

Singlets

(United States)

Contra dancing is usually understood to be a dance for many couples in long lines, with the dancers interacting throughout the dance. During the pandemic, contra dancing was off-limits, along with most folk dancing. Whereas folk dancing soon moved onto the Zoom platform, allowing individual dancers to continue dancing in their homes, contra dancing was still out in the cold.

Along came one-couple contra dances called Singlets! Ingenious contra dance creators used the same calls heard in traditional contra dancing, with a few variations/adjustments, and gave their community the opportunity to dance, at least if they had one other person in their household. An experienced contra dancer can even dance alone! While all are eagerly awaiting the time when it's safe to go contra dancing with our friends, these are a few contra-style dances that you can dance on your own or with just your partner. Below are two of Tony's favorites.

MUSIC While contra dancing is typically done to live music, any moderately-paced music with a 4/4 rhythm will work.

STEPS & STYLING Balance: Facing ptr, step R twd ptr, bounce or bend knee; step L bkwd away from ptr bounce or bend knee. Can be done with only R hands joined, or with both hands joined. Sometimes dancers do a small triple step instead of the step fwd and step bkwd. Can also be done by beginning standing sideways, facing opp directions, but generally stepping toward and away from partner.

Box the Gnat: Facing each other, R hands joined, M raises joined hands and walks a half-turn R to stand where the W was, while W steps fwd and turns L, backing under the joined hands. M and W will have exchanged places.

California Twirl: Standing side by side with M's R holding W's L hand, M raises joined hands and walks a half-turn R while W walks under joined hands and walks a half-turn L. M and W will be facing the opposite direction.

Do-Si-Do: (also spelled "Do-Sa-do") This figure uses a total of 8 steps, but it not precise. Facing ptr, walk fwd 2-3 steps, passing R shoulders; step sideways 2 or 3 steps, passing behind ptr; walk bkwd 2-3 steps passing L shoulders, ending in the same position as the beginning.

LESS IS MORE

Choreographer: Tony Parkes

Couples standing side by side, M on L, W on R, facing down (away from the music/screen), inside hands joined.

Meas	4/4	Figure
1		Walk fwd 4 steps.
2		California Twirl, end facing opp direction.
3		Walk fwd 4 steps.
4		Turn away from ptr using 4 walking steps to end facing ptr.
5		Join R hands with ptr. Balance fwd and back.

Singlets — continued

Meas	4/4	Figure
6		Box the Gnat.
7-8		Do-Si-Do around ptr. And the end of the Do-Si-Do, face opp directions and join R hands.
9		Balance twd ptr and away.
10		Slide to R or spin to R to exchange places.
11		Again facing opp directions, but with L hands joined, Balance twd ptr and away.
12		Slide to L or spin to L to exchange places.
13-16		Balance and swing ptr.

CAMERA SHY

Choreographer: Tony Parkes

Couples standing side by side, M on L, W on R, facing down (away from the music or the screen), inside hands joined.

Meas	4/4	Figure
1-2		Walk 4 steps fwd; walk 4 steps bkwd.
3		Balance with ptr
4		Dancer on R turns L in front of ptr.
5-8		Repeat meas 1-4 with new dancer on R.
9-12		Grand Slide: Walk 4 steps fwd, slide apart 4 steps, walk 4 steps bkwd, slide together 4 steps.
13-16		Balance and swing ptr. End facing down (away from music/screen)



Tony Parkes, calling squares at Stockton Folk Dance Camp in 2017.

There was a yak from Katmandu
Who liked to square dance at the zoo
Promenade left, and Do Si Do
Allemande left, and a heel and toe
You didn't think a yak could do!

~ Timothy McGuire