

## **Contras for Beginners and Community Dance Programs**

*Betsy Gotta*

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Many beginner party leaders use whole set progression contras such as the Virginia Reel, Tunnel Dance or OXO for new dancers. I believe that introducing duple contras in lines can be confusing for some new dancers and the caller should have a plan of dances to use and how to help the new dancers succeed. The dance leader also needs to understand each dance and be prepared to help the new dancers get through the complicating factors.

First, the beginner party leader needs to make sure the dancers understand that they should stay with their partner but meet a new corner each time through the dance.

Second, the new dancers should make sure the dancers understand that the way they face when they turn to face their corner will be the way they will be moving in the line until they run out of people.

Third, the caller needs to remind the dancers that when they run out of people with whom to dance, they will wait out one time through the dance. They must be reminded to change sides and told that now they will be moving the other way in the line. It is very helpful to new dancers to remind them that the dance starts with "such and such call" so they understand when to join back in.

The dances chosen will start with a minimal number of square dance calls. I have listed several simple dances which add calls or ideas slowly so as not to confuse the new dancers.

Personally, I would start the evening with 2 couple dancing on a Sicilian Circle. This plan allows me to teach several calls that I will use repeatedly throughout the evening. These calls would include Circle Left, Circle Right, Dosado, Right or Left Hand Stars, and Pass Thru.

The first two dances were designed to use minimal calls. For Swing, you can teach the ballroom dance position swing or have dancers use a 2 hand swing. I prefer not to have the dancers elbow swing because of possible confusion with arm turns, but Elbow Swing works also.

Most of these dances could also be done in a Sicilian Circle.

**Strut Your Stuff** Alternate Duple by Betsy Gotta

A1

Face Corner – Dosado 1 ¼

(You are next to corner - remember them. There are 4 single file columns)

Walk Forward Single File

(Pass by dancers- make eye contact)

A2

Turn Around – Walk Back

(Look for Corner - Return to that person)

Turn by the Left Arm until Ladies Face (Join Left Hands/Arms and Turn until the Ladies can see each other across the set)

B1

Ladies Pull By - Partner Swing

(Ladies Take Right Hands and Pull By each other to face Partner and Swing)

Long Lines - Forward and Back

(Open the Swing to have Standard couples – Men on Left – Lady on Right)

B2

Circle Left 3 Places – Original place

(Dancers are back in the place they started – Facing Up or Down the Set)

Balance the Ring – Pass Thru

(Step Forward and Back to Balance –Walk past the person you are facing, passing Right shoulders)

(Start again with new group of 4)

Calls to be Taught: Dosado, Swing, Balance, Pass Thru

**\*\*\*East Brunswick Stroll**

Alternate Duple by Betsy Gotta

A1

Face Corner – As Couples - Dosado

Veer Left – Girls Turn 1/2

(Couples move forward and Left form a 2-Faced Line – Girls turn ½ to change places)

A2

Promenade Up or Down

(Couples walk the way they are facing)

Wheel Around – Come Back

(look for the couple with your partner)

B1

Men Hook Arms - Turn the Line  $\frac{1}{2}$

(Men link elbows and turn half)

Ladies Drop Off – Men Turn Half to Partner

(Ladies let go and face in – men turn half with each other)

B2

Partner Swing – Face Across

Circle Left in Each group of 4 – 3 Places

Pass Thru

(Start again with new group of 4)

Calls to be taught: Couples Dosado, Swing Arm Turn  $\frac{1}{2}$ , Wheel Around, Veer Left

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### **Broken Sixpence**

Alternate Duple by Don Armstrong

A1

Face Corner – Dosado

Face Across – Men Dosado

(Men look diagonally Left for the other man in your group)

A2

Ladies Dosado

(Ladies Look Diagonally Right to find the other lady in your group)

Ones Swing your partner – Face Down the Hall – Twos join either side to make a line

(Ones Face away from music/caller – others join the closest person to form a line)

B1

Down the Center 4 in Line

(Walk 6 steps forward)

Turn Alone – Come Back

B2

Bend the Line – Circle Left

(Couples face each other and join hands to make a circle – notice where you are\*)

Star by the Left back to place

(get to the place from which you started the circle\*)

(Start again with new group of 4)

Calls to be taught:

Positions – Couple 1 (Actives) and Couple 2 (Inactives), Dosado, Swing, Bend the Line

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### **Fairfield Fancy**

Alternate Duple by Dick Forscher

#### **A1**

Face Corner – Dosado

Dosado Partner

#### **A2**

Circle left

Circle right, ending with the twos separating to form a line of four facing down

(Couple 2 lets go of their partner to form a line facing away from the music with couple 1 in Center

#### **B1**

Down Four in Line

(Walk forward down the hall 6 steps)

Ones arch and back up - Twos come in and Lead Up through the Arch

(Couple one raises their joined hands to make an arch – Couple 2 folds in to duck under the arch – All move up the hall to place – Couple One has moved away from the Music)

#### **B2**

Full ladies chain up and down the set with new group

(Ladies Chain with new group)

There is a video on you tube which shows the Ladies Chain done with the Ladies passing Right Shoulders, doing a 2 Hand Swing with opposite and facing as couples and repeating the action back to partner.

(Start again with new group of 4)

Calls Taught – Position in the group – Couple 1 /Couple 2, Dosado, Ladies Chain,

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The next group of dances would be used for a Community Dance Program where the dancers had more dancing experience. The figures which are commonly used in the Community Dance program would only have to be reviewed in the walk through.

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## **Butterfly Garden**

Alternate Duple by Bob Isaacs

A1 - Walk Around Corner

(Dancers put Right Shoulders towards Corner and Walk Full Around, with eye contact)

Corner Swing

A2 - Right and Left Thru

Ladies Allemande R 1½ – Scoop up Partner

(Scoop up partner with the ladies' L arm on top of the gents' R arm to get the smoothest flow from the whirl to the swing. Similar to Flutterwheel with an extra full Arm Turn)

B1 - Star Promenade ½

Butterfly Whirl into Partner Swing

(After the Star Promenade, Couples Wheel Around blending into a Swing)

B2 - Ladies Chain

Star Left Full Around

(Look away from Star for new Corner)

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## **Woods Hole Jig**

Alternate Duple by Tony Parkes

A1 - Balance and Swing Corner

A2 - Down the hall 4 in line, turn as couples

(After the Swing, face away from music and walk 4 steps, California Twirl)

Come back and Bend the Line

(Walk 4 steps towards the music and face across)

B1 - Ladies Chain over and back

B2 - Circle Left

Left Hand Star

(Turn the Star full around and look away for new Corner)

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## **Relative Simplicity**

Alternate Duple by Wendy Greenberg

A1 - Corner Dosado

Ladies Left Allemande 1 1/2 (to partner)

A2 - Partner Balance and Swing

B1 - Right Hand Star - Full Around

(Use a hands across star - Men make sure you know where you started)

Men Drop out - Ladies Chain

(Ladies you are going to your corner - not your partner)

B2 - Ladies Chain (to partner)

Circle Left 3/4

(1's are facing down, 2's facing up - where you started the dance)

Pass Thru

(find new corner to start the dance)

This dance is more position oriented. The men need to make sure they return to the side they started the right-hand star. The ladies need to make sure they chain first to their corner/neighbor. This would be used only if dancers succeed in the previously listed dances.

There are many more Contra dances that could be used in a Community Dance Program, these are some possibilities. For music, you can use square dance hoedowns, square dance singing calls or get more traditional music from the Lloyd Shaw Foundations. You can also find music by searching "Contra Music".

Betsy Gotta 4/22

Bonus Dance:

### **Friday Night Frolic**

Alternate Duple By Tony Parkes

A1 - Corner Balance and Swing

Men Allemande Left 1&1/2

A2 - Swing Partner

Forward and Back

B1 - Right and Left Thru

Ladies Chain

B2 - Balance with person across and Square Thru 2

Face In - Balance and Square Thru 2

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Calls to be taught – Balance, Square Thru 2 – Other calls on Community Dance Program