

# SLOW JAM AT RINCON MARKET

by Jackie Newlove

vivian MacKinnon, a tin whistle player, was feeling frustrated. She'd been playing for several years, had worked up some proficiency on the instrument, but still couldn't

play fast enough to keep up with the Old-Timey and Celtic jams around town.

Vivian's motto has always been: If you can't find a place that's right for you, you'll have to create the place you need. She set about doing just that and the Tucson traditional music community has benefitted from her efforts.

First Vivian contacted TFTM members about her idea of starting a Slow Jam session specifically focused on giving novice performers experience in a group jam setting. Big

Dave Firestine, leader of the Old-Timey and Celtic Jam that meets at the Rincon Market, and Sharon Goldwasser, leader of the Sunday Celtic Jam at the Auld Dubliner applauded Vivian's idea.

Dave assured Vivian that her idea had real merit. Sharon offered to guest-host and she supplied a list of classic, Celtic tunes.

Omer Claibourne talked with the manager of Rincon Market who graciously agreed to

Photo: Vivian MacKinnon

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Continued from page 1- SLOW JAM provide time before the Old-Timey and Celtic Jam for the Slow Jam. Omer contributed a list of old time tunes, and they were off.

Vivian was ecstatic. She announced the session to other fledgling performers. In the meantime, Brenda Hendrickson and Paul Blumertrit at the Folk Shop and at the folks who run the Celtic Music Contest at the Celtic Festival applauded the concept..

The Slow Jam met for the first time on October 3, 2006. Now, after a half-dozen meetings, Vivian is pleased. "It's going great," she said. "More folks keep showing up and coming back."

Regular instruments at the Slow Jam include: bass viol, harp, guitar, flute,

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Tucson Friends of Traditional Music (TFTM) is dedicated to keeping the traditions of community music and dance slive and growing in Tucson. TFTM sponsors and promotes concerts, dances, workshops, and informal music sessions. Through these activities and a newsletter publication, TFTM builds awareness, educates, and fosters diversity in music and dance in the Tucson community.

Tucson Friends of Traditional Music is incorporated in the state of Arizona as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation.

For more info, visit www.tftm.org. or call us at 520-408-6181.

mandolin, recorders and of course, tin whistles.

The session is geared to folks who already know how to play an instrument but haven't had an opportunity to perform with a group of musicians and/or who have not developed the skill to play up to tempo yet.

Vivian describes the goals of the group as follows:

- 1. Learn to play popular, classic Old-Timey and Celtic tunes.
  - 2. Learn to play well with others.
- 3. Work toward the goal of playing with enough speed, confidence and skill to be able to play with the "big kids" at Tucson jam sessions.

So, if you're a seasoned professional, please come and share your skills. Just remember, the group will stick to a speed that's slow enough for all participants to join in.

If you're an aspiring performer, please join us and develop and hone your skills.

The group meets the first and third Tuesday of the month from 7:00-8:00 PM at the Rincon Market, 2513 East Sixth Street.

For more information, contact Vivian at v\_mackinnon@yahoo.com.

We'd love to see you, so please join

us.

### A CONTRA REVIEW

ith the help of Wikipedia, let's start the new year with a Contra review.

According to the online, user-created encyclopeda, at the end of the 17th century, English country dances were taken-up by French dancers using steps from French court dances. The French called these dances contra-dance or

contredanse. As time progressed. English country dances were spread and reinterpreted throughout the Western world. and eventually the French form of the name came to be associated with the American folk dances. especially in New England.

A typical evening of contra dance is 3 hours long, including an intermission. During a typical event, attendees

will dance a number of individual dances, called contra dances, divided by a scattering of partner dances, perhaps one or more waltzes, schottisches, polkas or Swedish hambos. In some places, square dances are thrown into the mix. Music for the evening is invariably provided by a live band playing jigs and reels, from the British Isles, Canada, or the USA;

often the tunes are traditional and more than a century old.

Most contra dance events are open to all comers, regardless of experience. Generally, a caller will teach each individual dance immediately before the music for that dance begins. During each dance's walk-through, the dancers learn the dance by walking through the moves that comprise an individual contra dance,

following the caller's instructions.

The contra dance tradition in North

America is to change partners for every dance. One who attends evening of contra dances does not need to bring his or her own partner. In the short break between individual dances, the dancers invite each other to dance. Traditionally, one

either dances with the first person who asks or else sits out the dance. The music begins and the

dancers repeat a sequence of moves a number of times before the dance ends. Then the dancers thank their partners and find new partners for the next dance.

At most dances no special outfits are worn, but full, light-weight skirts are popular, becausethey look lovely and are more comfortable to dance in than pants.

Men sometimes wear skirts as well:

## DANCE CAMP NEWS

by Marilyn Cleavinger

bout 140 folks gathered on the second weekend of November at the Triangle Y Ranch for a wonderful celebration of music and dance at Dance in the Desert 2006. We were delighted to have callers Nils Fredland (formerly of Phoenix) and Laura Brown and lots of music

from our guest band, Lift Ticket, and local favorites Round the House, The Privy Tippers and Hands Four.

It was a memorable experience, with great workshops by our guest talent. For many of the attendees, this is a "can't miss" event, and it's wonderful to see the familiar faces of so many friends at the camp.

We do have plans to have camp again in 2007, and many of the dancers interested in helping with that venture met at Claire and Steve's home last month to discuss the planning process. There has been a good response to Dale's article asking for more folks to get involved in making camp happen. It was encouraging to see new volunteers at the after-camp meeting.

This is a crucial time to get involved as a dance camp committee member if you wish to see camp continue past 2007. One of the common denominators in the lives of all the fun and interesting people who make up TFTM is that they are VERY busy. However, camp does

require a big commitment of resources on the part of TFTM members and unless we have enough folks to carry this project forward, next year's camp may very well be our last one.

A lot of information will be presented at our next meeting about the whatswhens-and-whys of things that need to be done to make camp happen. If you're not already on my camp e-mail list and want to keep up-to-date, send me

an email at clever3@mindspring.com.

Some of the jobs are as small as working for one day to load and unload the floor from the truck the weekend before camp.

So, please get involved and help this wonderful Tucson Dance Community tradition continue.

Our next dance camp meeting is Saturday, January 27, at 1:00 PM at Russ and Liz Healy's home, 4405 N. Newland Blvd. Their home is near the intersection of West El Camino Del Cerro and North Silverbell Rd. From this intersection, continue west on El Camino del Cerro from Silverbell and turn south (left) onto North Wildlife Dr (second street). Turn left at West Wildlife Dr. and follow the street as it turns south becoming North Sunset Drive and then North Newland Blvd. Healy's number is 520-743-3606 if you need more info.

We are counting on your enthusiastic response and we're looking forward to seeing you there.

contradancers can be quite liberal in the way they dress. Low, broken-in, softs.oled. non-marking shoes recommended and, in some places, required. Perfumes, colognes, or other secreted products are not commonly worn.

As in any social dance, cooperation is vital to contra dancing. Since, over the course of any single dance, individuals interact with not just their partners but everyone else in the set, contra dancing

might be considered a group

activity.

As will necessarily be the case when beginners are welcomed in by more practiced dancers, mistakes will be made and overlooked.

Contra dances are arranged in long paired lines of couples. A pair of lines is called a set. Sets are generally arranged so they run the length of the hall, with the top or head of the set being the end closest to the band and caller. Correspondingly, bottom or foot of the set is the end furthest from the caller.

Couples consist of one lead (called gentleman, or simply gent) and one follow (or lady). By custom, leads are male, and follows are female, though this need not be the case.

Couples interact primarily with an adjacent couple for each round of the dance. Each sub-group of two interacting couples is known to choreographers as a the set as) their partners and across

minor set and to dancers as a foursome. Not all dances are done in two-couple minor sets.

Couples in the same minor set are neighbors. The couple at the top of each minor set are ones (the active couple or actives); the other couple are twos (or inactives). Ones are said to be above their neighboring twos; twos are below. Minor sets originate at the head of the set, so that at the start of the dance the topmost dancers are ones-

if there is an uneven number of couples dancing, the bottom-most couple will wait out the first time through the dance.

> There are three common ways of arranging dancers in the minor proper sets:

> > formation, improper formation, and Becket formation.

In proper dances all the gents are in one line, and all the ladies are in the other: dancers are across (on opposite sides of) the set from their partners.

In improper

ones cross over, dances the switching places with their partners. The result is lady-gent-lady-gent lines.

Becket dances are essentially improper dances in which each minor set has been rotated clockwise - lines are lady-gent-lady-gent, with dancers standing next to (on the same side of



from their neighbors. (This formation is named after "Becket Reel" by Herbie Gaudreau, probably the first contra dance to use this formation. The dance itself is named after the town of Becket, Massachusetts.)

Traditional dance choreography left the actives doing much more than the inactives. Modern choreographers typically want everyone to be active, so the roles have been renamed "one" and "two." At the same time, improper and Becket dances have become more common than proper dances as choreographers and dancers have come to desire greater neighbor interaction.

#### LESS COMMON CONTRA DANCES

There are four additional forms a contra dance may take: triple minor, triplet, indecent, and whole-set.

In whole-set dances, such as the Virginia Reel, only the head couple is active. After once through the dance, this couple is left at the foot of the set. Whole-set dances are now almost only seen in dances for children.

Triple minor dances, or triples, are based on sixsomes or three-couple minor sets, as opposed to the duple minor dances based on foursomes. Triple minor contra dances, which also occur in English country dance, are rare.

Triplets, which are "triple major" dances - the entire (major) set is three couples - are also rare. The triplet form is an adaption by Ted Sannella of the traditional English country dance triplet, using modern contra dance tempo and

moves; he composed a first triplet in 1968 and more than 41 of his triplets have been published. In his lifetime they were more commonly seen.

Indecent dances are duple-minor contras in which the twos cross over, as opposed to the ones in an improper dance.

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# **TFTM ADVERTISEMENTS**

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known, award-winning band. www.roundthehouse.com. Call Claire, 520-882-3068 or Sharon, 520-298-3014.

Learn about Contra Dance and Tradtional Music by researching and writing articles for the TFTM Newsletter. Please contact Jorga at 520-250-8393 or email scribe@ultras.com for more info.



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8 a.m. - 8 p.m. Monday - Saturday 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Sunday

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In triple minors and triplets, *ones* are called *actives* and both *twos* and *threes* are inactives.

#### STANDARD FORMATIONS

A fundamental aspect of contra dancing is that the same dance, one time through which lasts roughly 30 seconds. is repeated over and over, but each time vou dance with new neighbors. This change is effected by progressing the ones down the hall/set and the progressing twos up the hall/set In non-Becket dances, this is done by moving the ones to the bottom of their minor set and moving the twos to the top of it: the ones now have a different pair of twos below them In Becket dances, ones progress by moving to the place formerly occupied by the ones below them: similarly, twos move to the place formerly occupied by the twos above.

A dance will typically run at least long enough for every couple to dance with every other couple both as a *one* and a *two*.

# SOME COMMON CONTRA TERMINOLOGY

WEIGHT: Weight is the force pulling connected dancers apart from each other that results from the centripetal acceleration of dancers as they revolve around one another in figures such as an allemande, rollaway or a swing. Such figures may be done faster and with extra flair if the dancers "give weight." Most experienced dancers feel that mastering the concept of giving weight adds an important dimension to the dance. It means dancing with the other person and not just dancing near the other person Weight is also known as spring or springiness and tension.

CHOREOGRAPHY: Most contra

dances consist of a sequence of about six to twelve individual figures, prompted by the caller in time to the music as the figures are danced. As the sequence repeats, the caller may cut down his or her prompting, and eventually drop out, leaving the dancers to each other and the music

F i g u r e s typically take eight counts, although figures with four or sixteen counts are also common. Each dance is a collection of figures assembled to allow the dancers to progress along the set.

Counts (as used above) refer to one half of a musical measure. Two quarter notes in 4/4 time or 3 eighth notes in 6/8 time. They may also be called steps, as contra dance is a walking form, and each count of a dance typically matches a single physical step in a figure.

Parts: Typical contra dance choreography comprises four parts, each 16 counts (8 measures) long. The parts are called A1, A2, B1 and B2. This



# THOMSON'S TUNE OF THE MONTH

LEARNING NEW TUNES
by Bruce Thomson, LibTNov1@aol.com

ne of the most satisfying aspects of playing old time music is learning new tunes. There are several methods of learning new tunes including: personal instruction from a tunemeister, sucking up new tunes at jam sessions, use of sheet music, or learning from recordings. Clearly personal

instruction is preferred because you can get special help with tricky parts. But it's often tough to find somebody who knows the tune and has the time to help you with it, so most of us have to use one or both of the other methods. Jamie Gans, a superb fiddler from Indiana, was visiting New Mexico with caller/dancer

Tamara Loewenthal (www.fiddlenfeet.com) and we talked about methods of how we learn new tunes

First, regardless of how you're learning, you have to "hear" the tune in your mind. This means listening to it over and over until you can whistle or hum it, including all of its nuances and complexities. In the old days, when dinosaurs roamed the earth, I used records and moved the needle back to the beginning of the track time and time again. Needless to say, I have some records with a lot of pops and scratches on them. Jamie used a variable speed tape

recorder. Learning from CDs is especially convenient because you can use the back arrows to instantly return to the beginning of the track or even to a certain passage in the tune. I am always a bit surprised when somebody at a jam session starts noodling along with a new tune at full volume the second time through; I've got to hear even the simplest tunes several times before it's incorporated in my feeble synapses.

Even if you have music and can read it, I think you must have the tune fixed

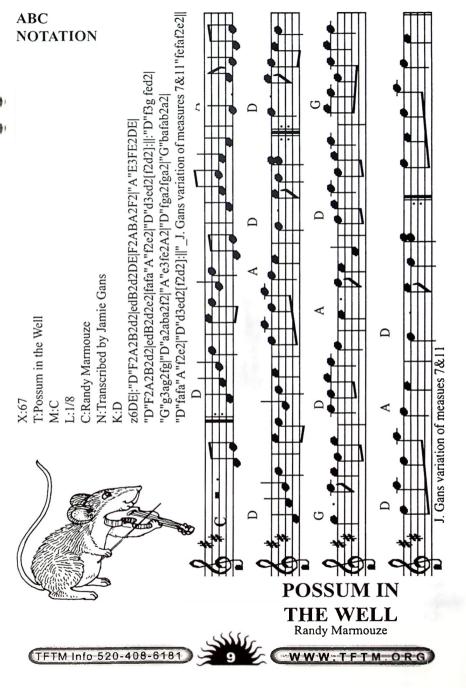
in your cerebral cortex before you have really learned it. I know several folks who will enter ABC files into their computers and learn the tune from the playback rather than the sheet music. In my experience there's a big difference in the playing of a tune that you've memorized from sheet music compared to one you've learned aurally.

Even if you do memorize the music, the tune will lack spontaneity and feeling until you've begun to hear it in your head.

Once you've got the tune in your head, figure out its basics without the complexities. I often start by learning the chord progression. Generally the notes in a phrase will be part of the scale associated with the chord for that phrase, so this knowledge eliminates a lot of possible wrong notes. And, of course, knowing the chord progression will make you much more popular with the backup musicians.

After you have the basic tune down,





you can start on the intricacies, variations and ornamentations. Here's where things get challenging. In the old days we would slow the turntable to 16 RPM to hear the hard parts, or play a reel-to-reel tape recorder at half speed. The problem with this method is that it lowers the notes by an octave so it's like learning to play fiddle tunes played by a cello; helpful but tough. Now there's software like Amazing Slow Downer (www.ronimusic.com) that will digitally slow music without affecting pitch. It's great, but if you have the tune properly fixed in you head, you'll find that you don't need it except for the fastest and most intricate passages.

Finally, there's the problem of remembering the darn things. I can't tell you how many tunes I've learned perfectly at a jam session, only to forget them completely by the time I get home. Usually, I can't even remember its name. key or who taught it. (Alcohol may be partly responsible!) If you own a tune sucker (i.e. a recording device), you're in luck, but I never have one when I need it. My solution is to copy the first three or four measures of each part of the tune into ABC notation. It takes just a moment and can be done on a scrap of paper. This is usually just enough information to align the neurons sufficiently that recovery of the rest of the tune from the darkest depths of my random access memory file can be achieved.

While he was in New Mexico, Jamie played *Possum in the Well* at a house concert. The tune was written by **Randy Marmouze**, a banjo player from Greene County, Indiana about 30-years-ago.

nomenclature stems from the music. Most contra dance tunes as written have two parts, A and B, each 8 measures long, and each fitting one part of the dance. The A and B parts are each played twice in a row. Hence, A1, A2, etc. While the music in A1 and A2 for example is generally the same, the A1 and A2 parts of the dance have distinct choreography. Thus a contra dance is typically 64 counts, and goes with a 32 measure tune.

Note: Tunes of this form are called "square." Tunes that deviate from this form are called "crooked" and are more commonly used in square dancing where the phrasing of the dance does not have



to align with the phrasing of the music as closely.

# BASIC FIGURES FOR SINGLES AND PAIRS

Allemande: Two dancers join either right or left hands in a thumb-up grip and walk around each other.

Balance: The couple faces each other with one or both hands joined and, in time to the music. take a step toward each other and close their feet, then a step apart and close their feet. It is typical in some areas to replace the closing of the feet with a stomp, kick, or jump, giving the figure a strong rhythmic feel. Often followed by a swing. Balances may also be done in lines or circles In lines. unless otherwise instructed. dancers balance right and then left.

Butterfly Whirl: The gentleman and lady turn around, while keeping hold of their partner's waist. Facing the same direction, with inside arms reaching across their partner's backs or, less commonly, the gentleman's arm behind lady's back and the lady's hand on gentleman's shoulder, the lady walks forward and the gent backs up in a circle.

This often leads into a figure with the ladies in the center.

Courtesy Turn: The gentlemen

takes the lady's left hand in his left hand, and puts his right hand behind her back to take her right hand. The dancers are side by side as they turn around to face back across the set, the gentleman walking backward as the lady continues to walk forward.

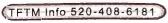
**Do-Si-Do:** Two dancers begin by facing each other, then move clockwise so as to first pass right shoulders ("pass

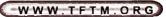
by the right"), then back-to-back, then left shoulders, ending where they began. As an embellishment, experienced dancers will often add a spin while performing this move. The spin should not interfere with the movement of the dance.

Gypsy: This relatively recent addition to the repertoire was adapted from English country dancing. A pair of dancers look each other in the eyes and walk around each other in the designated direction, without touching each other. (In this way the gypsy is some where edo-si-do and a swing.

between a do-si-do and a swing. The amount of eye contact depends on various factors including individual comfort and local tradition.

**Promenade:** Facing in the same direction, shoulder-to-shoulder with the lady on the right, a couple walks where the caller directs. There are several different handholds:





ONGOING ACTIVITIES of Traditional Music and Dance. These are not TFTM events.

☐ Irish Jam Session at The Auld Dubliner, 800 E University Blvd (Southeast corner of Euclid and University): Traditional Irish jam session every Sunday from 4-8 PM. Info: (520) 206-0323

**A** Scottish Country Dancing: Thursdays, 7:30 pm, First United Methodist Church, 915 E. 4th St.

Info: 520-299-5566.
UPCOMING ENGLISH

DANCES:

Thursday, February 15, 2007 Thursday, February 19, 2007 7-9:30 pm. \$5

Jam: Open Jam session on the first and third Tuesdays. Slow Jam from 7-8 pm. Fast Jam from 8-10 pm. Rincon Market, 6th St. at Tucson Blvd. Set up in the Deli area. Tunes from the TFTM Tune Book and some other sources.

Shape Note Singing: First and third Saturdays, 3-5 pm, Sonora Cohousing Common Room, 501 E. Roger Rd. Info: 682-6201.

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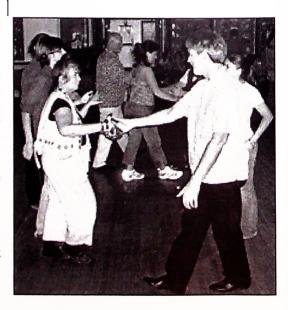
Courtesy turn position - See Courtesy Turn on page 11.

Skaters' promenade - As in the courtesy turn, the couple join left hands in front; rather than joining right hands behind the lady's back, right hands are joined in front above the left hands.

Inverted Skaters' (A term coined only for the purposes of this text) This uncommon form of the promenade position is the same as the skaters' promenade with one exception: the couple join right hands below their left hands.

The gent may choose to spin the lady under his arm at the end as a flourish; in some areas this spin is practically a rule, while in others it is unheard of.

Promenades are frequently used to move a couple to the opposite side of the set, or to bring dancers back to place (useful when dancers get lost mid-dance).



Roll Away with a Half Sashay:

Two dancers facing in the same direction, holding hands. One dancer spins (the roll away) with a full turn in front of the other dancer, who sidesteps (the half sashay) behind to exchange places. At the end of the figure, the dancers have changed places but are still facing in the same direction as initially. (Most commonly, this figure starts with the lady on the gent's left and the lady passes in front of the gent). Giving weight is of key importance in this figure.

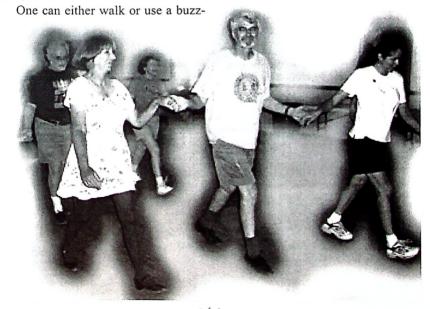
Swing: The couple takes a modified ballroom position, with the lady's left hand on the gent's shoulder, the gent's right hand on the lady's left shoulder blade, their free hands clasped together in the air (experienced dancers often experiment with other ways to place their hands.

step; one partner may walk while the other uses the buzz-step.

For the buzz-step, the right foot takes only small steps. The left foot pushes against the ground repeatedly, moving the dancer in a circle clockwise.

Weight is very important in this figure. A swing usually ends facing across the set, sometimes down the set, rarely up the set, but always with the lead on the left and the follow on the right. It is generally recommended that newcomers get an experienced dancer to teach them this figure before the dance begins.

Turn Alone: Each person turns around in place. It is polite for dancers to turn towards the person they are currently interacting with (this may not



be their partner: when in the center of a line of four it is polite to turn towards the person on the end). This often follows "Down the Hall Four In Line,"

Turn as a Couple: In this figure a couple with hands joined turns around in such a way that the ladies remain on the same side of their gent, normally the right-hand side. The California Twirl is commonly used to turn as a couple.

Twirl to Swap: This is a generic term for a number of dance moves which begin with a couple holding hands; they raise their joined hands, and the lady walks under them while the gent passes behind her, to trade places. There are a number of variants of this, depending on how partners are facing and on which hand is joined:

California Twirl: The lady begins on the gent's right facing in some particular direction; they have the "convenient" or inside hands joined. The figure ends with them both facing in the opposite direction from their original direction.

Star Through: The couple begins facing each other, with the gent's right hand and the lady's left hand joined. If the figure begins with the gent facing north and the lady south, then both will be facing east when the figure ends (with the lady on the gent's right).

**Box the Gnat:** The couple begins facing each other, with right hands joined. They end facing each other.

Swat the Flea: The couple begins facing each other, with left hands joined. They end facing each other.

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# BASIC FIGURES FOR FOUR OR MORE and ADVANCED AND RARE FIGURES.

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Page 15 - Jim McConnell

# UPCOMING DANCES

Information on bands and callers was not available for this issue. Please check the TFTM Web site for up-to-date information. Here are the dates for upcoming dances:

Saturday, January 6, 20 and 27 Saturday, February 3, 17, and 24 Saturday, March 3, 17, 24, and 31 Saturday, April 7, 21, and 28 Saturday, May 5, 19, and 26 Saturday, June 2, 16, 23, 30

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Newsletter Deadline: The deadline for articles, announcements, ads, upcoming dances, events and reviews is the 18th of each month. Please email your submission to scribe@ultrasw.com.