

PLACE A CLASSIFIED AD | WHERE TO FIND THE VOICE

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2007



SOVO.COM
all the news for your life and your style.



- HOME
- CLASSIFIEDS

- THE LATEST
- SOVOWIRE
- SOVOBLOG

- NEWS
- VIEWPOINT

LOCAL LIFE

- MAIN FEATURE
- OUT IN ATLANTA

- ECLIPSE
- CALENDARS
- ABOUT US

- CALENDARS

EMAIL UPDATES

New to email updates? Then [click here](#) to find out more.

email address

subscribe

unsubscribe

I have read and agree to our [terms and conditions](#).

Sign Up

ADVERTISING

- GENERAL INFO
- E-EDITION
- MARKETING

ABOUT US

- ABOUT SOVO
- MASTHEAD
- EMPLOYMENT

MAIN FEATURE

Swing your partner

Gay dance groups chuck gender roles for toe-tapping fun

By [ZACK HUDSON](#)
Friday, February 02, 2007

For many gay Atlantans, dancing is what you do after a few drinks at your favorite nightclub on Saturday night. But for an increasing number of the city's gay residents, dancing is a social outlet in its own right — as well as a great way to exercise, a fun and demanding sport, and even an avenue for friendly competition.

A centuries-old form of folk-dancing called contra dancing is the newest kid on Atlanta's gay dance block. It's also a really good time, according to Barbara Katz, who, along with her partner Maggie Cowan, founded the Quicksilver Country Dancers, a new group that holds its first dance of the year on Feb. 3.

To explain the draw of gender-free dance, Katz cites her own experience as female dance enthusiast whose partner also happens to be female.

"There's just a sense of welcome. With mainstream dancing, there's always a slight rigidity among straight dancers, and invariably, when I'm dancing with my partner, someone will ask who's dancing the lead," she says.

"In gender-free dancing, because you don't have those gender cues, you have to pay a little more attention to position. It's nice to be in the majority once in a while," she says.

Contra dancing traces Celtic and Franco roots to North America. Like its country cousin, square dancing, it also uses a caller, a master-of-ceremonies who verbally choreographs the dancers' cues from a microphone stand while backed by a country or folk music band.

With gender roles left at the door, dancers use a simple system to identify who leads.

"People who are leading will wear an arm band. That way, people will know, that's the leader in the group," Katz says.

They will instruct "banded" dancers to dip, swing, do-si-do, and allemande, with their "bare-armed" partners.

QUICKSILVER COUNTRY DANCERS is the newest entry in Atlanta's growing list of offerings for gay



Quicksilver Country Dancers members demonstrate contra dancing, a folk-dancing tradition in which groups dance together with only one leader.

(Photo courtesy of Quicksilver Country Dancers)

MORE INFO

Quicksilver Country Dancers

Gender-free Contra Dance
Saturday, Feb. 3
8 p.m.
\$9 adults; \$5 children
Horizon School
1900 Dekalb Ave.
Beginners workshop at 7:30 p.m.
Additional events set for April 14, June 2
www.qcdancers.org

Hotlanta Squares

Open House for winter dance classes
Monday, Feb. 5
7 p.m.
First Metropolitan Community Church
1379 Tullie Road
www.hotlantasquares.org

Come Out Dancing

Salsa, ballroom, and social dancing lessons each week
404-245-7977
www.comeoutdancing.com

Hoedowns

Country & Western and line-dancing lessons each week
931 Monroe Drive
404-876-0001
www.hoedownsatlanta.com

Southern Line Atlanta

www.southernline.org

Peach Stampede

May 25-27
www.hoedown2007.com

[del.icio.us](#)

[Digg This Story](#)

[reddit](#)

[Sound Off about this article](#)

[Printer-friendly Version](#)

[E-Mail this story](#)

[Letter to the Editor](#)

dance enthusiasts.

The popularity of gay dance groups is spreading into urban centers throughout the U.S., according to dance instructor Shirley Adams, whose Come Out Dancing group holds several classes in Atlanta each week.

Adams says she normally departs for dance competitions and events in Europe every April, but will remain stateside this year so she can enjoy gay dance events in Philadelphia, New York and Orlando.

"It's starting in the states," she says enthusiastically. "I don't have to go to Paris and London because there's so much here."

In addition to frequent special events, Come Out Dancing lists classes each week in locations across Atlanta for students of varying skill levels in a multitude of dance styles, including Waltz, Foxtrot, Salsa, Tango, East Coast & Hustle, among others.

Gay fans of country dance styles have a particularly long list of choices in Atlanta. Hoedowns, the popular gay Country & Western bar in Midtown, hosts dance lessons for beginner and intermediate level dancers at least four evenings each week before the crowds roll in. The bar also regularly opens its doors to other dance groups.

Southern Line Atlanta meets weekly at Hoedowns and teaches progressive line dancing classes there on Fridays. The group's members participate in a variety of competitions around the country.

The Hotlanta Squares, a group for gay square dance enthusiasts, hosts frequent lessons and dance nights at the First Metropolitan Community Church of Atlanta, and members compete in square dancing events.

Dance lessons require "a definite commitment," acknowledges Eduardo Acevedo, Hotlanta Squares web master. "The benefits of dancing are that it's great exercise and a positive way to have something to do in your life. It's a wonderful group of people. You can make friends and the group of people is really outstanding."

Hotlanta Squares holds an open house for winter dance lessons on Feb. 5.

In May, Atlanta hosts the Peach Stampede, the 2007 convention of the International Association of Gay & Lesbian Country & Western Dance Clubs.

LESS FAMILIAR TO Southern audiences than Country & Western dancing, contra dancing enjoys more widespread popularity in New England, according to Katz, who says that Cowan, who lived for a time in Connecticut, learned contra-dancing there.

A few years back, the couple began sharing their love of contra dancing by hosting periodic dances to raise funds for various community organizations.

As the dances gained notoriety, Katz, Cowan and others opted to form a non-profit group, the Quicksilver Country Dancers, to hold dances and raise funds for community causes. Quicksilver has six dances planned for 2007, but Katz predicts the group will expand next year.

"If we are continually getting between 70 and 80 people, it's my hope we'll go monthly in 2008," she says.

She is quick to invite beginners to the contra dances, and notes that dancers of all sexual orientations and gender identities are welcome. The dance caller will lead an informal instruction session prior to each dance so that beginners have a chance to learn the various steps and positions.

Search the Voice

advertisements



advertisements

An advertisement for Wachovia's "Pick-A-Payment Mortgage". The background is light green. On the right, a hand is shown placing a brick on a stack of four brown bricks. The bricks are labeled from top to bottom: "invest", "unexpected expenses", "debt", and "mortgage". On the left, the text reads "DISCOVER THE NEW PICK-A-PAYMENT MORTGAGE". Below this is a blue button with the phone number "866 480 6916" and the text "TALK WITH WACHOVIA". At the bottom, it says "EQUAL HOUSING LENDER" and the Wachovia logo.

"At our upcoming dance, Maggie and I both decided we're only going to dance with people who don't know how to dance just to make everyone feel welcome," Katz says.



[national](#) | [local](#) | [world](#) | [health](#)
[letters](#) | [viewpoint](#) | [arts](#) | [classifieds](#)
[real estate](#) | [blade personals](#)



[Washington Blade](#) | [David Atlanta](#)
[Express Gay News](#) | [411 Magazine](#)
[New York Blade](#)

© 2007 | [A Window Media LLC Publication](#)

Please direct any comments/questions about this site to the [webmaster](#)