

Associated Dance Forms

by Tim Marriner

Historically, after the caller finished the tip, the band would continue playing music. Any dances done during this time were usually regional favorites. Waltzes, Polkas, Mixers, Jigs, Clogging and Line Dancing were just a part of the program. This type of dancing resembles our program for Community Dancing of today. These dance forms are all branches on the family tree and are a part of our overall square dance activity.

Rounds

The steps used with Round Dancing are standardized ballroom type movements. The moves are arranged in a progressive sequence that fit a specific musical arrangement. Simple patterns could be memorized but as the complexity increased so did the dances, and a prompter, known as a cuer, was needed. Today there are six different levels of complexity known as Phases. ROUNDALAB helped standardize the steps that are used today. (The history sounds familiar!) Often a Round dancer having been taught to dance on the first step of the musical phrase is a smoother square dancer!

Contras

Usually the Virginia Reel comes to mind when discussing Contras to those that are not involved with this form of dance. This image is true only to an extent. Contra Dancing can be done from various lines and various circle arrangements as well. It was said the term Contra was a mispronunciation of the English ancestry dance form called Country Dance. Many Contra dance steps are related to Modern Western Square Dancing of today. The music is well phrased and the dancer gets the first beat of music to start if done properly. Several of our modern square dance hoedowns and singing calls can be utilized with contra dances. CONTRALAB is organized much like CALLERLAB and is a valuable resource of material on this subject. American Square Dance Magazine often has many easy dances written, as does the Community Dance Program newsletter from CALLERLAB. This dance form provides variety at a square dance and can be used as a great teaching aid for smooth dancing.

Mixers

No, there isn't MIXERLAB that I know of yet, but this simple round dance like routines can provide variety and bring enjoyment at a square dance. They all involve the changing of partners in some fashion. One of the early mixers of years gone by is called the John Paul Jones Mixer where all the ladies get into the center of the room in a circle looking out and the men outside in a circle looking in. They would all circle left to the music until the leader either blew a whistle or hollered for everybody to "Swing!" They continued until the leader blew a whistle again or hollered "Circle!" There are many unique mixer dances like this. These dances are a valuable tool for the one time Dance Party, and the program for Community Dancing.

Lines

LINERLAB? - Not quite. There are several international web sites, online magazines, and videos that feature new line dance routines that range from basic to advance. Usually no partner is needed. There are multiple steps involving footwork that can make you change many directions. These dances go way back from the old Alley Cat, to the Electric Slide. More current dances are evolving with new music. Again, these routines provide lots of fun and variety at any dance party.

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