



# *Capital English Country Dancers*

## *Callers and Musicians for 2023 – 2024*

**Capital English Country Dancers brings you a wonderful variety of callers and musicians from the East Coast. Read about them and appreciate their contribution to our dances.**

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## **Melanie Axel-Lute, caller and choreographer**



**Melanie Axel-Lute** called her first English dance for North Jersey English Country Dancers in honor of Sharon Green's move to California. After several years of working with Mary Jones and Tom Amesse, she began calling full programs. She has been a contra dance caller since 1998 and is a regular at dance camps and dance weekends, where she divides her time between ECD and contra. She is known for careful teaching and eclectic programs, so come enjoy old favorites and unknown gems.

Melanie lives in the greater Capital District of NY.

## **Nancy Bakemeier, violin**



**Nancy** began playing classical violin in elementary school and continued into college. Following a hiatus as a US naval officer, she became an active member of the Susquehanna Folk Music and Fiddlers Society in Pennsylvania and played at numerous festivals and events. For some fifteen years, since moving to the Adirondacks, she has played for dances and events in upstate New York and northern Vermont.

Nancy lives in Chestertown, New York.

## **Margaret Bary, caller**



Margaret Bary, a lifelong dancer and dance educator based in NYC, teaches English Country Dance at CDNY and other dance communities in the region. She has a background in Modern Dance, holds an MFA in Dance, and is a Certified Movement Analyst. As a member of Half Moon Sword, she performs at NEFFA and other dance festivals. Margaret served as Program Director of CDSS Campers' Week from 2014-2016, where she taught rapper and longsword, and led dances for all ages. Underlying all of her work with children and adults, Margaret believes that participatory dance experiences foster joy and self-expression, and bring us together as a community.

## **Don Bell, caller and choreographer**



**Don Bell** is a Troy-based dance organizer and English Country dance teacher, caller and choreographer. He has managed the Rensselaer English Country dance series for over 20 years and taught beginner workshops at the Flurry Festival and the Troy Victorian Stroll. Don served on the Flurry Festival Committee and the DanceFlurry Organization Board for many years.

You can see his collection of English Country dance videos at: [www.youtube.com/user/donwfbell/playlists](http://www.youtube.com/user/donwfbell/playlists).

Don is from Troy NY

## **Eric Buddington, violin**



**Eric Buddington** switches effortlessly between fiddle and violin. He excels at Argentine tangos, waltzes and milongas; he also joins Spare Parts for Regency balls, Ragtime balls, and English country dances, as well as contras. He performs with Spare Parts on The Regency Ballroom CD. Formerly with the Flying Garbanzos, Eric currently performs with Spare Parts (tango, regency, ragtime, contra, English), CoinciDance (contra), Poke in the Eye (traditional and original fiddle & guitar) and Woodbinde (medieval music). Visit his WEB site at <http://eric.buddington.net/>

Eric comes to us from North Adams MA.

## **Doug Creighton, flute, piccolo, melodeon, concertina**



At an English dance, **Doug Creighton** can be found playing flute, piccolo, melodeon or concertina. After studying flute in college, he began English dancing in the mid-1980's and soon after, began playing for dances. Over the years, he has danced English, contras, Cotswold Morris, Northwest Clog Morris, and has been part of a performing Québécois step-dancing troupe. In addition, he has been a long-time musician for several different Morris teams in both the US and Canada. The result is that his playing can range from rhythmic and punchy to sweet and lyrical, and he brings a strong sense of what dancers need from the music.

Doug lives with his wife, Susan, in Brattleboro, VT.

## Yonnie Estes, piano



Vonnie had started contra dancing in the late 1970s and has been accompanying, as a keyboard specialist, several genres of related traditional dance tunes since the mid-1980s when she and now husband and musical partner, John Guay, attended a workshop led by fiddler George Wilson, held at Old Songs, Inc. Since then, she has performed at quite a few local and several Quebecois festivals, dances and concerts. English country dance tunes were incorporated into her repertoire when Diane Bell asked her to be the primary pianist for the Heartsease band in the late 1990s.'

## Elizabeth Freedman, caller

**Elizabeth Freedman** began English country dancing twenty years ago, and has taught and performed both English country dance and Scandinavian couple turning dances for at least 15 years. She is a regular caller at CDNY and has called sessions at various on week-ends at Circle Lodge. She has been a caller at CD of Westchester and Stockbridge ECD and travels to Albany every year to call for Capital ECD . She has also taught English country dance workshops for the New York City chapter of the Jane Austen Society of North America.

Elizabeth Freedman comes to us from the NYC area.

## Charles Fisher, flute



Music has been an important part of Charles life since early childhood and he has an eclectic musical background. He fell in love with classical and jazz flute when a college student, and he has also played oboe, guitar, piano, and penny whistle, in addition to voice. He is classically trained and has studied with notable musicians. He has performed a variety of musical styles and with a variety of groups, including marching band, orchestra, mixed voice chorus, opera, masterworks (Stravinsky and Ravel), contra and English dance bands, music jams, traditional music and music of many periods.

After moving to the Capital District, Charles started playing and studying traditional music. He has been playing weekly at sessions such as Fiddler's Tour, the Patricia Kernan's music jam, groups in Saratoga and North Adams, Paul Rosenberg's family dance, and has attended workshops at music camps and festivals. Most recently he attended a workshop with Bare Necessities at the Flurry.

Charles has played only once for an English Country Dance, but the music is similar to the classical and traditional flute, whistle and recorder music he has played for years. It is very fun music to play.

## **Steve Fry, piano**



Steve played several different instruments as a young student, eventually switching to French Horn. He started college as a French Horn performance major with a minor in piano. He played horn in the Binghamton Symphony and the Tri-Cities opera orchestra. Eventually, playing in a rock band became his primary musical outlet. He got hooked on traditional music after hearing The Holy Modal Rounders in the mid '60's. He was horrified at first, but they and the music got under his skin, never to get back out. During his working life, he (and wife Betsy) played with Short of Breath (folk); Annie and the Hedonists (for 20 years, playing guitar, mandolin, trumpet and keyboards); Set Americain (Quebecois oriented contradance band, with Vonnie Estes and John Guay), and English Country Dance with Heartsease.

## **Eileen Nicholson Kalfass, violin**



Eileen began studying classical violin at age four. She grew up contra dancing throughout Pennsylvania, New York, and other areas in the northeastern United States with her father, caller Bob Nicholson.

At twenty, Eileen started playing for contra dances herself. She currently plays with musicians Rachel Bell, Jane Knoeck, Andrew VanNorstrand, Eric Anderson, and more, in multiple combinations such as Seaglass, Continental Drift, New Brew, and more.

Eileen plays for both contra and English country dances throughout the United States and Canada. With Seaglass and New Brew, she also plays for French bal folk dancing. She really enjoys playing for dancing at weddings and parties, too.

Eileen's classical technique and rich tone truly compliment her fiddle style. She enjoys playing Northern, Quebecois, Scottish, Irish tunes and more. Her energy, enthusiasm, and love of music combined really keep feet moving on the dance floor.

Eileen's solo album was released in September 2018. It features Seaglass, Continental Drift, New Brew, and Shelly Campbell and Allan Dewar from Cape Breton, NS. Her album, *Crossing Bridges*, recently won the 2019 SAMMY Award for Best Americana Recording.

## **Carmen Giunta, caller and choreographer**



Dancing of all sorts has been an important recreation for me for nearly 40 years. International folk dancing was my gateway to a world of recreational dancing that has expanded to include New England style contras and squares, Scandinavian couple dancing, English country dancing, and Scottish country dancing in addition to International folk dancing. More recently (only 20 years ago!) I began calling English country dances and still more recently I've tried my hand at writing some. I call regularly for Syracuse Country Dancers (my home dance) and Country Dancers of Rochester (my home away from home dance). During the COVID pandemic, I called English country dances adapted for one or two dancers from my basement over Zoom. (Carmen called several virtual dances for Capital ECD during CoVid.)

My “day job” for nearly 30 years was as a professor of chemistry at Le Moyne College in Syracuse. I continue to be active writing and editing about the history of chemistry.

Carmen comes to us from Syracuse.

## **Gail Griffith, concertina**



Gail Griffith has played concertina in HeartsEase, an English country dance band, for over 20 years; and she's played cello in the Albany Area Senior Orchestra for 16 yrs. She also called traditional dances for beginners and disabled people for over 40 years.

She lives in a 200-yr old house in Rensselaer County., with her husband Terry and two big-ish dogs.

Gail lives in the Capital District.

## **HeartsEase: Diane Bell, Vonnie Estes, Steve Fry, Gail Griffith, Patricia Kernan, Marilee Urbanczyk,**



Heartsease is an English Country dance band located in the Capital District. This all-women band has been together for over 20 years and has played at the Dance Flurry, at the Victorian Stroll and for re-enactor events in the region. They were the house band for the monthly Rensselaer English country dances held in Troy for many years. Musicians include: Diane Bell on violin; Vonnie Estes on piano; Gail Griffith on concertina; Patricia Kernan on flute, whistle and clarinet; and Marilee Urbanczyk on pennywhistle and percussion.

The band drew its name from an English Country Dance of the same name. (Heartsease is an old word for pansy or violet and has a long history of use in folk medicine.)

Members of Heartsease live in the greater Capital District of NY.

## **Orly Krasner, caller and choreographer**



Orly Krasner loves to share the joy of English Country Dance as a dancer, choreographer, and teacher. She is a regular part of the teaching rotation in Westchester, NY and New York City and is a frequent guest for dance evenings, special events, and festivals both near and far. Orly has emceed balls and weekends across the US, Canada, and England. She has taught at Pinewoods Early Music Week and joined Gene Murrow for two trips to Japan where they taught ECD workshops under the auspices of the National Federation of Teachers of Folkdance. Orly loves a challenge, so she's been learning Japanese and studying traditional dance. She is also studying Baroque dance and is looking forward to a minuet-step revival!

As a choreographer, Orly's first collection, Celebrations, has sold 300 copies. The book and CD, recorded by Reunion (Daniel Beerbohm, Barbara Greenberg, and Jonathan Jensen), are both available from CDSS, and a second collection is in the works. In real life, Orly credits her discovery of country dance with helping her finish her PhD dissertation; she currently teaches music history and theory at the City College of New York.

Orly comes to us from New York City

## **Pat MacPherson, piano**



**Pat** has been playing piano and fiddle for English and Scottish dancing for almost 40 years. She works with Revels North in White River Junction, VT, leading a community band with Nils Fredland, working backstage during Christmas Revels, and as a musician for their Summer Revels. Pat also runs a business, Narratus, which collects and preserves family stories and archives.

Pat comes to us From Montague MA.

## **Val Medve, caller**



**Val Medve** is known for her selection of English country dances both vintage and new. Her calling style is clear, easy to follow and laced with good humor.

Val's interest in dance began with Polish folk dancing when she was a young girl in southwestern Connecticut. In the early 1980s, she caught the contra dance bug. She soon added many other traditional dance genres, performing with Gwiazda Polish Folk Dance Ensemble, Reel Nutmeg, Sleepy Hollow Morris, and The Green Mountain Volunteers (a troupe that represented the U.S. at international dance festivals in Canada and abroad).

Locally, Val called for the Stockade Assembly in December 2017. She calls regularly in northern Vermont for the Burlington Country Dancers in Colchester and Jericho. Val has taught/called ECD at NEFFA (New England Folk Festival), Newton, MA (for CDS Boston Center), the Flurry Festival, Adirondack Dance Weekend, The Strafford Ball, Champlain Valley Folk Festival, Jane Austen events in northern Vermont, as well as dance evenings in Troy, NY; Rochester, NY; Amherst, MA; White Plains, NY (for Country Dancers of Westchester); Ridgewood, NJ; Norwich, VT; Kingston, RI; Philadelphia, PA; Ann Arbor, MI; Pasadena, CA; and the Big Island of Hawaii.

In the summer of 2013, with the help of coffee (which she had forsaken for almost a decade), Val booked and powered through a 2-week ECD tour with her husband Tom and the Seppelers, where she and Dan called to music by Barb (sometimes accompanied by fine local musicians). Val is a member of a hard-working and devoted committee that runs the Burlington Country Dancers's annual "Across the Lake" English Country Dance Weekend (usually the second weekend in June).

Val comes to us from Essex VT (near Burlington).



## **Britany Orlebeke, violin**



**Britany Orlebeke**, an Albany native, has been playing for English and contra dances since 1994 and she especially enjoys the spirit of the English repertoire. A classically trained violinist, Britany joins groups of various sizes and configurations at Capital English Country Dances. She was a founding member of the contra dance band, Beverwyck and the English country dance band, Three Muses. For many years she regularly played for our dances. As family and career became busier, her appearances at our dances became less frequent. We are overjoyed that she is able to join us this season and hope she continues to grace our dances with her beautiful music.

Britany lives in the NY Capital District.

## **Spare Parts Band: Bill Matthiesen, and Liz Stell; with Britany Orlebeke.**



photo: Sandy McNay

**Spare Parts** plays “music from past to present, always with dance groove”. Since our first dance in 1989, **Liz and Bill** have been playing beautiful and energetic music for Capital English Country Dancers. They are favorites at the Dance Flurry and many other venues. Bill compiled and edited Waltz Books I, II, and III are "Must-haves for the waltz lover." ---Fiddler Magazine.

Visit their WEB site at <http://www.bfv.com/spareparts/index.htm>

Bill Matthiesen and Liz Stell come to us from Lanesboro MA.

## **David Smukler, caller, choreographer, dance organizer**



David is a dancer, caller, choreographer, and organizer of contra dances and English dances. He recently became the president elect of the Country Dance and Song Society (CDSS) Board. He is the author, with David Millstone, of *Cracking Chestnuts: The Living Tradition of Classic American Contra Dances*.

David leads contras, squares, English country dances, family dances, school programs, and special events. His teaching is gentle, clear and supportive. His taste in dances is eclectic, and you can expect a wide variety of dances in his programs, which often blend old favorites with new gems. David calls extensively in upstate New York, and has often traveled farther afield, including gigs on both coasts, Canada, and the Czech Republic.

David comes to us from the Syracuse NY area

## **Cedar Stanistreet, violin**



Cedar grew up playing both classical violin and traditional fiddle music, and studied violin performance at the Crane School of Music. For the past fifteen years he has played for contra dances across North America with bands including Nor'easter, Cardinal Direction, Maivish, and Cloud Ten. His spirited, rhythmic playing and clear tone keep dancers on their feet. When not travelling, Cedar can be found at home in Putney, Vermont, working on his land, baking bread, and birdwatching. He also repairs violins, violas, and cellos.

Cedar comes to us from Putney, Vermont.

## **Elizabeth Stehl, Caller**



Elizabeth Stehl is passionate about sharing the joy of dancing, especially English country dance.

Elizabeth grew up dancing in the Capital District, studying ballet and modern dance. She attended the University of Utah in Salt Lake City as a dance major. After four decades working as a computer programmer, and a long time practitioner of Morris, contra, Scandinavian, International traditions, her graduate studies and professional life took her to Boston, Berkeley, Denver, Seattle, Minneapolis and Austin. In 2020 she relocated from Austin and settled in the quaint Village of Niskayuna, New York.

Elizabeth, who organized a weekly Sunday afternoon English Country Dance leadership in Austin, which lasted 3 years until Covid, is now teaching beginning English country dance at Schenectady's Jewish Community Center.

## **Alan Thomson, piano and recorders**



**Alan Thomson**, being the multi-genre pianist many have come to know, is an active performer at numerous festivals, dances, and concert settings involving Classical, Jazz, Swing, traditional Contra, English country dance, and musical theater. Holding a Master's degree of performance on piano from the College of St. Rose, he has of late been incorporating his longtime performance background on recorder in providing music for English Country Dances. As a piano instructor he teaches in as many styles as he performs.

Alan is founder and leader of The Alan Thomson Little Big Band and is one of the founding members the contradance trio, Border Bandits.

Alan lives in the Capital District.

## **Tricia van Oers, recorders**



**Tricia van Oers** graduated with high honors in 1998 from the Conservatory of her native city Rotterdam, the Netherlands, with a Teacher's and Performer's Degree. She did graduate work at Indiana University's Early Music Institute, where she received a Performer Diploma with high achievement in Early Music Performance. She then worked making and testing recorders at the world-renowned Von Huene Workshop in Boston.

Based in Connecticut, her activities include performances with Trinity Wallstreet Baroque Orchestra, New York Early Music (Fred Renz, dir.), Four Nations Ensemble, Ars Antiqua, Emmanuel Music (Boston), Cantata Singers (Boston), Concert Royal (NYC), the Choral Arts Society of Philadelphia.

She has performed as a guest soloist with Tempesta di Mare, Musica Sacra, the Chamber Music Society of Central VA, Amor Artis, and the Bethlehem Bach Festival Orchestra, where she was Artist-in-Residence during the 2017 annual Bethlehem Bach Festival. As a founding member of the Rotterdam-based recorder ensemble Scarabee she recorded at the Great Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles, France. Ms van Oers teaches privately, and regularly coaches at workshops and recorder societies in the Northeast and across the U.S.

Tricia comes to us from West Cornwall CT

## **Marilee Urbanczyk, whistle and percussion**



Marilee studied piano and flute as a young student. She took up penny whistle after hearing John Roberts play at a Nowell Sing We Clear concert around 1984. She was first introduced to contra dancing around 1989. Joining the local Morris dance team in 1994 was her introduction to English Country Dance. She joined the "big band" which played for English dances at St Paul's church in Troy, and later joined the newly formed Heartsease house band for Don Bell's dance series in Troy. She has loved playing for and dancing to English Country dances ever since.

Marilee lives in the Capital District.

## **Larry Wallach, piano and harpsichord**



**Larry Wallach** has a long tradition of playing English country dance music for local series. He has shared his music with Capital English Country Dancers (CECD) since the first year in 1989, and prior to this, he played for an English country dance series in the Berkshires. He taught dance band workshops in the early years of CECD to foster musicians interested in playing English country dance music. Since 1995, he has been on the staffs of early music weeks at World Fellowship Center, New Hampshire and at Camp Pinewoods, Massachusetts as pianist and harpsichordist. Larry enjoys playing English country dance music on his new harpsichord and, in 2009, his interest was the inspiration for a afternoon of Historic 17th century dance and acoustic music at CECD. It is now a much loved annual tradition for us.

Larry is also a composer whose recent works include "Berkshire Morris Madness" for wind quintet based on eleven tunes danced to by the Berkshire Morris Men, of which he has been a member since 1984. His orchestral composition "Berkshire Rhapsody" was premiered in April 2017 in Milford, Massachusetts and his more recent orchestral work "Species of Motion" was recorded in the Czech Republic in December 2020. He is a devotee of the music of Charles Ives and has performed the sonatas for violin and piano with a variety of violinists and fiddlers.

Larry is retired and is Faculty Emeritus in Music at Simons Rock College, where he chaired the program for many years.

Larry Wallach comes to us from Great Barrington MA.