

Four Chestnuts

There are many old tunes, and many old dances. Some still survive. Those of us active in the Modern Contra Dance Community call them “Chestnuts. These tunes have maintained the tradition of having the tune and the dance cemented together. When we dance the dance, we play its signature tune. Thus, Chorus jig is danced to Chorus Jig.

Regretfully, these dances are going out of fashion. They are what we call “unequal” dances. The “active” couples (the ones) get a lot of action. The “inactives” (twos, and, if danced in an older style the threes) get time to watch, carry out set management, and be helpers to the active couples. Or, to put in in modern urban contra lingo, to stand around... Modern urban contra dancers generally prefer “equal” dances, where the ones and twos do the same thing, just going in opposite directions.

Still, many of us love these dances, and there are a lot more. Money Musk, Lady Walpole's Reel, Lamplighters, and Fisher's Hornpipe, just to name a few.

Since we are at Folklore Week, and that indicates an interest in the broader range of dance awareness, I'm including these for our consideration, even if we don't get to them.

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Chorus Jig

Played ABCB

(though it's a reel...)

A tune for the dance:
Chorus Jig

A D

5 A

B G D G D G

14 G D G D G

C D C

23 D C

B G D G D G

32 G D G D G

Chorus Jig: A1: Ones down the outside; Return
Proper A2: Ones down the center, turn alone; Return, Cast Off (same sex)
B1: Contra Corners
B2: Ones Balance & Swing

Hull's Victory

A tune that goes with
the dance, Hull's Victory

The musical score is written in 2/4 time and consists of four staves. The first staff contains measures 1-4 with chord symbols F, C, F, C, and F above the notes. The second staff starts at measure 5 and contains measures 5-8 with chord symbols F, C, G7, and C. The third staff starts at measure 9 and contains measures 9-12 with chord symbols F, B \flat , G7, and C, ending with a triplet of eighth notes. The fourth staff starts at measure 13 and contains measures 13-16 with chord symbols F, C, F, C, and F.

The dance:
Hull's Victory
Proper, Duple Minor

A1 Ones allemande Partner Right 1/2 to a wave (4), Balance (4)
With Neighbor allemande Left twice (8) (twice if you can, or a leisurely once)

A2 Ones allemande Partner once to a wave (4), Balance (4)
Ones Swing Partner in center

B1 Ones down center, turn as a couple; return, cast off with (same sex) Neighbor

B2 (same sex) Right & Left Through (over & back)

A dance that commemorates a naval victory in the War of 1812--the defeat of the H.M.S. Guerriere by the U.S.S. Constitution under the command of Isaac Hull on August 19, 1812. Dance caller, Walter Lenk, said the sound of the balances are supposed to represent the sounds of the cannon balls bouncing off the deck of the U.S.S. Constitution...

Petronella

The musical score for "Petronella" is written in 2/4 time and the key of D major (two sharps). It consists of four staves of music. The first staff contains measures 1-4 with chords D, A, D, and A. The second staff contains measures 5-8 with chords D, A, D, D, A, and D. The third staff contains measures 9-12 with chords D, G, Em, A, and D. The fourth staff contains measures 13-16 with chords D, G, Em, A, and D. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

A very old tune, from Scotland, with a dance from Scotland, though here is its modern (80 or 100 years?) American version:

- A1 Ones step to center to make a "diamond" (No. one Man facing up, No. one Woman, down (4) Balance (4); Spin to the right one place (4) Balance (4)
- A2 Spin to the right one place (4) Balance (4)
Spin to the right one place (4) Balance (4)
- B1 Twos spin to their side WHILE Ones go down center, turn alone; Return, (same sex) cast off
- B2 (same sex) Right & Left Through, over & back

Rory O'More

Samuel Lover, circa 1837
And it has it's own dance: Rory O'More

A A D A E

5 A A D A E A

9 F#m Bm F#m F#m E

13 F#m Bm F#m F#m E

Rory O'More
Proper, Duple Minor

A1 Ones cross, go below one, cross back coming up through current neighbors, and around their same sex neighbor to step into the center making a long wave with partner in right hand, and a shadow in left.

A2 Rory O'More Balances: balance right (towards partner) then left (towards shadow) Then slide (or twirl) past partner reforming a long wave, partner now in left, and a second shadow in right, and balance--left (!) towards partner, right, towards second shadow, then slide (or twirl) back to original position in the long wave. (balances are 4-beats, slides are 4-beats)

B1 Ones turn Contra Corners

B2 Ones Balance & Swing

An old tune, and an old dance. There are words to this tune, and they can be found in a variety of Irish song books. And, there are Scottish and probably Irish versions of this dance. Rory O'More, however, was a figure in Ireland in the early & mid 1600s.