

# New-Age Petronella

By Diane Silver

Written to go with the original tune Petronella, though any AABB tune will also work.

This dance was written initially as an adaptation for the Roots Contra dance in Asheville, NC, which I ran with Laura Lengnick and Karen Gaughan (This dance accompanies the Roots Contra article on page 26).

I had collected a list of contra Chestnuts (thank you David Smucker and David Millstone) which were written to match a particular tune with precision, and which also had enough zip and interest (in my personal opinion) to satisfy modern sensibilities. I had called the original Petronella several times over the months, and I enjoyed introducing the original move (spin and balance, rather than balance and spin). I also emphasized the glory of catching hands around the ring on the 4<sup>th</sup> beat rather than clapping hands—(“spin-2-3-catch! Balance in and balance out)—and I enjoyed having a group of dancers who were willing to forego the clap.

However, for this particular program, the B part was just a little too repetitive of other dances planned. I didn't think there would be tolerance for yet another dance with 1s lead down the center, turn alone, return, cast around; same-role-right-and-left over and back. Also, my aim in programming for Roots was not a whole evening of Chestnuts, but rather a mix of Chestnuts, modern contras with impeccably good flow (for which Laura & Karen would brilliantly match an impeccably well-suited tune), and other dance formations. Programmatically, I was looking for a more modern dance.

So with apologies to the prolific Trad., I wrote a new B-part. The result is admittedly a blatant modernization of the original, but it maintains the wonderful A-part that fits so beautifully with the tune, and it has been well received by modern contra dance crowds.

## Improper Contra

- A1) 1s spin to a diamond ring (Lady #1 spin thru the middle to the bottom point, Gent #1 spin a smidge to the top point; 2s join on the sides, ala original Petronella.)(4).  
Bal. the ring (4). All spin rt. 1 place (4); balance the ring (4).
- A2) All spin rt. 1 place (4); balance the ring (4).  
All spin rt. 1 place (4); balance the ring (4).  
(1s are now at the side points of the diamond ring).
- B1) 2s (at the top & bottom points of the diamond ring) propel Lady #1 across the set to her Partner, while they (the 2s) step to the side she vacates and all swing Partner (on Gents' home side).
- B2) Long lines forward and back (8).  
Ladies chain across (8).

*The new B1 has been especially popular, with a good deal of whooping as the 2s catapult Lady #1 across the set.*

**Notes:** The original Petronella is Proper, while this adaptation is Improper. In the original, Gent #1 spins through the middle to form the diamond ring in A1, but in this adaptation, Lady #1 has that responsibility. She/They (Lady #1) must be especially vigilant, being ready at the conclusion of the sequence to identify the next set of four and immediately spin through the middle to start the dance again.