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# THE CONTRA PULSE DOESN'T SKIP A BEAT

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*By Ben Williams*

In the spring 2020 issue of the *CDSS News*, we debuted *Contra Pulse*, our new podcast by Julie Vallimont. We're excited to now be releasing episodes on a regular schedule, each featuring an interview with a musician from across the spectrum of dance music players. As we move into the next phase of the project, I wanted to give you a deeper look into our process and what's coming up next.

Our latest interview comes from Charlie Pilzer, a musician who has seen it all since entering the contra scene in the '80s and has played with a wide array of different bands. His recording studio, Tonal Park, has been behind some of the best contra CDs of the past few decades, and with his background in international dance as well, he has a great perspective on what makes good dance music and the changes to dance music in recent history.

We were particularly excited to release this episode now because Julie recorded part of it in a hallway at the 2019 New England Folk Festival (NEFFA). While it gave the audio editor (me) a few headaches, it's somehow comforting to hear the hustle and bustle of people walking by, the calls and music from the gym, and pickup bands playing down the hall. Part two of the episode was recorded at Julie's house; it goes deeper into Charlie's thoughts and includes some musical examples.

So far, we've been releasing recordings that Julie made in the past year, but starting now we'll have brand new recordings to share with you! Over the past couple of months, we've been working to figure out how to do interviews in quarantine. We'll be starting with a

few people in Brattleboro that Julie can interview on her porch. (We even got some wireless mics for social-distance interviewing.) And we're also prepared to do remote interviews using recording equipment we can send to interviewees to make sure we get excellent audio quality.

Julie's first interviews were recorded on location at the various dance events she was attending—in the woods of Maine Fiddle Camp, at NEFFA, and so on. As we honed in on our podcast format, we devoted some resources to buying more suitable equipment for this kind of work. I'm really looking forward to the improved audio quality in our newly recorded episodes.

Julie's original vision also included having video and audio examples to demonstrate the concepts her subjects talk about. It may not be possible to have those during our quarantine sessions, but once we're allowed to travel again, we're planning to publish extra audio and video features on the *Contra Pulse* website.

We expect to release a new episode every two weeks. You can check out the current episodes and subscribe to future updates at [contrapulse.cdss.org](http://contrapulse.cdss.org). You can also search for *Contra Pulse* on iTunes, Spotify, or any other podcast platform. We'd love to hear your feedback: are there things you'd be particularly excited to hear or want us to dive into? Let us know at [contrapulse@gmail.com](mailto:contrapulse@gmail.com).

*Photo by Julie Vallimont.*

