

Two Contra Tunes: *The Alligator's Dentist and Gator Boots for Jolie*

These two tunes were written during the tune writing workshop at the 2018 Stellar Days and Nights dance weekend in Buena Vista, CO. The workshop started with one of the participants telling the group a hilarious joke about an encounter with an alligator with a toothache, and suggested we write a tune called "The Alligator's Dentist." We all decided that the image of a dentist wrestling with an alligator while extracting its tooth might have some musical potential. Together, we worked out the sound of the imagined thrashing tail and frenzied tussle (reflected by the driving fiddle part) and the multiple attempts of the dentist to get his hands in and out of the alligator's jaws (the approaching and retreating flute melody). We used an iPhone to capture ideas as we worked, so we could go back and retrieve musical phrases we liked best.

THE ALLIGATOR'S DENTIST

Peter Esherick, Erika Gerety, Erin McMullin and Ladies at Play

The musical score for "The Alligator's Dentist" is presented in four systems. Each system consists of two staves: a treble clef staff for the melody and a bass clef staff for the accompaniment. The music is in 4/4 time. The first system features a driving fiddle accompaniment in the bass staff and a melody in the treble staff. The second system continues this pattern. The third system introduces a flute melody in the treble staff, with the fiddle accompaniment in the bass staff. The fourth system continues the flute melody and fiddle accompaniment. Chord symbols are placed above the treble staff: Am, G, F, D, F, D, F, D, Am, and E.

The second tune followed nicely... earlier in the day, we had discussed an observation that our friend Jolie from the Albuquerque dance community had made about the effect of music on dancers, and we decided to write a tune for her as a token of our appreciation, gifting her a musically rendered pair of gator boots (since we obviously could not get alligators off our minds!). The Ladies at Play notated the tunes after the workshop, and the next morning, joined onstage by the workshop participants and the members of Uncle Farmer, we debuted the two new tunes as a medley during the final dance of the weekend, called by Gaye Fifer. The Ladies at Play are an Oklahoma-based contra dance and English country dance band. They recently put out a CD that features fifteen compositions by Jonathan Jensen, entitled *Swimming Down the Stars*. Their earlier CD consists of original waltzes written for couples in the Oklahoma City dance community, entitled *Once Upon a Waltz*.

GATOR BOOTS FOR JOLIE

Peter Esherick, Erika Gerety, Erin McMullin and Ladies at Play

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and the key of D major. It consists of four systems of two staves each. The first two systems are for a melody and bass line, with guitar chords (Em, C, G, B) and triplets indicated above the staff. The third and fourth systems are for a piano accompaniment, with chords (D, C, G, D) and an 8va marking above the staff.

WEB EXTRAS: See the dances being called by Gaye Fifer at the close of Stellar Days & Nights (video by Wendy Graham): youtube.com/watch?v=aHcWd3a4ENw&t=20s

Listen to the tunes on Soundcloud: Alligator's Dentist: soundcloud.com/marana-1-1/alligators-dentist

Gator Boots for Jolie: soundcloud.com/marana-1-1/gator-boots-for-jolie