

CIRCLE DANCE TEACHERS' HANDBOOK

Marina and John Bear

*(a work in progress, as presented in Vancouver, August 2008
and revised and expanded in the summer of 2010
and again in early 2014)*



*The first circle dance teachers,
Bernard Wosien and Friedel Kloke-Eibl*

Topics

- 1 - Introduction
- 2 - To Begin
 - First Contacts
 - The Venue
 - Arrivals
- 3 - Planning a Session
 - First and Second dances
 - Things to consider in choosing dances
 - Dancing in two halves
 - Dancing to a Theme
 - Special Events for your circle
 - Personal considerations
 - Teacher's challenges
 - Problems with your venue or equipment
- 6 - Teaching the Dances
 - Dance Mantras
 - Circle Dance cards
 - Light-handed dance introductions
 - Further basic thoughts
 - Dealing with parts
 - What your circle needs from you
 - Demonstrating dances
 - Style
 - Common dance step patterns
 - Teaching more complex dances
 - Ending a dance
 - When it just doesn't work
 - Special needs
- 10 - Steps and Instructions
- 12 - Introductory sessions (see Addition 2)
- 12 - Emerging teachers
- 13 - Notation
- 14 - Technology
- 19 - Marketing

- 26 - Addition 1 - Learning Styles
- 28 - Addition 2 – Astrid's Dance Themes list
- 43 - Addition 3 – Introductory Sessions
- 45 - Addition 4 – Folk Dancing *vis à vis* Circle Dancing

Introduction

When you love something, there's great joy in sharing it. The delight that comes from moving to music is multiplied when you find yourself in a community of dancers, sharing your delight.

Unlike International Folk Dance, in which the dancers serve the dance by getting the steps right to carefully preserve the form, Circle Dance exists to serve the dancers—to provide a supportive, safe environment for physical, emotional, and spiritual experience.

Teaching Circle Dance is especially rewarding if you love to dance. To pass the dances along, you'll find yourself learning them at a deeper level than you did when you were simply a member of the circle. Thinking about how to explain a dance encourages your creative response. You'll find yourself making up dance mantras to remember them better—"side together-side-together-grapevine starting side-right, left cross front." And you'll probably find that as you imagine yourself introducing a dance to your circle, images will appear to help convey the feeling, the style of a dance—"We raise our arms in celebration as we go in here. . . ."

But the thing that sets Circle Dance (or Sacred Circle Dance) apart is the most important element a teacher needs to recognize and try to convey. It's the essence of the circle. Clearly, what we create together as we move through a dance is more than the steps. There's an energetic, cooperative effort we're all contributing, whether we're dancing effortlessly through a familiar dance or struggling to learn something complicated. The teacher's role is to make the dance accessible to people in that circle, to make it possible for all of them to contribute to the creation of a community of dancers in that moment.

At our summer dance camp, there's usually at least one person who was dragged along by an enthusiastic friend or who is taking a courageous leap towards some imagined goal. It's wonderful when, at the end of the camp, someone comes up to you and says, "I didn't think I could do it, but I did it! And I love it! Where can I do more?"

We hope that this weekend will encourage you to join the growing number of teachers spreading the pleasure of Circle Dance across the planet or, if you're already teaching, that we'll provide some structure to the way you think about what you already do and some hints for doing it more easily.

To Begin

First Contacts

The “teaching” starts before anybody ever gets to your dance space, so I think of it as sharing more than teaching. When somebody calls, in response to an ad or a poster or a recommendation from a friend, it’s our first chance to give them a taste of what we’re trying to do. They’ll have questions: is it okay to come without a partner? What do I wear? How much does it cost?

The way you answer them is their first taste of Circle Dance.

The Venue

Does it reflect those things you said you wanted to convey to that caller we just spoke to?

Is it clean? Is the lighting good enough to see steps but not harsh? Can you lower the lights if you want to? Did you bring/arrange for a center? Is it something that conveys your caring for the circle (not just the same bowl of water, three feathers, a rock and a well-used candle you’ve used the last few times)?

Is everybody who comes in greeted? You don’t have to do it. You may be arranging things for the evening. But the general idea is that whoever shows up is acknowledged. If they’re unfamiliar, they’re welcomed and a few moments of “How did you hear about us? Have you danced before?” sort of talk is encouraged. Most circles have a few outgoing types who don’t mind approaching folks. Encourage them to keep an eye out for new dancers.

Arrivals

Welcome everybody. Gather the circle.

Is there a theme for the evening? Mention it at the start. Is there anything special about the day, or the center? Either talk about it now or say when you will.

Teach the handhold.

No sense letting newbies flap around when we can shortcut that confusion. “For most dances, the standard handhold is right palm facing into the center, left palm facing out, or ‘thumbs to the right.’ It just makes it easier if you let go of hands to turn around, you’ll find hand in the right position to join up again.”

Planning a Session

Do you know who's coming?

Do you have a back-up plan in case there are number of completely-new-to-dancing folks who turn up?

First and Second Dances

Generally we do something simple and grounding for the first dance. If you have the kind of group that tends to drift in around your starting time, it's good to do something that can begin in a line, so people who arrive as you're dancing can just join on. A simple *pravo oro* or *lesnoto* works well.

Many groups use *Enos Mythos* as a starting dance, but that presents a pretty solid wall of dancers' backs to late arrivals, so you might want to choose something else.

Second dances can be a little livelier. People may still be arriving, so keeping it simple is a kindness.

Things to consider when choosing dances

From there on, you have many choices:

Things to balance: traditional & modern; fast & slow; easy & challenging

New dances vs. repeats is an important consideration

Random Selection—instead of having a list, just put the music on. Nobody knows until the music starts what they'll be dancing. Obviously this only works with a somewhat-experienced group. In the days of cassette tapes with one dance on each, we used to have everyone pick a tape at the start of the evening. We'd then put them in a basket and just pull one out without looking at it and put it on. Sometimes even the person who'd chosen it didn't recognize it at first!

Dancing in two halves

Sometimes a circle has people who are total beginners, struggling to keep up with a waltz, and dancers who've been coming for years and really enjoy a bit of a challenge. One approach is to divide the session into an easier first half and a more challenging second. People often enjoy testing themselves by staying for a dance or two in the second half and then either watching or (especially if they've ever folk danced) dancing "behind the circle" to learn things on their own.

Dancing to a Theme

After many months of just accumulating a list of dances you feel like doing, or ones people have asked to do, for a session you might decide to do an evening with a theme. Maybe it's full moon on your dance night, or a holiday, or it's been raining all week and you hope if you honor the water, it'll let up for a while. John sometimes enjoys what he calls "letting the outside world in." We've done an evening of "Dances George Bush Wouldn't Like." On Friday the 13th, we're in the habit of doing *Vari Hassapiko* and possibly other pirate dances. And we acknowledge our own political holidays and even difficult events in the world by dedicating the energy of a dance to the people in difficult situations.

In 2014, we took quite a few lists of themes and categories that dozens of different people had created, and either posted on the internet, or otherwise shared with us. The Master List of themes and categories now includes more than 2,000 dance titles in more than 50 categories. You will find it, in its entirety, on our website, at www.circledancing.com.

Another place to look for themes for dance evenings or for centers, if you're expanding beyond the four-directions centers, is on Internet sites for holidays. Here are a few to try:

<http://www.holidays.net/dailys.htm>

<http://www.web-holidays.com/calendar/index.htm>

<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0001832.html>

http://www.pch.gc.ca/PROGS/CPSC-CCSP/JFA-HA/index_e.cfm

Special Events for your circle

When a circle's been going for a while, it's fun to get together for a few hours on a different day and reward yourselves with a Just Dance Day. The leader(s) will of course come with a few dances prepared to keep things going, but generally it's a grab bag. People name their favorite dances and those are the ones you do. If you can afford it, it's nice not to charge for that day. It's a gift to the circle.

Every Circle Dance teacher has a few dances that take a little more time to teach or require a little more effort from the circle. A Three Difficult Dances Day is a way to enjoy those dances. Again, it's an extra event which you might even allow to be by invitation (should you have dancers who are eager but not quite up to the dances you want to do). We include a few dances everybody knows and end the session with pizza.

Music Sharing Day happens when you've got a number of dancers who really want to make some of the dances their own. Often it's a first step towards becoming a teacher. You gather at somebody's house, preferably one that allows room for a little dancing. You have whatever technology you're using for making copies of music and you share whatever people want.

Personal considerations:

If you're aware of someone's particular issue, that's fortunate. Perhaps someone in your circle has a reason to celebrate, or a challenge they're facing, or a recent loss. If you've helped create a safe, sacred space just by being open and caring, your dancers may share whatever is on their minds and hearts and the circle can support their process. But sometimes we find out about things after a dance has deeply affected someone. Many of us have been holding the circle at the end of a dance only to discover that someone is in tears. It's just one of the reasons to respect the power of this way of coming together.

But there are also times when somebody just leaves the circle, often without explanation. Because some of the dances do have deeper meanings, or because a dance comes from a group that person disapproves of, or any number of reasons particular to that person, leaving the circle seemed necessary. Take it as a good sign. The person recognized that whatever reaction was felt, it was personal and the rest of the circle is entitled to its own experience. Some people find certain dances too particularly religious, or militaristic, or they commemorate something historical that person can't celebrate. Of

course you'll check in with that person afterwards and ask what caused the upset so you can avoid causing it in the future, but that's probably the best you can do.

Accounting for physical limitations is certainly individual. If a member of your circle has difficulty with fast dances, or dances that involve quick turns because of knee problems, or can't do a shoulder hold, the first thing to do is let them know if your next dance is likely to cause difficulty. Sometimes the circle just has to allow a member to learn that he can't keep up. Rarely will a dancer notice that she's the one causing a clog in the works. But usually it's sooner rather than later that the person doing the disruption leaves the circle, hopefully for just those dances that are a problem. Being tolerant and kind is a gift we give the whole world of circles.

Sometimes a simple change in the dance will make it accessible. Don't hesitate to make the change if it feels right. Handholds can vary. If someone gets too dizzy on turns, stepping in place or moving along with a moving turn works well. But you set the tone for the circle, and if you're accommodating and gentle with your dancers they'll respond to the good of the circle.

Teacher challenges that go beyond the problems just discussed may include disruptive dancers, hygiene issues, problems with the venue and equipment.

Because in Circle Dance we try to be open and accessible to anyone who wants to join the circle, sometimes people are attracted to the group who have serious emotional or social problems. An established circle can usually accommodate one or perhaps two people who need extra attention. Often it's as simple as setting boundaries. "Sue worked on making the center for us this week. Rather than re-arranging it, would you like to bring the center next week?"

One circle had a very shy, reticent, homeless man who clearly loved the circle, but who also clearly never bathed and was really difficult to dance alongside. In his case, the circle decided just to put up with it for a few months until their summer break. He hugged the teacher at the end (something he'd never done before) but he never reappeared.

When you have a persistent and difficult person to deal with, there's nothing like group process. Meet with as many of your core group of dancers as you can get together. With any luck, at least one of you will be experienced in dealing with difficult people. Take the problem to the circle, in effect. Explore ways to be kind and helpful to the person you're concerned about while keeping the circle going. Only once in over 25 years of dancing have we had someone so impossible that when we changed venues we just didn't tell her. She never found us again.

When dance teachers gather and swap stories, there are always some related to the venues and the equipment. The doors were locked. Couldn't turn the heat on (or off). Bathrooms challenging. Bulbs burned out. Sound system didn't work. Electricity failed. Some problems are solvable, some simply are not.

When possible, we try to check out a venue in advance. One hall looked terrific, and was very affordable—but the manager was fanatical about his new wooden floor, and said we'd have to wear surgeon's shoe or foot covers. Another seemed perfect . . . until we came back in the evening, and the sound from an adjoining hall, which had regular rock and heavy metal dances, was deafening.

One must (try to) be of good will, and roll with the punches. We showed up at one venue at the appointed time and found a Bar Mitzvah rehearsal in full swing. We offered to do some Israeli dances for them, but were turned down.

When equipment fails, and you don't have a back-up in your emergency box, giving up is always an option, but so is singing, humming, or drumming (after you've asked if maybe someone has a CD player in their car).

Teaching the Dances

Really get to know them. Dancing them lots is the best. But also, let the music run through your head when you're standing in line at the bank or the market. There's lots of good evidence that visualizing yourself doing something really does contribute to your ability to do it well. (See the section on learning styles if you have trouble learning dances).

There's always the option of playing a few phrases of the music before you start teaching a dance. That not only gets it into your mind and body, but gives your circle a sense of the timing and a hint of the general feel of the dance.

Dance Mantras

While you're practicing a dance, imagine how you'll teach it. Talk through the steps as you do them. In the best cases, your words can fit the rhythm of the dance. The steps become like a mantra that captures the dance: "Side-behind-side, lift-down, side-behind-side, bounce-bounce, side-behind-side, bounce-bounce."

In general, it's not a bad idea to call out the steps as you do them when you're actually teaching, especially announcing which foot you're stepping onto "Side Right, Left crosses in front, side Right Left points to the side, side Left, Right points to the side." You've probably already got those words in your head from your practice session, right? Then when you start the dance, you can use the same words for the first couple of times through and everybody is reassured.

Ideally, the teacher has the dance inside and can just offer it. But we're human and fallible. So it's better to have a card with the steps on it, to which you can refer rather than teaching the dance wrong and having to go back and do it all over again to a hopelessly confused circle.

Circle Dance cards

The card should include the country of origin of the music and of the dance, if it's traditional, and who made up the steps (again, unless they're traditional, too), the handhold and when the dance starts (i.e., "begins with the singing" or "start after 4 drum beats).

Light-handed Dance Introductions

You may want to suggest a general idea of the dance to begin. What's it about? Why did you choose it? Is it joyful, sad, energetic, etc. And here we get personal: some people love to tell stories and spend as much time talking about a dance as doing it. This delights some members of the circle and annoys the daylights out of others. This is your

call. People will tell you if they enjoy your presentations or they wish there were more dancing and less talk. In any case, trust the dances. Resist telling people what they should experience. “This is a dance for the heart” is more open than “in this dance your heart opens to the circle.” Well, maybe.

It would be great if someone assembled a collection of the stories of the dances, and then we could pick and choose what (if anything) to say. John really thinks it is a good thing to explain at least a little before, and possibly after a dance, but you don’t want a five minute story before a 3 minute dance.

Example: When we do *Enas Mythos*, especially if there are new people, or if we haven’t done it for a while, at the very least we’ll say that it is an old Greek dance that arose on the island of Kos. We might mention that Kos was the home of Hippocrates, who may have done the dance. We occasionally mention that (we were told) when the crusaders came through in the 12th century, they saw the cross-arms handhold as making the sign of the cross, and adopted the dance. Sometimes we explain that at Findhorn, the in-out-right steps were interpreted as, “I greet you, I give you space, I move on.” Rarely we mention that once, when we did the dance for a group of doctors, one looked at the spiraling arms around the circle and said, “Hey, we’ve made a DNA model.” And sometimes we just shut up and dance.

Further Basic Thoughts

Dealing with Parts

In any event, be clear about how many parts there are to the dance and teach them separately.

You can decide whether you want to tell the circle how many parts there are. Some people will assume any dance with more than three parts is too complicated and they just give up before they even try. It might be a good idea just to teach a longer dance one part at a time, building up from the first one. “Now that you’ve got the second part, let’s do the first part and then the second.” Then you add the third and do it from the beginning, and so on.

Especially with simple dances where’s only one part to learn, it’s a kindness to tell folks when they’ve just learned the whole thing. “And that’s the whole dance” usually provokes smiles of confidence that are good for all of us.

What your circle needs from you

They need to hear you. Speak loudly enough so they can. If you have any doubt, ask, from time to time, “Can you hear me?”

They need to see your feet. So simple. If you’re wearing a skirt, it needs to be a relatively short one—or pants will do just fine.

Where you stand makes a difference. In a small circle, it’s fine to stay in the circle and pass the learning around through the hands of the dancers. When the circle gets a bit larger, you might want to step into the circle to teach the dance, and maybe even remain in there for the dancing if it’s complicated and that would help. Having one or more experienced dancers in the center is also a good option, so that people on all sides of the circle have someone to watch. That helps counteract the Dreaded Mirror Effect—some

folks just naturally follow with the opposite foot, as if they were watching themselves in a mirror.

Demonstrating dances

Some teachers feel that learning “across the circle” is enough of a problem that they tend to teach most dances with everybody more or less in a line behind the teacher who’s facing the same way as the group and demonstrating the steps. People may learn the steps more quickly that way, but that’s not what we’re about. Instead, you might move to stand next to a person having trouble in a circle, or ask one of your stronger dancers to slip into that place. Suggest that people look at somebody you know is comfortable with the dance who’s standing on the right, if the dance goes to the right (for example).

For most dances, you can begin by teaching it just as it’s danced. But *how* you teach it depends on you and the capacities of your dancers. (Do look at the “Teaching Styles” essay at the end of this handbook.)

And face it—no matter how carefully you say “Just watch while I show the steps”, there will be half the circle trying to move along with you. That’s why demonstrating a dance needs to be saved for those dances where it’s really the best approach. If you’re demonstrating something challenging, like a part of the dance that’s done facing out from the center, they’ll just have to realize that they can’t both follow you and watch at the same time and the second time you do it, they’ll probably listen to your advice about just watching.

Style

For some dances, the style really is part of the dance. There’s a tremendous difference in walking with a Russian Glide or an Israeli step-knee bend, step-knee bend. In doing a Macedonian dance, describing the lift as if there were a string attached to the knee, pulling it up, helps convey the feel of the dance. Sometimes it’s just nice to remind the circle that Greek dances are done very upright, with a real sense of pride, but you wouldn’t stop a dance to admonish the dancers that they’re losing their pride. Just mention the style and demonstrate it when you show the dance and hope for the best.

Common dance step patterns

There are a few patterns of steps that turn up in a number of our dances. They’ve got names, and sometimes you’ll even find the dances notated with those. Here are the most common ones:

Cherkassia (cherk-ka-see-a, or sometimes cherk-**kas**-see-a). It’s also spelled tcherkassia.

It’s a series of three steps: Step to the side, cross behind and rock forward—sometimes described as side-behind-replace. Or, cross, replace, and step to the side. You can do it by crossing in front, or by crossing behind. Confusion can result because you have to say “side right, left crosses in front, replace right” and that’s a lot of words for a brief movement. Also saying “right cherkassia” might mean “step right first and then cross with the left” or “cross the right over to the left.”

It's usually done to one side and then to the other, but you can just do half of it to one side (as in the cross-over after turning in Winds on the Tor).

Grapevine The basic pattern is four steps: a side step, a cross, a side step and a cross. It can be side-cross in front, side-cross behind, or it can begin with any of the those four steps and just continue, winding along like a grapevine.

Pas-de-bas Sometimes you'll hear a teacher call this "pony step" or usually "pony-step" because it's a one-two-three step, done to the right or left. Step right-bring left together-and shift your weight back to the right foot.

Slip-Step a right slip-step is step right-feet together-step right; a left slip-step starts on the left foot.

Waltz More a rhythm than a step, it's nonetheless always three steps with the first one slightly emphasized (**one** two three, **one** two three). In teaching, you might say "Waltz Right-two-three, Left-two-three," so people know which foot they should be on.

Yemenite Step back, bring your feet together, then step forward on the same foot on which you stepped back. There are "side Yemenites" where you step to the side, bring your feet together, and then cross in front with the foot you started on.

Teaching more complex dances

Dances that have unusual steps might benefit from teaching those steps first. "Unusual" might even be a step like a Yemenite, for a group that just doesn't do many of them. Doing the unfamiliar step a few times, or until people seem comfortable with it, before you start teaching the dance is helpful.

Dances with unusual rhythms, or ones where the rhythm is the heart of the dance are learned more easily if you clap or step the rhythm first. If you have a handheld drum, you might consider using that.

Ending a dance

Finally, mention how the dance ends if it's at all unusual. Often either the music just stops (obvious, eh?) or it fades away, but sometimes there's something special, like a repeat of the last phrase, or you start up again but it'll end after the first couple of phrases. We've all had that "Oops, I forgot to tell you to stamp four times at the end" experience where you try to convey the message just before it happens. Sometimes it works; sometimes it doesn't. Planning ahead is better.

Ending a dance is important. In folk dance circles, I've noticed, when a dance ends people just drop it. Sometimes they applaud, but the end of the music is the end of the dance. When new people come to circle dance, it's kind to let them know that we generally hold the circle for a few moments after a dance. It's often explained by saying that it's a moment to notice where we are. A dance may create a feeling that we honor by recognizing it. If it was energetic, there's an afterglow to enjoy.

When it just doesn't work

For more details on teaching, do read through the Learning Styles section. It will give you some options when a dance just doesn't seem to be "going through" (counting, "singing" the instructions, etc.).

On the other hand, if a dance really seems to be falling apart—people are totally confused and the circle is getting wobbly—there’s nothing to do but stop. You can re-group and try to get the main obstacles cleared up, or you can always say “Let’s do something else. How about something we all know” to restore the balance in the circle.,

Special needs

In addition to the occasional dancer with a sore shoulder, you may find your circle including a dancer who presents greater challenges. People who are blind can be brilliant dancers, and Circle Dance is the perfect environment for them to blossom. It’s not even too much of an imposition to expect that sighted dancers on either side will catch hands after a turn or just say what a gesture is (We’re reaching out to clap hands with each other on either side, here.). Deaf dancers often are responding to subtle rhythmic clues from the rest of the circle and can keep up with most dances if they’re next to a dancer who’s confident and clear.

Substituting for a fellow teacher once, we were caught off guard by a busload of Downs syndrome folks who appeared at the session. By jettisoning our plans for the evening and doing Walenki Funk, Sailor’s Hornpipe, and a few other simple dances with lots of repeats, we gave them an evening everyone agreed was an unexpected joy.

When there are people in the circle who, because of age or disability, will clearly have trouble keeping up with a dance, it’s just kind to say “This is a fast, or complicated, dance. If you find you’re not enjoying it, just step back, bringing the hands of the people on either side of you together and feel free to watch the rest of us wear ourselves out!”

Finally, there are language issues. You may someday find yourself with anywhere from one to a whole circle of dancers with whom you have no common spoken language. Doesn’t matter. You have the same number of feet and hands, and through gestures and demonstration you can teach almost any dance in the Circle Dance repertoire.

Steps and Instructions

Elsewhere we discuss the matter of notation (how you make notes on dance steps), and the philosophical issues related to changing a dance.

This section deals with the matter of how you find the steps to a dance, when you have lost them, forgotten them, can’t remember them, or hear a wonderful piece of music and wonder if there is a dance (or two) to it.

There is no one all-encompassing answer to this. People have talked for years about the idea of a single easily-accessible location where all the steps are stored. But with thousands of dances, not to mention the many variations of some dances, it would be quite a job. Still, there are some pretty good answers.

The problems with other people’s steps—any ones that you did not write down yourself—is that there is often great variation in notation (sometimes clear, sometimes not), and indeed variation in the way the dances are done. This can be frustrating, but it is what we’ve got.

The best one-word answer to finding or interpreting steps is: **Ask!**

Whatever your question about doing a dance—the steps, clarifying a point (are the arms up or down when you turn?), history, pictures, etc.—there are almost certainly

people out there who have the answers, and are willing to help. The forums mentioned elsewhere often get those kinds of questions, and there is also a lot of direct person-to-person email and mail and even phone. (In our early years, we once telephoned Colin in England, desperate to learn where the ‘pause’ happened in Sadi Moma...and he told us.)

Getting the steps to a given dance can be a bit challenging. By and large, they are out there, but it’s not always easy to find them. Various dancers, especially in Canada it seems, have accumulated files with the visuals for a great many steps: more than 4,000 on some lists we have seen. But they are not ‘there for the asking’ in any simple way. We’d love to see a readily-available website where they can all be found, and we’re thinking about how to do that . . . but as of early 2014, there is only a bit of progress.

Bear in mind that there are often several, even many versions of a given dance, and the source of the instructions often are not given.

So you can always ask a teacher if she or he has and can provide steps, within reason of course. A bunch of possible things to try follows.

For now, you might want to do internet searches, and go to the various sites we’re about to mention, for steps and videos . . . and if there is something you really want or need, as a last resort, don’t hesitate to ask us (john.bear@mac.com) and if we have the thing(s) you want, we can email or mail you a PDF file.

Sources of steps and videos

Here are some good places to start looking:

Swedish circle dancer Esbjorn Aneer has steps to about 100 dances on his site at <http://www.lysator.liu.se/~esa/danser/danssite.htm> (only ones that start with letters A-H).

Touchstone Farm has steps to roughly 500 dances on their site at www.sacredcircles.com

Andy Bettis has steps to about 100 dances on his site: <http://www.andybettis.com/dance/steps/index.html>

Bob Shapiro has the steps to about 200 dances, and links to the videos of some of them, at <http://www.recfd.com/folknote.htm>

The folk dance group in Evansville, Indiana offers a free site, with the steps to more than 300 dances. <http://www.evansvillefolkdancers.com/id103.html>

Dick Oakes offers the steps to nearly 300 dances at <http://www.phantomranch.net/folkdanc/folknote.htm>

Andrew Carnie no longer maintains his massive list, steps to more than 1,000 dances, but it is still accessible and helpful: <http://dingo.sbs.arizona.edu/~carnie/folkdance/OldFolkdancepages/FDIFDnotes.html>

Greek-Balkan-Turkish: This big site not only has steps to a great many dances, but free downloadable music to 130 of them.
<http://www.geocities.com/balkanfolkdances/>

Videos of dances

A huge number of videos of people doing dances can be found on the Internet. Many of them are quite amateurish—a small group of people having fun in a high school gymnasium, for instance—but even those show you how the dance is done (by those people at that time, anyway). And there are more professional ones, as well.

As an example, if you do a search for “Laura Shannon” at www.youtube.com, you’ll find short videos of her dancing in Bulgaria and elsewhere. Type the words “circle dancing” into the search box, and you’ll get hundreds of videos of people doing circle dance, some from ‘our’ network (there are ones from Neskaya in New Hampshire, Kevin in Tennessee, and our group in Berkeley; the short video of Stefan and Marina doing his Estonian Frog Rite might be worth the price of admission).

One of the biggest and most helpful sites is a German one, Dancilla (www.dancilla.com) that has more than 1,000 videos of groups dancing, as well as 1,000+ instructions, and other information on the dance.

Another large and helpful site, just for Israeli dances, is Les Posen’s Israeli Videos, http://homepage.mac.com/israeli_folk_dances/Personal148.html, with many hundreds of videos, easily searchable.

There are lots and lots more out there. We’ve put a few dozen links on our website at www.circledancing.com . . . and most of those links lead, in turn, to other links.

Introductory Sessions

Every year at our dance camp, the first night is planned to introduce, or re-introduce, people to the basic steps of Circle Dance, and to a few of our very basic dances which we do to a variety of pieces of music. The session is described at the end of the handbook in Addition 3. You might find it useful if you’re beginning a group sometime, or if you’re asked to lead dances for folks who’ve never danced with you before.

Emerging Teachers

We always hope to find a few eager souls to begin training as teachers of Circle Dance. Many people come to Circle Dance evenings as a welcome relief from the demands of job, family, etc. and are quite content to do whatever is being taught and then go home. But in order to keep circles alive and functioning, we all know new teachers are needed to serve as replacements when the main leaders are unavailable, to provide welcome variety from those of us with too many “old favorites”, and to enable them to spread Circle Dance when they find themselves in another place with no currently-functioning circle.

Having a way to encourage “emerging teachers” is a good idea. One way to begin, is to ask dancers to take on a favorite dance. For Adopt-A-Dance, you give each dancer a tape or CD of the music and a copy of the steps. Then you just have to remember to let

the emerging teacher know when you'll be scheduling the dance at one of your gatherings.

When a member of your circle asks you to offer Circle Dance at an event—a wedding, graduation, birthday, etc.—try to get that person to take on a dance to lead. Point out that it'll mean more to the people at the event if someone they know offers a dance. Offer to help with the learning and teaching. Then you have another person to call on for a dance in your regular circle.

Notation

Reading it: There are any number of ways to notate dances. Most dance teachers who provide booklets with dance steps to go with their workshops include a key, or index, to their notation. You can usually figure out the general footwork (“f” or “fwd” means step forward; R & L are obvious; a little u-shaped bump is your nose and indicates whether you're facing along the line of dance, in or out of the center) but the timing can be a real challenge. If the dancer is also a musician, the notation may include a count accompanying the steps, so you know where in a 4/4 count each steps falls. There are any number of stories about circles deciding that a particular dance is too slow or too fast only to discover that they've been trying to do it half- or double-speed. When in doubt, check with the person who wrote the notes. Some teachers try to discourage people from attempting to learn dances from notation and say the notes are just reminders for you if you've learned the dance “live.” Some dancers like the challenge of trying to figure it out.

Doing it: Into every teacher's life there comes a time when you need to notate a dance on your own. You've probably got a system already, but if you haven't, Brigitte Evering from Ontario has put a great deal of time and love into developing a system of notation on computer that enables you to cut-and-paste patterns of steps and then print them out or email them to a frantic dancer who wants to do something tonight but has lost the steps.

Ask John Bear about it. He'll help you get a copy.

Archiving your dances: Meanwhile, we keep amassing more and more steps to dances and how do we keep track of them all? Annotating dances in a book works for a relatively short period of time. You have to leaf through too many pages to find what you want. A loose-leaf notebook with one dance on a page lets you alphabetize your entries and extract one to copy if needed. Of course, you'll find that you need more than one notebook before too long, and carrying several binders every time you dance gets to be a nuisance.

If you want hard copy of your notes, using 3x5 or 4x6 cards may be the answer. You can take out the ones you plan to use for an evening and just re-file them afterwards. If you want to have instant choices, there are plastic boxes designed to hold cards and you can just take the boxes along. You can copy the cards in a copier to share notes for dances. It's also an easy system to start: just begin by notating your circle's current favorites. As you add dances to your sessions, you add cards.

Of course, many teachers nowadays use their laptops as a primary resource. Storing all the music in easily-searchable form (again, we think iTunes makes the most sense) means you just have to carry some kind of external speaker system and you've got your entire repertoire with you. If you've entered the steps to all the dances for which you have music, you're a portable Circle Dance event wherever you go. (Some people store their step diagrams on the computer as PDF files, or scan the step diagram and paste it into Microsoft Word or some graphic program such as PageMaker, InDesign, or Quark.

Technology

Short of using an Edison wax cylinder Dictaphone (that's what folk dance historian Robert Thornton took to Albania in the 1930s, with great results), we have seen dance teachers using every sound-producing device imaginable, from vinyl records to tape cassettes to CDs to MP3 players of all kinds. (The iPod is by far the most popular—in large part, we think, because of the wonderful free iTunes software that it works with), but there are a dozen other devices out there, and many people have their strong preferences.

So this will *not* be a “Consumer Reports” or “Dummies” sort of section, on how to choose and use your device. There is ample information out there, on the internet and articles and books. If someone asks us, we say, “iPod, iTunes, end of story.” But we (also) get annoyed at people who think that what *they* do is what *everyone* should do, so we'll back off, and discuss other issues. (But wait: one thing. We're surprised how many people think that iTunes and the iPod are solely Macintosh things. Not so. They work just as wonderfully on Windows computers.)

Sound-making devices

Whether you travel with cassettes, CDs, or an MP3 player, you need something to play the music. We've learned the hard way, on more than one occasion, that you can't really depend on the venue to provide sound, even if they say they will, even if they have in the past. We had enough disasters that we actually started storing a small ‘boom box’ at the venue where we dance the most, along with a few CDs of popular dances, so that if all else fails, we can still put on a session. (We were tempted to make an “In case of emergency, break glass” box to store these things.)

We are strongly in favor of devices that can also run on batteries—not just for power failures, but to increase the options for spontaneously going outside to dance, or to plan events in parks, on the beach, and so on.

For years, we happily used one of the two portable systems available from Cambridge Soundworks (www.cambridgesoundworks.com). Their System 12 “Mick Fleetwood” model has consistently gotten superb reviews in audio magazines. It packs into a rather heavy (30-pound) suitcase. Two west coast teachers happily use it. It ain't cheap (around US\$500 new), but it is excellent. One local teacher happily uses the more modest Cambridge system, the SoundWorks Amplified Speaker System with Porta-Pack, which all fits in its own backpack, and costs around \$160.



We sold our System 12 to another dance teacher a couple of years ago, because we fell in love with Apple “Hi-Fi” device: a simple white box with minimal bells and whistles, but it can work on batteries, and we can just stick our iPod in its slot, and off it goes. (It also has a jack for input from other MP3 players or CD players). It has a wireless remote control device, which we find very helpful in raising or lowering volume during a dance, or just starting a dance from some distance away. Around US\$300.



There are a great many other sound devices available now, including quite decent ones under \$100. A visit to your local Target, Best Buy, Circuit City, Frys, Radio Shack, etc., or to the Internet, will reveal all.

Update: in 2009, the Bose people came out with a battery-powered version of their superb little SoundDock device. The sound is terrific, and the battery lasts about 6 or 7 hours on medium volume. (Plugs in as well, and charges the iPod as it charges itself.) On $\frac{3}{4}$ volume, it fills the very large hall where we dance each week. Not cheap—about \$400. Bose never discounts but they do have specials: when we bought ours, at no added cost we got a spare battery and a carrying case.



Getting, and editing music

Copying Music: the ethics and legalities

The copying of music, whether circle dance, Mozart, or the Sex Pistols, is one of the most discussed and debated topics in the worlds of technology and ethics.

The circle dance world runs the gamut from people who simply will not make a copy of a piece of music for someone else as long as it is possible to buy that music from a commercial source . . . to those who freely copy and hand out other people's music, sometimes with a caveat that it is only for teachers, or only for workshop participants, not to be given to others.

Each person needs to make up his or her own mind on how to deal with this. We are very pleased that it is now possible to buy individual pieces of music, over the internet, for as little as fifty cents each, rarely more than a dollar. So when someone absolutely must have the music to *Dreams of Harmony* (or whatever), we can suggest that they purchase it online, or sometimes we will do it for them and give it as a little gift.

When the music isn't available, either as individual tracks or on an album, we generally will make copies for people.

Sometimes (perhaps often) it isn't easy to behave well. When Marina choreographed the dance *Nightwalking* to music on an album by Navajo flutist Carlos Nakai, she wrote to Nakai, and to the album company, asking for permission to put the music on her own CD and make it available to others. No one ever answered. When she called the company, she reached a helpful man who asked how many copies of that track she was talking about. "A few dozen, maybe fifty," she replied. The man explained that typical royalties were a few pennies per track per CD, so that she was talking about royalties, over years, of a couple of dollars. "Not worth the paperwork," he said. So he didn't say "Yes" or "No." He didn't say anything. Act accordingly!

Copying Music: four of the main sources

Well we really don't need to explain about retail music outlets, or the notion of buying CDs and cassettes online. But we have a few things to say about the notion of buying individual songs.

The concept was pioneered in 2003 by Apple, through their iTunes Store. They are now the biggest music seller on the planet, and billions of songs have been downloaded, typically for 99 cents each. And, as mentioned elsewhere, this is usable by all computer users, not just Macintosh.

When you go to <http://www.apple.com/itunes/store/>, you can search quickly through their millions of songs, by title, artist, album, or genre. You can listen to a 30-second excerpt from each song, and if it is one you want, you click on "Buy Song" and it is yours for 99 cents, charged to your credit card. Roughly half their music is copy protected, which means you can use it for yourself, make CDs from it, but those copies can't be copied. The other (roughly) half are yours free and clear.

iTunes Store has a great deal of circle dance and folk dance music, often in a mind-boggling number of versions. There are, for example, more than fifty versions of *Misirlou* (from Greek to tango to surfer to Pete Seeger to Harry James), and a few dozen *Nigun Atiks*. And entire albums can be downloaded, typically for \$10.

A second major source of individual songs is Amazon.com. Go to their site (www.amazon.com) and click on Digital Downloads. Everything is just the same as

iTunes, with the important difference that *nothing* is copy protected. They, too, have a great deal of circle and folk dance music. We found 93 *Misirlous* and a dozen *Nigun Atiks*.

A third major source is www.emusic.com, which has a completely different marketing and pricing strategy. You pay a monthly fee (either \$12, \$15, or \$20) and that entitles you to download 30, 50, or 70 songs during that month. That works out to 30 to 40 cents per song, and they are not copy protected.

A fourth major source, probably the largest and surely the least expensive, is YouTube. Among the many millions—by now, perhaps billions—of videos on YouTube are a huge number of music ones. Everyone from the national chorus of Slovenia to Miss Rigrutsky’s third grade class singing and playing music. There is readily available software that allows you to “strip” the music from a YouTube and save it as a regular music file (MP3, WAV, etc.) which you can play through your sound system, and store in iTunes. A Google search will find quite a few softwares that do this, some free, some of modest cost. The one we use successfully is the free Media Human YouTube to MP3 converter, available for Windows, Mac, and Linux:
<http://www.mediahuman.com/youtube-to-mp3-converter/>

Copying music: recording and adjusting the songs

How do you get the music onto your computer? Well, again iTunes is the best and simplest way. When you click on “Buy now” the music will flow onto your computer and end up automatically in your iTunes (or other sound program you may have).

We find times when we wish to manipulate the music in one way or another. Sometimes we wish to speed it up or slow it down, without changing the pitch. Sometimes we wish to make it longer, or shorter, or remove that drum solo in the middle.

Here’s a short article that John wrote for the *Grapevine* magazine.

Audacity

(Grapevine article by John Bear)

Because I’ve been using technology since Hector’s computer was a pup, people seem to think I must know things, and so they ask me questions. Sometimes I do. From people in the world of circle dance, the two most common questions are

1. How do I get sound into my computer from tapes, CDs, vinyl, live audio, the radio, etc.?
2. Once music is on my computer, how can I edit it, to make the songs longer, shorter, faster or slower (without changing the pitch), clean up bad sound, remove or add bits, and so on?

Until yesterday afternoon, I had an answer, but it wasn’t a great answer. I would explain that I had used a variety of sound editing softwares over the years: SoundEdit 16, Sparkle, Sound Studio, and so on, but it was always a challenge to learn how to use it, to get it to work on a specific computer, and to try to understand the manual, presumably translated into English by Croatian-speaking Mongolians.

Yesterday I was ranting about this to my visiting 13-year-old grandson, and Max

looked at me as if I had said I was still watching a black-and-white television.

“Audacity,” he said. “It’s cool and it’s free.”

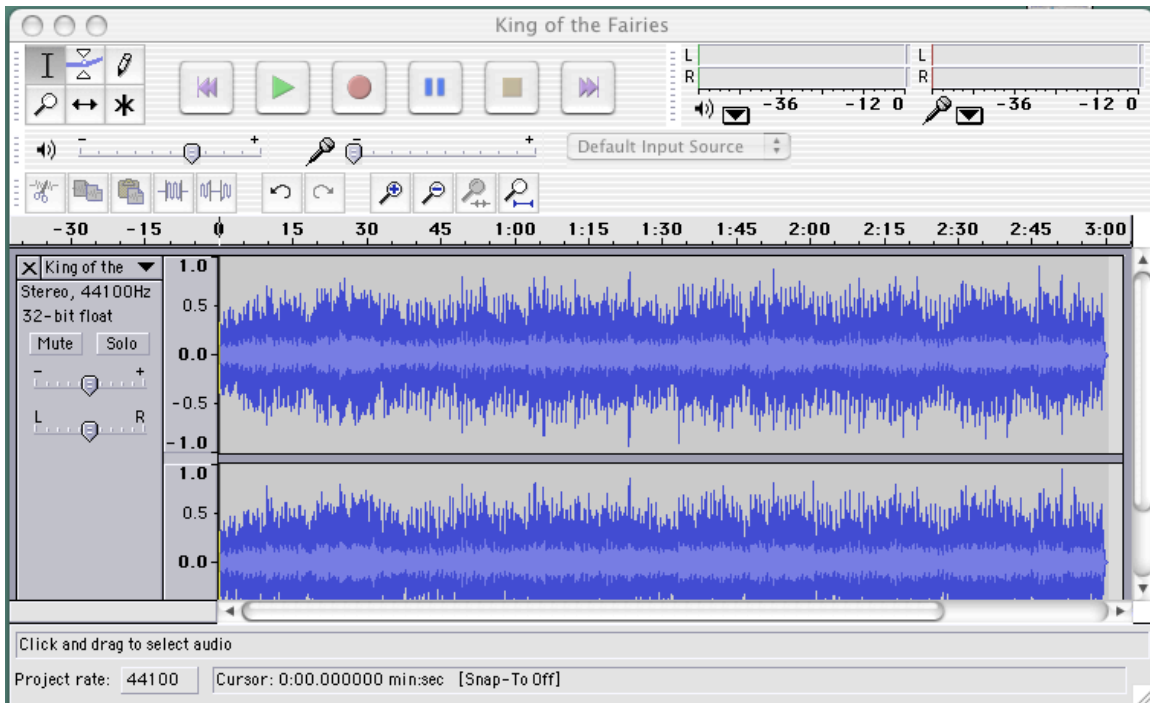
And so I headed for <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>, and, my goodness, the kid is right.

There is no need to say much more. This is the music software that I (and you, if only you knew it) have been waiting for. The website is clear, the manual is excellent, and the software is really terrific. Here, for instance, are just a few of the things it can do:

- Record live audio
- Convert cassettes and records into digital recordings or CDs.
- Edit the music as simply as you now edit words on the screen.
- Remove static, hiss, hum, and other background noises.
- Cut, copy, splice, and mix sounds from different sources together.
- Change the speed without altering the pitch, or vice versa.
- Make multi-track recordings with an unlimited number of tracks.
- Add special effects: fade in, fade out, echo, wahwah, reverb, whatever.

It works on Macintosh. It works on Windows. It works on Linux. It probably works on your hair dryer. And, because the developers support the principles of the Free Software Foundation (see www.fsf.org), their product is absolutely, totally, now and forever, free. £0. \$0. €0. ¥0. Isn’t that something!

A final word for people who are completely new to the notion of editing music. The concept is really quite simple. When you send sound into your computer, into Audacity, through the sound-in jack, you see a picture of the music—the wave form—that looks like this. Here is what you see when you play a tape or CD of *King of the Fairies* into the computer’s “sound in” port. (Note: most but not all newer computers have such a port. For those without, one can get an inexpensive (under £10) “sound in” box that plugs into your USB port: the flat one, where you probably also plug in your printer and keyboard.)



Using the tools in Audacity, you can edit those waves, just as you would text: cut, paste, move bits from one place to another, stretch it out, squeeze it together, and so on.

Marina and I have been editing dance songs for years: we slowed down *Moi Muzhunika*, speeded up *The Vegetable Jamboree*, removed some unwanted notes from *Finnish Oro*, added 50% to the length of *Winds on the Tor*, and so on. Now, with Audacity, these things will be easier for us, and possible for nearly everyone else.

Marketing

Whether we are putting on dance sessions as a labor of love, with no thought of actually making money, or as a means of earning (or supplementing) an income, the simple fact is that if people don't come, it's not going to work. Over the years, we have seen, and been aware of, many attempts to start a group that have lasted only a few months, or a few weeks—or less than one day, if no one (or almost no one) shows up.

Our Bay Area group has survived for more than twenty years, and has never missed a Friday in Berkeley in all that time. But it has not been entirely a bed of roses. We've had cold and rainy evenings in winter when, at the announced starting time, there were two or three people there. Some of our local teachers have attempted to start groups in other areas, nearer their homes, in a dozen communities in and around San Francisco. Some of these have worked well and are going strong, dancing once or twice a month; others lasted for a while, and then faded away; and a few, notably in San Francisco itself, just didn't work at all.

John's advertising mentor, Howard Gossage, used to use the marketing model of a gigantic stadium. Imagine, for instance, that every sentient being within fifty miles of you has been seated in a huge stadium, and has agreed to listen to you for five minutes. You

describe your product or service, perhaps demonstrate it, and then say, “Raise your hands, if you’d like to try it.”

In this model, it is easy to envision, even in a sparsely populated area, hundreds, even thousands of people agreeing to give it a try.

But in real life, we don’t have the huge stadium. We have to get their attention in some other way—or, more realistically, a multitude of ways, and typically we have very little time to do it. In the world of books, it is generally felt that you have about three seconds to attract someone’s attention as they wander through a big bookstore, so the title must be interesting and extremely visible, and the appearance must be attractive and engaging.

The “too many or too few” issue

In most situations, the goal of marketing a circle dance group is to attract a modest number of people. If you try something and no one comes, that’s not satisfactory. But if you try something and too many people come, that’s not so good either. (Once, our publicity came to the attention of the person who arranges a monthly “singles adventure” at a local church. With no advance notice, one evening the bus pulled up, and suddenly we had fifty people descending on us, jibbering, jabbering, having no idea what we were all about . . . but of good will, and a willingness to give it a try.)

Generally, through, we (and all the other circles we know) would be quite pleased if two or three (or even one) new person came to any given session.

When we are at our most businesslike, we think about new people in terms of their financial impact. The typical person in our circle puts about \$4 in our donation basket. And they might come back an average of 4 or 5 times. (More than a few people never come back; some become regulars, or at least irregulars.) In this model, each new person brings an average of \$20 to our treasury over the next few months. Therefore, if we pay \$60 for something—an advertisement, copying and putting up posters, sending letters to radio stations, whatever—we would hope this brings in at least three new people. But whatever happens, we’ve learned something. The very basic rule of marketing is: If something works, do more of it. If it doesn’t work, do less of it.

The three main marketing things for us turn out to be

1. A physical object
2. The internet and
3. Old fashioned publicity and publications, and use of free labor

1. The physical object

We came to realize that it would really be helpful to have an all-purpose physical something-or-other, to be able to hand people, mail to people, and put out in places where people could see it and take it. We’ve tried many things, from business cards (you can get quite nice free color business cards from a company called Vista Print (<http://www.vistaprint.com/>). They will give you 250 free, in hopes, of course, of getting more business later; and their fancier ones are all of \$2 for 250) to standard size post cards (about 4 x 6 inches) to larger cards (4 x 9 inches is a standard size) to big posters.

No one thing has worked well and regularly, but we’ve come to rely on the 4x9 cards, as the most versatile. They are big enough to be seen on bulletin boards or in store

windows; they are small enough to fit in car windows (side or back); and they can be mailed easily and relatively inexpensively. We choose not to put them under windshield wipers of cars, because we don't like it when people do that to us—but is it something that some people do.

We designed ours so that it has pictures and words front and back, but enough white space so we can add a label, rubber stamp, or handwriting with specific information about an event, and have room for an address and a postage stamp.

When we wanted to try a small number, we bought a few hundred from a local copy shop for about 25 cents each. When we decided that this would be a main method for us, we bought several thousand from an on-line company called Print Direct for Less (www.printdirectforless.com). Heavy coated (glossy) cardboard, color on both sides, about 12 cents each.

Every few months, we deliver a stack of 50 or so to the two main public libraries in our area, and they put them out for us, on literature racks. This is one of our best sources of new people.

We have not had much success with big posters, with one exception. (We always ask new people how they learned about us.) In our university town, we are competing with a huge number of events, and every telephone pole is groaning under the weight of other people's posters, one stapled on top of another. One time, we tried one of the several poster-putting-up services in our area ("The Thumbtack Bugle"), which claimed to know the 'best' places—but it was expensive, and had no discernible results.

The one exception was a handmade poster (11x17) that we put up in the window of the hall where we regularly dance, facing the street. It said, "Circle Dancing **HERE** every Friday..." emphasizing the here. It didn't have spectacular results, but three of our most eager regulars learned about us from that sign, so we're not complaining (and, of course, it was free).

2. The internet

Endless books and articles have been written about making use of the internet—for dummies, for idiots, for beginners, even for you and me. This could go on for many pages, but for now, we'll mention four relevant things.

a. Craig's List

Craig's List is a major marketing phenomenon of this decade. It is a free worldwide service (except for job listings, which are not free), whereby people buy and sell, promote their events, and communicate in a wide variety of ways. It is so powerful, for instance, that newspaper classified sections, help wanted sections and real estate sections are very much on the decline, since so many millions of people use Craigs List every day.

There is a Craig's List for hundreds of cities and towns in North America, and elsewhere: www.craigslist.org.

They are all similar in format, but of course Vancouver or Toronto will have far more listings than Whistler or Cranbrook. They all have an "Events" section, where anyone can list any event. There is no limit to the length of a listing. We place a one-page

listing on Craig's List every week. We've experimented with longer and shorter listings, and different headlines and text. As with so many other things we do, it does not work spectacularly, but it steadily brings in 2 or 3 or 4 or 5 new people every month.

The listings are automatically deleted after the date of an event, so we need to put it in again as soon as an event is over, and the next one is coming along.

Here is the text that we are using now. Feel free to use any or all of it, if you wish. The reason for the "search terms" list at the bottom is that a lot of people use the search function in Craig's List to search, for instance, for "Israeli dance" or "Greek dance" or "folk dance" – and we want them to be able to find us.

Circle Dancing. Simple folk dancing done in a circle. Friday evening. Beginners welcome. No partners.

We dance on Friday evenings, 7:30 to 9:30 pm, Finnish Brotherhood Hall, 1970 Chestnut St., corner of University Ave. (two blocks east of San Pablo Ave.), Berkeley.

We move in a circle to wonderful music from Greece, Israel, Scotland, Bulgaria, Russia, Romania, France, the Americas (Shaker, Zydeco, Mexican, Hopi, etc.), and elsewhere. We trace dance steps sometimes new, sometimes centuries old. There is some similarity in form with international folk dance, but there is a certain attitude of attention, awareness, and respect that evolved from this form's origins at the Findhorn Foundation in Scotland.

The dances are mostly simple, or moderately easy, and each one will be taught just before we do it. You won't need a partner because everyone in the circle is your partner. And you won't need any special skill, because these dances have always been done by everyone, old and young, to honor the earth and its rhythms. Dancing in a circle is one of the oldest ways in which people celebrate community and togetherness. In an evening, we typically do 12 to 15 dances. Newcomers are always welcome.

There is no fixed fee. We appreciate \$5 in our donation basket, or whatever you can readily afford.

Your body and heart will delight in a growing feeling of connection and oneness: with yourself, with others, with the earth, perhaps with something greater.

More info from Marina and John Bear, 510-528-4253, john.bear@mac.com, <http://www.circledancing.com>

Search terms: folkdance folk contra Israeli Scottish country international line dancing dances
Balkan Greek Bulgarian ethnic dance

b. Website

Well, what can we say. It is probably nice to have one...and, having once been quite difficult and complicated, it is now (we think) remarkably easy and totally free. After going through many of the available options, over the years (hiring an expert; using the very clunky do-it-yourself software at Tripod.com, moving to the much simpler do-it-yourself software at Apple's iWeb (unaccountably discontinued in 2011 and now unavailable), we came, very happily, to weebly.com. Weebly is a wonderfully simple and straightforward service, in which you can create a website in, literally, a matter of minutes, and put it online, at zero cost, with just one click of the mouse. The free version has the Weebly name in the site title (we originally chose www.circledancing.weebly.com), but you can register a name at a service like GoDaddy.com (the largest) for around \$10 a year, and Weebly will link to that site. So at this time, we are paying GoDaddy something like \$12 a year for the URL of www.circledancing.com, and when you click on that, it seamlessly and instantly takes you to the site we created with Weebly.

We like Weebly a great deal

c. Internet advertising