

# Shared Weight: A Powerful Networking Tool for Traditional Dance, Music... and Very Likely Song!

by Emily Addison ~ in collaboration with Shared Weight listservs founders

CDSS is excited to announce the resurgence of **SharedWeight.net**, a powerful online community that supports those passionate about traditional dance, music, and song.

## A brief 101 about Shared Weight

Shared Weight is a group of listservs. Each separate list brings together people who are passionate about a particular topic, connecting them through email. Members of a listserv can ask questions of their group as well as share ideas, discuss topics, and provide encouragement.

## Renewing and expanding Shared Weight

Early in 2019, CDSS partnered with Seth Seeger and Chris Weiler (founders of Shared Weight listservs for contra callers, organizers, and musicians), Alan Winston (founder of the English country dance list), Ridge Kennedy (founder of the trad callers list), and Weogo Reed (founder of the contra sound forum). We have been working throughout the year to bring all of the lists under one umbrella as well as update the back-end software, create a new Shared Weight website (thank you Emily Rush for your volunteer work!), tweak the mandates of a few lists, and promote them more widely. We have also identified some 'list champions' to shepherd certain lists (thank you to these folks!). The whole team is excited about what this new partnership offers.

*I'm excited about the renewed energy and focus from all the list owners and the improvements to the services. I hope that more people in our community can take advantage of the expanded resources and support that we can provide. —Chris Weiler*

*It makes a lot more sense for a list of national/international scale to be supported by a continental organization (CDSS)... I'm hoping the website and the CDSS News articles will help bring this resource to the attention of more people who can use it. —Alan Winston*

Shared Weight's vision is to increase the vitality of the traditional dance, music, and song community in North America. And the mission is to provide an accessible, non-corporate online-platform that hosts communities of traditional dance, music, and song organizers and performers with the goal of supporting each other across geographical boundaries.

Being a leader in traditional arts (whether as a caller, musician, organizer, song leader, or sound tech) can be rewarding and enjoyable, but it can also be challenging and isolating work. The Shared Weight lists bring us together so that we can act as a support network for each other. Each of the list founders is proud that the Shared Weight lists are very positive communities, welcoming of both new and experienced individuals.

*Through building audio skills capacity, we are improving local dance, singing, and other events, which helps build our communities as a whole. Several list members are experts in various fields, so we can get real answers to questions, rather than just guesses. At the same time, musicians, callers and organizers have brought a different, helpful perspective. From the start I stated that posts should be ok for reading by one's mother or eight year old child, which has built a community of respect and collaborative learning. —Weogo Reed*

## Why listservs? What do they have to offer?

Listservs are a great platform for hosting online conversations, and yet we recognize that no one platform meets everyone's needs. Here are some advantages of listservs:

- They are simple, reliable, and durable. Additionally, the Shared Weight lists run on open-source software, therefore being independent of large corporations who make their money off of their users.
- Listserv archives hold a wealth of information and are easy to search by subject, which is harder to do in platforms such as Facebook.

- Some individuals don't use social media, whereas most individuals have an email address.
- Users can set the list messages to be sent to them immediately or in digest mode (one email that contains many posts).

### What lists are hosted by Shared Weight?

- **Dance organizers:** This list has recently expanded its scope to serve organizers involved in any form of traditional social dance (e.g., Appalachian squares, contra, barn dances, ceilidh, and more). Topics vary widely (e.g., how to increase attendance, financial models, safety issues).
- **TradSound:** This list was previously called the ContraSoundForum. It has recently expanded to include anyone interested in doing sound for traditional dance and concert events. Discussion topics include people skills, hearing preservation, acoustics, audio equipment, system operation, and more.
- **Contra callers:** Just as the title suggests, this is a list is for those who want to discuss calling contra dances.
- **Trad callers:** This list welcomes a wide range of callers, including those interested in calling for school-aged children, barn dances, traditional square dance (in its various forms), one night stands, and more!
- **ECD:** This list is for discussing all aspects of modern and historical English country dance and its related forms. Topics include calling, dancing, organizing, and music.
- **Dance musicians:** This list has recently expanded its scope to serve musicians who play for any form of traditional social dance (e.g., family dances, contra, ECD, Quebecois squares, Balfolk, and more). Topics vary from how to get gigs to how to play in a way that excites dancers.

### Online communities with similar services

*Each of these can be found through a quick Google search:*

- **Pourparler** is a group dedicated to teaching folk/ethnic/world/traditional dance in schools and/or in the wider community. To be added to this listserv, you need to have attended one of the annual Pourparler gatherings.
- **Morris Dancing Discussion List (MDDL)** is an

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unmoderated discussion group about all things Morris.

- **Mudcat Cafe** is a listserv for those interested in traditional song. Much of the conversation focuses on song lyrics and history.
- **Organizers of Contra Dance** is a Facebook group for contra dance organizers.
- **Song Session Organizers** is a Facebook group for traditional song leaders.

### The possibility of new lists

The Shared Weight team welcomes the idea of hosting other lists that serve the traditional dance, music, and song community. We have recently identified a number of individuals who would like to have a listserv for traditional song organizers, and so we are exploring the option of launching a new list sometime this winter. We have also discussed the possibility of a listserv for ritual dance leaders/organizers depending on interest from the community. Please email me if you are interested in either of these lists or if you have suggestions for other lists. [emily@cdss.org](mailto:emily@cdss.org)

On behalf of CDSS, I want to say a HUGE thank you to Alan Winston, Chris Weiler, Ridge Kennedy, Seth Seeger, and Weogo Reed. These community leaders identified the need for support networks 15-25 years ago, and they found a way to pull us together. Each of these lists has benefited hundreds of individuals throughout North America and beyond, strengthening our shared traditions.

We encourage you to join one or more of these lists to *share the weight* and become part of a community of people who share similar passions as you!