

**The Vision Thing**  
some elements to think about for a dance series  
David Millstone

**Organizational structure**

Who decides how the dance will be run?

musicians / caller

committee: Who picks the committee?

How are committee members replaced?

Finances

How much to performers? Fixed fee? Guarantee? Percentage?

Does group set aside money in special fund?

**Socializing**

Is there food built into the evening? And who cleans up?

Potluck beforehand

Meal provided

Snacks at the break

Who provides?

Committee

Volunteers (*Nelson, NH: No volunteer for cookies next week? No dance!*)

Potluck

Gathering afterwards

How much time is set aside for the break? *In Denmark, every event has half hour coffee break: "The dance provides us an opportunity to get together to socialize with each other."*

**Target audience**

Are children allowed? Encouraged? What ages?

Separate family dance?

Aimed at what ages? Very young? Or elementary/middle school?

If so, how is transition managed to more adult event?

Different admission structure for different ages?

Youth / students / seniors

**Desired program & tradeoffs**

Zesty contras – *norm in most contra-centric communities today*

Older dances – *new Montpelier series*

Mix of old and new dances

Role of squares & other formations: Advantages and disadvantages

Mixers allowed? Encouraged?

Repertoire of couple dances?

Taught on the spot?

Special workshops?

Do other things happen during the break?

Waltzing or swing dancing to recordings

Demonstrations

Other couple dances (e.g., hambo, zweifacher, mazurka)

## Talent

What's the balance between local talent and visitors from away?

Same musicians / caller each time or rotating roster?

Who does the booking?

Does same person book bands and callers?

If it's two people, do they coordinate?

Is caller selected first, and then appropriate bands? *Vice versa?*

How far in advance does the series get booked?

Advantages / disadvantages of booking far in advance

Are there opportunities for newer callers / musicians to perform?

Special nights for new talent (e.g., caller showcase)

One-shot appearances worked into series

## Communication

How does vision get transmitted to others?

---

### TWO SAMPLES

#### 1) NEFFA Thursday dance—Our Vision

The committee has strived to provide a fun New England-style dance that features high quality local and touring performers, as well as providing a venue for newer, talented individuals to get some exposure. The all-volunteer TNDC takes an active hand in the conduct of the dance. We strive to offer a dance where all are welcome, and that everyone dances with everyone in all parts of the hall.

#### The Musicians and Callers

We like to feature a blend of local and touring callers and musicians. Even though we feel very confident and blessed with gifted local talent, touring performers bring spontaneity and variety to our dance. It's incredible how New England style dance has spread around the country and the world, and we enjoy tapping into the talent that has developed away from New England.

Occasional multi-caller "NEFFA Contra" evenings present a variety of callers, some experienced and some just cutting their teeth.

#### The Dancers

The dancers, musicians, and caller form a mystical triangle that manufactures fun, friendship, and energy. People come from great distances to attend our dance. It makes no difference whether the dancers come from across the street or from out of state; it's great to have them here adding to fun.

We don't have beginner classes, but we do welcome beginner dancers to our dance. We embrace the tradition of sweeping along beginners in a sea of experienced dancers; we find they learn quickly and often return in subsequent weeks.

#### 2) Belfast Flying Shoes—MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Belfast Flying Shoes is to bolster the spirited dance community in Midcoast Maine by deliberately weaving three strands into the fabric of the series: The Community Dance, the Tasty Treat Potluck, and the Contra Dance.

The **Community Dance** - fun and simple dances, such as those presented at weddings or schools. Calling by Chrissy Fowler. Music by the all-acoustic All-Comers Band, led by a core ensemble and open to all musicians. New dancers, experienced dancers, families and musicians all collaborate to create the event.

The **Tasty Treat Potluck** ("savory or sweet: an after dinner treat!") - a half-hour social break between the Community and Contra dances, with emphasis on strengthening community connections through shared food and conversation.

The **Contra Dance** - zesty dances and tunes in a program of contras and squares presented by a variety of talented callers and musicians from throughout the Northeast, especially touring performers. Expectations for this particular thread are colored by committee members' collective experiences in exciting dance communities in Maine, Boston, New Hampshire and the Pioneer Valley of Massachusetts.

Also see: <http://tinyurl.com/3stbhad>