

The Lakewood Observer

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Masonic Temple Ballroom Hosts *Mud In Yer Eye*

By Melissa Page

On the first Saturday evening of the month contra dancing is going on here in the heart of Lakewood. Contra dancing takes place at college campuses and urban and rural communities nationwide. Every age finds enjoyment and exercise from the traditional American community dance. It stems from the 17th century English Country Dance and the music is mostly traditional Irish, English, and Scottish jigs and reels. The band, *Mud In Yer Eye*, currently consists of about forty musicians from all over Northeast Ohio. On any given night there may be 10 to 20 band members up on stage. Jan Larsen, the long time coordinator of the band and psychology professor at Case Western Reserve University, plays the hammer dulcimer. Also on stage you will find a variety of instruments such as fiddle, banjo, mandolin, recorder, accordion, and piano, depending on which musicians play that night.

The Masonic Temple attracts musicians and dancers from Oberlin to Twinsburg. Contra dance is for any one who can walk to a beat. The very heart of it is to draw people together for an enjoyable occasion whether they are young, old, slow, energetic, experienced or beginner. You do not need to come with a partner. Contra dancing starts with couples paired in a line. Whether you switch partners for every song or you keep the same partner all night, you will still connect with several different dancers regularly.



Swinging partners in the Masonic Temple Ballroom

Anyone can be a dancer on the first try. The steps are meant to be simple. Lessons are not required, or even usually taught, other than teaching sessions held before the event. Here the caller will go through most of the variety of steps and moves that you can expect during the night. Before each new song, the caller takes dancers through the order of steps that will be repeated during the song such as allemandes, ladies chain, and right hand star. To further ensure that all will keep pace, the experienced dancers cordially keep beginners on track as you exchange with them during the dance. In addition to the contra dances, the band performs a couple of waltzes during the evening to mix it up.

Contra dancing has been described as “an amusement park ride we make for ourselves.” Although they’ve been regularly performing here for some time, who knows how long *Mud In Yer Eye* will be coming to Lakewood as their venue choice? Whether you come to dance or just sit back and enjoy the music, you will be glad you came for the rich and enthusiastic experience of a contra dance.

The next *Mud In Yer Eye* event will be Saturday evening, December 6. Lessons for the contra dance start at 7 p.m. in the Masonic Temple basement while the annual Light Up Lakewood musical entertainment performs in the ballroom. The Contra Dance kicks off immediately afterward at 8 p.m. till 11 p.m. and costs \$6 per person. Due to Detroit Ave. being closed around the temple you should enter the Andrews parking lot off of Clifton Blvd. Soft-soled shoes or tennis shoes recommended and dress for comfort.

For more information on contra dancing or *Mud In Yer Eye* visit neohiocontradance.org.