theorize that this is because a contra dance is like a computer algorithm, but the real reason is because a dance is a great place to meet women, and contra dancing doesn't require undue amounts of coordination or rhythm.

Contra dancing grew out of English Country Dancing. The main difference is that it is done to Irish music (lively jigs and reels). The movements are borrowed from many other dance forms: a few from English Country Dancing, more from square dancing, and still others made up just for contra dancing. It is called contra dancing because the dancers stand in two lines, facing (contra) each other. You dance with a partner, but the tradition is that you dance each dance with a different partner (although you don't have to). You also dance (to a slightly lesser extent) with the other dancers in line.

Even though contra dancing grew out of English country Dancing and square dancing, it is quite a bit different. I know many people who don't like English country dancing or square dancing at all, but love contra dancing.

Contra dancing is truly one of those dance forms where, if you can walk, you can dance. It is primarily a social dance (like waltzing). The primary goal is to have fun and meet people, so new people are welcome. People of all skill levels (from total beginner to people who have been contra dancing for decades) can comfortably dance together and have a good time. It is also a family event, since kids can dance with adults or each other and have fun.

All dances are taught. There is a caller (like in square dancing), who walks everyone through the dance a few times, and then calls the moves while the music plays. There are thousands of different contra dances.

I started contra dancing many years ago. Over the years, I've learned how to call contra dances, and have even written a few. We even did one contra dance at my wedding last summer.

There are contra dances in Wellington. The next one is March 19th at 7:30 at St. Michael's Church in Kelburn. If you haven't tried it before, show up at the beginning for the lesson. I will be calling dances during the evening (and I'll be dancing when I'm not calling!). I've heard a rumor that the band will also be playing some music I wrote (a waltz). Please come!

Here's a web page about contra dancing

Here's a web page about contra dancing and mathematics, and why so many computer people like contra dancing.

-WmLeler

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