

Using Contras for Dance Parties and Class

Seminarinhalte / Seminar content:

Objective:

- Getting people to move to the musical phrase and to listen and respond to commands.
- Promoting a good atmosphere in a group

Moving to musical phrase:

- choice of music
 - should have clear 8 count/beat phrases with a strong accent on 1st beat
 - should have 32 bars or 64 counts (no bridges)
 - should be familiar to the leader
 - may come from several types of music perhaps similar to type used for Class.
- contra dance only requires walking steps – no fancy footwork- this allows people to have a more relaxed approach to the music.
- most contra dance movements require 8 steps to complete some 4 steps some 16 steps because of the phrasing people know when start a new movement.
- contra dance has a set choreography which with time allows the people to inter-react with the music and other dancers.

Listening and responding:

- commands are given before the phrase – there is time to react with the music.
- commands maybe given the whole time if needed but can be varied or shortened.
- if teaching is done in German it is possible to give commands in German and/or English allowing for a gradual acceptance of English vocabulary.

Promoting a good atmosphere in a group.

- Contra dance allows interaction with a maximum number of people
all dancers in each set will dance with all the others in the set.
- Contra dance requires hand contract for most movements,
hand contact bridges differences in age, race, and creed.
After dancing and “holding hands” interaction in the group increases.

Things to consider before a dance party

- Who has asked me to do a dance party
- Who are my clients? School children, families, young adults -students, working people, seniors?
- How many people will there be? Does the room suit the group?
- How long will I have to “Work” with the group
- Do I want to recruit from the group or do I see it as a one time event.

Things to consider in a class:

- contra can be used as a teaching tool
 - the walk thru allows for an explanation of a new figure or movement
 - repetition of a newly taught figure or movement with different dancers

- contra can be used as a change of pace
 - after a workshop the pleasure of “just dancing” lets people relax
 - choice of music can help it feel different

- contra can be used as a chance to help integration
 - mixers are a mainstay of contra dancing, after a mixer say; “keep this partner and...”
 - contra dancers usually change partners for each new dance “ask your neighbor to dance the next dance”

- contra dance can be used to underscore the “party“ atmosphere on, or around a special holiday

Where to get dances?

ECTA Library:

Gunzenhauser, M; The Square Dance and Contra Dance Handbook

Fischle, H; Leitfaden Contra Dance

Armstrong, D; Caller teacher Manual for Contras

ECTA CTC Dances Done 1996-2011

or

contact ECTA Contra Coordinator or fellow leaders.

Revisions

Nr.	Changes	Release	Contrib.	Date
1.	Writing the keyword list		CDB	2015
2	Update for website	1.5	EH	2018/05/01