

Square or Round Dance for Fun, Fitness and Fellowship

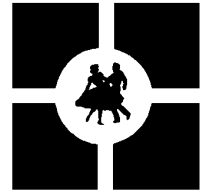
METRO MATTERS

SPECIAL ISSUE

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This Special Issue of Metro Matters is intended for distribution to residents of the Metro Area who might be interested in Modern Square and Round Dancing

What is Modern Square and Round Dancing?

The world of Modern Square and Round Dancing encompasses several forms of dancing all characterized by a synchronized aspect. A group of dancers move more or less in unison in response to prompts or directions given by a leader. This is a healthy, recreational and fun form of dance done for the enjoyment of moving to music and simultaneously socializing with like-minded people. It is a non-competitive activity where dancers experience satisfaction when they successfully complete the choreography and laugh at the confusion caused when mistakes are made.

Square Dancing organizes the dancers into groups of eight who form a square of 4 couples at the start of the dance. Traditional Square Dancing featured named dances that were set patterns often known to all of the local dancers. In its modern form the square dance choreography uses a vocabulary of calls known to the dancers. The caller "calls" these moves to create an endless variety of figures to keep the dancers entertained. Some figures are old favourites and some are spontaneous new creations. The music for Square Dancing ranges across many genres requiring only that it can be played at about 128 beats per minute. Expect to hear classic sing-a-longs, ragtime, jazz, big band, rock 'n' roll, folk songs, music from musicals and movies, country and western, disco, Latin, and what ever else might please the dancers.



Round Dancing organizes the dancers in couples facing counterclockwise around a big circle. It is basically pre-choreographed and cued ballroom dancing. Many choreographers have written superb choreography for specific pieces of music. This choreography is graded according to the number and difficulty of the moves used. Dancers learn the individual moves in a rhythm and phase (difficulty level) and with just a bit of practice are able to learn any dance that uses the set of moves, or with more experience are able to dance straight from the cues. Rhythms include waltz, two-step, polka, foxtrot, jive, rumba, cha-cha, tango and others.



Contra Dancing usually organizes the dancers in facing lines. Dances are usually walked through before they are danced and typically consist of a 64-step figure that repeats. The music and choreography are more closely melded together than is the case for Square Dancing with clear emphasis on the 8-beat phrasing. Although modern music is sometimes used, many of the classic dances were choreographed for traditional jigs and reels.



Line Dancing is usually a solo activity but dancers all move in synchronization. Typically a given piece of music has a specific dance figure of 16 to 64 beats, which includes a 90 or 180 degree change in facing direction. Dancers repeat this sequence, sometimes with flourishes and slight variations, until the music ends.

Clogging is also a solo activity done in synchronization. In this case dancers have special clogging shoes and learn special footwork. Choreography has been written for specific pieces of music, which dancers learn to perform with the aid of a prompter.

When and where do we dance?



Clubs usually dance once a week from September to May with a break for the Christmas holidays. There are several clubs in the Metro area that offer beginner Square, Round or Contra Dancing. The Metro Association sponsors a reduced schedule of dances during the summer. Currently, most Metro area clubs dance in the evenings. There is a senior's group that dances during the day. Details about the local clubs can be found on the accompanying brochure, or visit our provincial website at <www.squaredance.ns.ca>. The local contact number is 902-435-4544.

What does it cost?

The average cost is \$5 per person per dance event. Sometimes this is collected as yearly club dues. Club members also pay a small yearly membership fee in the National Square and Round Dance Society, which includes third party liability insurance coverage.

Is special attire required?

The most important item of clothing is a pair of comfortable, soft-soled shoes with good support. For square and round dancing ladies are encouraged to wear a comfortable skirt to ensure freedom for moving. For many years the traditional attire has been a knee length full skirt over a crinoline with pettipants. Although ladies are sometimes initially reluctant to wear this attire, it is actually very appropriate for the activity and great fun to swish and twirl the skirts. Recently prairie skirts have become popular and now are also accepted everywhere. Gentlemen usually wear a long-sleeved shirt with a western or string tie and long pants. The dress code is no longer as strict as it once was. Many events today are more casual accepting any clean and neat street-wear.



How do we learn?



New dancers attend dances designated for beginners. There the vocabulary is gradually explained and practiced by dancing dances choreographed to use just the known moves. Within the first ten minutes you will be dancing. "Circle Left, Circle Right, Forward and Back, Dosado, Promenade." You can guess what the first three moves mean so you only need to learn how to Dosado and Promenade. Some groups accept new dancers at any time, but most clubs generally begin instruction in September, October, or sometimes January.

What about dancing elsewhere?

Within a year of weekly dancing most dancers learn enough vocabulary to be able to dance at similar clubs across Canada and around the world. The same list of moves is used worldwide and called everywhere in English allowing dancers to truly enter a world of fun and friendship.

There are many special events designed to entice the traveling dancer. Plan to enjoy special dances around Nova Scotia scheduled for nearly every weekend, the Maritime Convention in November, the Canadian National Convention somewhere in Canada biannually in July or August, the US National somewhere in the US every June, or similar events in England, Europe, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. If you begin dancing soon, you will be ready to participate in the 2010 Canadian National, which is scheduled to be held in the World Trade & Convention Centre & Metro Centre in Halifax.



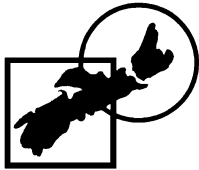
What does Metro Square & Round Dance Association do?

Square and Round Dancing is organized in a pyramid of supporting organizations. Nova Scotia is divided into six regions. Metro Association is the Central Region organization representing all clubs in Halifax Country.

Metro coordinates publicity activities for the Metro area including demonstrations at Grand Parade on Canada Day, dancing on floats in the Natal Day Parades, and media advertising. It also hosts a few special dances such as a New Year's Eve Dance, and a benefit dance for the Heart and Stroke Foundation. We have chosen to support this charity because of the obvious connection between the exercise provided by Square or Round Dancing and the physical activity recommended for a healthy heart. Did you know that an evening of dance is equivalent to walking 5 km and has other benefits as well? See the "Dance for the Health of It" brochure.



What other dance organizations are there?



The website is hosted by the Square and Round Dance Federation of Nova Scotia which is the provincial organization working for the benefit of all six regions of the province. The Canadian Square and Round Dance Society is the national organization that deals with insurance, sponsors the biannual National Convention and provides a unifying presence for the benefit of clubs across Canada. Leaders also have specific organizations at the provincial, regional, national and international level. If you are interested in other forms of dance, visit the website of Dance Nova Scotia at <chebucto.ns.ca/Culture/DANS>



What about a single event Dance Party?

Several of our local callers and cuers are available to teach, call and cue for your special single-event dance. Schedules are busy so please plan ahead. Check the contact information in the separate brochure or see our website.

Is Square Dancing being taught in school?

We are delighted to be involved in the effort to teach dance as an exercise and recreation option for those students not motivated by competitive sports. Callers make presentations as arranged by the school or through Perform Nova Scotia and will assist teachers to develop dance as part of their curriculum. We are working on a locally produced CD and information package for use in the schools.



For more information check these Web Sites:



Square & Round Dance Federation of NS: <www.squaredance.ns.ca>

Look under Regions – Central to find HRM information

Dance Nova Scotia (DANS) <chebucto.ns.ca/Culture/DANS>

Canadian Square & Round Dance Society (CSRDS) <csrds.ca>

“Square Dancing is Friendship Set to Music”