



Capital English Country Dancers

Callers and Musicians for 2025 – 2026

<https://www.danceflurry.org/series/capital-english-country-dancers/>

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

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Melanie Axel-Lute, caller and choreographer



Melanie 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 Albany 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.

Don Bell, caller, choreographer, videographer



Don is a Troy-based dance organizer and English Country dance teacher, caller and choreographer. He 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: youtube.com/@donwfbell.

Don is from Troy NY

Norma Castle - flute, percussion

Tentatively scheduled



Norma has been a dance musician for over 25 years, playing ECD, Contra and Klezmer. She brings her lyrical flute playing and lively percussion to all the ensembles she plays with. Norma is a Tai Chi instructor and since the pandemic has been teaching a weekly Zoom class for dancers and friends. She likes to spend time in her garden.

Dorothy Cummings, caller



Dorothy has been involved in English country dance (ECD) since 1997, when the New York Times ran Linda Wolfe's article "Dancing in Jane Austen's Footsteps." She apprenticed as a caller at CDNY in 2009-2012 and leads ECD at CDNY, Country Dancers of Westchester, New Jersey, the Hudson Valley, and farther afield.

Dorothy regards English country dancers as part of a community that extends from the 1600s to the present, and she relishes sharing the classics. She is fascinated by the variety of ways that people learn and is motivated to ease the learning process. With crisp diction, lively musicality, and personal warmth, Dorothy promotes an encouraging and rewarding ECD experience to keep dancers coming back.

Dorothy comes to us from New York City.

Vonnie Estes, piano



Vonnie started contra dancing in the late 1970s and has played keyboard for several genres of related traditional dance tunes since the mid-1980s. At that time she and now husband and musical partner, John Guay, attended a workshop led by fiddler George Wilson, at Old Songs. She has performed at local and Quebecois festivals, dances and concerts and began playing English country dance tunes when Diane Bell asked her to be the primary pianist for the Heartsease band in the late 1990s.

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 has also played oboe, guitar, piano, and penny whistle, in addition to performing voice. He enjoys music of many styles and eras, and he has performed with a variety of groups, including marching band, orchestra, mixed voice chorus, opera, masterworks (Stravinsky and Ravel) and, more recently, contra and English dance bands.

After moving to the Capital District, Charles started studying and playing traditional music. He regularly plays in local music jams and for Paul Rosenberg's family dance. He has attended workshops at music camps and festivals, including a workshop with Bare Necessities at the DanceFlurry Festival.

Charles finds English Country dance music a lot of fun to play as it is similar to the classical music he has played for years.

Charles lives in the NYS Capital District.

(The) Flying Romanos: Robin Russell , Marnen Laibow-Koser, Norma Castle

Tentatively scheduled



The Flying Romanos have been playing gorgeous, inventive and exuberant music since the 1990s. They have traveled and performed widely.

They first got together to play English country dance music back in 1998 and started out as a house band for North Jersey English Country Dancers. Since then they've diversified, and now happily play music for contras, Scottish country dance, and even a Balkan tune or two, although English music remains their primary focus.

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The Flying Romanos is based in the greater New York City area.

Elizabeth Freedman, caller



Elizabeth began English country dancing thirty five years ago, and has taught and performed both English country dance and Scandinavian couple turning dances for at least 20 years. She is a regular caller at CDNY and has called sessions at various week-ends at Circle Lodge. She has been a caller at CD of Westchester and Stockbridge ECD and travels to Albany 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 and has called dance parties for Germantown Country Dancers in the Philadelphia area.

Elizabeth Freedman comes to us from the NYC area.

Martha Griffin, caller



Martha is a preceptor, teacher, & choreographer specializing in the music & dance of the period 1650-1925; English Country, Victorian, & Ragtime.

She moved to Connecticut in 1987 to study massage therapy, joined Therapeutic Massage Associates and never left. She completed four years of study in Energy Medicine and Spiritual Healing with Dorothy Neville at the Institute of Healing Arts and Sciences. Most recently she studied CranioSacral with the Upledger Institute. She is working towards her certification and enjoys the healing journey with each client.

When not at TMA, she enjoys traveling, hiking and biking, as well as leading dances and workshops in vintage dance, dances of the Victorian and ragtime eras, and English Country Dances.

Martha comes from Connecticut.

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Marnen Laibow-Koser, violin, viola, flute, recorder

Tentatively scheduled



Marnen has been playing music for country dances since the age of eleven. As a member of The Flying Romanos, he has toured in England, Canada and Japan, and has also played for dances throughout the United States with other bands, including The Moving Violations and Squeezology.

Outside the country dance world, Marnen plays music ranging from Javanese gamelan to opera. He has appeared on stages across Europe with guitar virtuoso Ritchie Blackmore, as a member of the Renaissance-folk-rock band Blackmore's Night, and frequently plays for musical theater and ballet throughout the Northeast and elsewhere.

Marnen is also active as a composer, with a special interest in chamber and vocal works; his compositions are available at <http://www.marnen.org/composition.html> .

Marnen comes to us from Randolph, MA, in the Boston area.

Orly Krasner, caller and choreographer



Orly loves to share the joy of English Country Dance as a teacher, choreographer, and dancer. She is a regular part of the ECD teaching rotation in New York City and Westchester. A frequent guest teacher both near and far, Orly has taught at Pinewoods Early Music Week, festivals in the UK (Lichfield, Southam, Whitby), and dance weekends across the US (Harvest Moon, Northwest Passage, Suttle Lake). With Gene Murrow, Orly has twice taught ECD workshops in Japan under the auspices of the National Federation of Teachers of Folkdance.

As a choreographer, Orly's first book and CD, Celebrations, are both available from CDSS. Celebrations includes, among other dances, "Algorhythms," "Middlemarch," "Safe Haven," and "When Laura Smiles." The CD features Reunion (Daniel Beerbohm, Barbara Greenberg, and Jonathan Jensen) and is suitable for both dancing and listening! Orly is working on her second collection of dances.

Orly continues to challenge herself as a dancer, studying traditional Japanese dance as well as Baroque dance. (She loves the minuet!) In real life, Orly teaches in the music department at the City College of New York.

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Dominik Landowne, violin



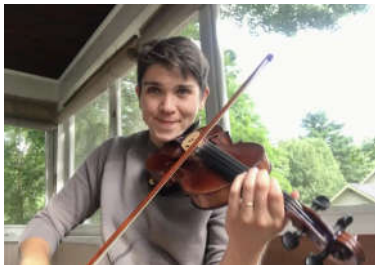
Dominik grew up in Chicago and Rockland County, NY immersed in the folk dancing scene, having dancers as parents.

A graduate of Chicago School of Violin Making, he works full-time for an instrument rental company repairing violins, violas and cellos and rehairing bows. Classical violin training began at 9 years old which led to attending Kinhaven Music School for 3 summers, New York Youth Symphony for 3 seasons and one year at Baldwin-Wallace College Conservatory. Since high school, Dominik has been occasionally hired to play for Eurythmy (a performing dance-like art learned in Waldorf Schools).

For about five years, he has played regularly in English Country Dancing bands, both in Ridgewood, NJ and with Serendipity at Country Dancers of Westchester. He has also enjoyed lessons with Barbara Greenberg of Hold the Mustard and A Joyful Noise! In addition, Dominik delights in exploring traditional Irish/Scottish music in sessions, playing chess/puzzling, gardening and hanging out with cats.

Dominik comes to us from New York City.

Eleanor Lincoln, violin, viola



Eleanor is a violin and viola player and music educator based in Western MA. When not teaching elementary school music, she enjoys playing for English Country dancing (including with her trio Melusine) and singing in various choral ensembles. Eleanor is often seen working as a member of the summer CDSS office staff at Pinewoods and was thrilled to add her musical voice to the program this summer.

Eleanor comes to us from Western MA.

Imogen Mills, caller



Imogen is an English and family dance caller from Southern, VT. Originally from NJ, she began dancing as a child and grew up in the folk dancing community. Her goal as a caller is to bring playfulness and thoughtfulness to the dance floor.

Imogen comes to us from Southern, VT.

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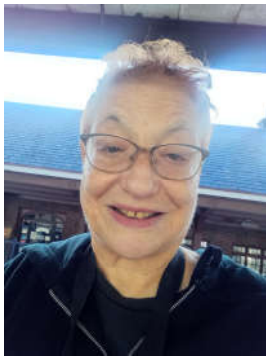
Jean Monroe, piano, percussion



Jean's festival performances include Dance Flurry 2019, Pinewoods 2017 and other folk events from New Hampshire to Philadelphia- Contra Dance, English Country Dance, Colonial, Regency, Civil War, late-Victorian, Ragtime, sci-fi/steampunk. An accomplished historical dance pianist with a Bachelor's Degree from Yale, Jean creates & emcee's our Historical Tales & Tunes Concerts. (Maynard, MA.)

Jean comes to us from Maynard, MA.

Sue Polansky, clarinet



Sue is a music therapist who has taught in New Rochelle and is currently teaching at Harc Action Learning Center (school for disabled adults) in Danbury Ct and at St Marys School in Ridgefield Ct. She is also a professional clarinetist who currently plays with the following bands: Serendipity, Calliope, Tidly Pom and others in the New York City area. In addition, she plays in various nursing homes and has played in community shows, such as Evita, Pirates of Penzance and a Little Night Music.

Sue comes to us from Danbury, CT.

Daniel Popowich, caller



Daniel got bit by the folk-dance bug in 1986 and has been dancing English regularly since. Along the way were voyages into Scottish, Contra, Morris, Sword, and Clog dancing.

Prior to moving to NYC in 2016, Daniel lived in western Massachusetts and danced regularly in both the Amherst and Brattleboro areas. Daniel called dances in Amherst and ran a Brattleboro English dance series. He also called regionally in New Hampshire and the Boston area. For ten years Daniel led the committee that ran the Brattleboro Playford Ball, one of the last remaining talk-through only English dance events.

Daniel is passionate about the history of our tradition and is known for leaning heavily on the "classics" of our repertoire. You can be sure he'll have at least one 1651 dance on his program.

Daniel comes to us from New York City.

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Robin Russell, piano

Tentatively scheduled



Robin is a former contra and ECD-obsessed dancer. She fell in love with playing for dance after participating in a band workshop in which she played woodblock! She revels in the musician's ability to move dancers physically and emotionally. As pianist of the Flying Romanos, she has toured in England, Canada, and Japan and has recorded four CDs of dance music. She's been playing for CDNY's English dances since the 1990's, and is the lead musician and organizer of the North Jersey English Country Dancers in Ridgewood NJ. Robin is also a member of several contra and ECD bands in the NY metro area.

Robin comes to us from Ridgewood NJ.

Spare Parts: Bill Matthiesen, piano; Liz Stell, flute; Eric Buddington, violin



photo: Sandy McNay

Spare Parts has been playing beautiful and energetic music for Capital English Country Dancers since their first dance in 1989. They are favorites at the Dance Flurry and many other venues. Their "vintage dance" repertoire includes Jane Austen, mid-to-late 19th century, ragtime, tangos and early swing. Bill's four Waltz Books are a "must have for the waltz lover." -- Fiddler Magazine. His large collection of early tango music has recently been incorporated into the Library of Congress.

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

All three musicians come to us from Berkshire County MA.

Alan Thomson, piano, recorders



Alan, a multi-genre pianist, is an active performer at numerous festivals, dances, and concert settings involving Classical, Jazz, Swing, traditional Contra, English country dance, and musical theater. He holds a Master's Degree of Performance on Piano from the College of St. Rose. When playing English country dance music on piano, he also utilizes his performance background on recorder. 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, Contravention.

Alan lives in the Capital District.

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Micah Walter, violin



Micah started playing classical violin and Irish fiddle in 2002, started dancing in 2012, and has played for English country dances in Western Massachusetts since 2019. Micah studied music and linguistics at Haverford College, with a focus in composition, and completed a master's degree at Harvard University in music. Micah also plays banjo, sings, writes shape-note tunes, and does bellringing.

Micah lives in Western MA.

Helen White, caller



Helen was first exposed to traditional Country Dancing in 1990 at the British Club in Thailand, where she experienced the power of community dance to draw strangers together. She started leading English dance in Michigan in the mid-1990s and graduated from CD*NY's apprenticeship program in 2012. Now calling mainly in the New York metro area, Helen's programs share her delight with the variety of English country dance — from sublime to playful — and encourage participants to enjoy themselves while building their competence and confidence.

In addition to leading dances for adults, Helen leads family dances, with age-appropriate programming. She also has played music for English and contra dances for more than 20 years in the tri-state area and beyond.

Helen lives in the New York area.