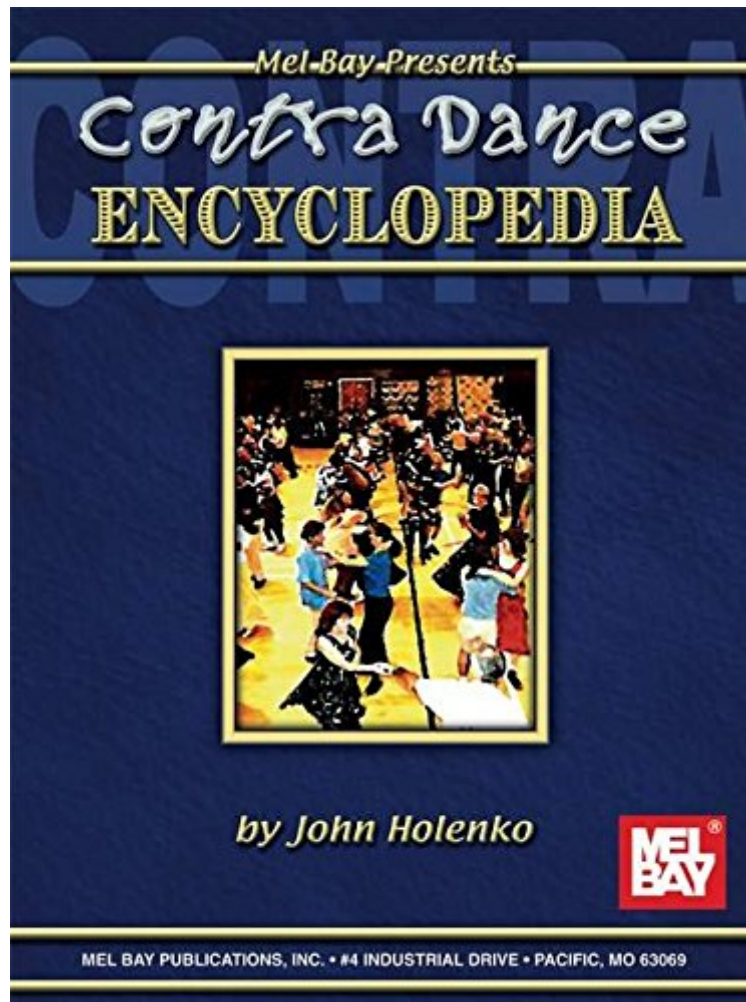


## Contra Dance Encyclopedia

*John Holenko*

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**John Holenko : Contra Dance Encyclopedia** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Contra Dance Encyclopedia:

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Musician's handbook, not an encyclopediaBy Rick GregoryThe Contra Dance Encyclopedia is most definitely not an encyclopedia. It really should be titled "Contra Dance Music" or "Contra Dance Tunes" or "Folk Tunes for Contra Dancing." The back cover's "About this Book" accurately describes the contents: "a convenient and easy-to-use handbook for musicians who want to play for contra dances." Musician's handbook - yes, encyclopedia - no.The first two pages provide the reader with a bit of history of contra dance - where it came from, how it evolved, and its current state. The vast majority (57 of 80 pages = 71%) of the book is musical scores. The eleven pages devoted to instrumental technique and other things musician-related are probably useful to aspiring contra dance musicians.Some of the statements the author makes are not totally correct. For example, your

partner is not necessarily across the set in the opposite line. The contra dance Becket position has partner couples together on the same side of the set, facing another partner couple. Nor do dancers always form lines "alternating male and female." The contra formation termed "proper" has all the males on one side and all the females on the other (as opposed to the alternating "improper" line). The statement that alcohol is forbidden at contra dances is perhaps true at some dances, but I've never heard of such in my 28 years of contra and square dancing. Perhaps the author is thinking of Modern Western Square Dancing; square dances do not permit alcohol at the dance (after the dance in a restaurant is another matter). Contra dances I attended in North Carolina frequently had the cans of beer outside on the porch; a beer can or two has also been seen at contra dances in Utah. And no, I've never seen anyone becoming unable to dance as a result. Anyone looking for compilations of the dance figures might consider the book, *Cracking Chestnuts: The Living Tradition of American Contra Dances*, available from the Country Dance Song Society. Or titles from the Anglo-American Dance Shop.

The *Contra Dance Encyclopedia* is a handbook for musicians who want to play for contra dances. Music from American fiddle tunes to the Irish tradition are presented in sets suitable for playing for dances (as well as sessions, concerts, and other gigs). There is also an extensive section of tunes grouped into Reels, Jigs, and Waltzes that can be used. Included is a short history of contra dance, as well as ideas on putting together a dance band. Instrumental and stylistic techniques for guitar, mandolin, whistle, and fiddle are discussed, as well as band dynamics and orchestration. Convenient and easy to use handbook Music from American fiddle tunes to Traditional Irish tunes are presented in sets suitable for dances Information on the history of the contra dance Instrumental and stylistic techniques for guitar, mandolin, whistle, and fiddle are discussed

About the Author John Holenko has performed on classical guitar and historic instruments throughout the United States and in Europe. As a solo guitarist and chamber musician, Mr. Holenko performs the traditional repertoire for classical guitar, as well as new music for the instrument, and lesser known works from all periods. Called "a skilled soloist" by the Boston Globe, Mr. Holenko has given recitals and been featured in radio broadcasts in New York, Los Angeles, Boston, and San Francisco. As a member of the early music ensemble Sonus, Mr. Holenko has performed on historic instruments in recitals in the United States and in Europe. Sonus' recordings for Dorian Discovery feature Mr. Holenko performing on oud, saz, psaltery, and other period instruments. His work with the cittern, Renaissance guitar, and Baroque guitar keep him involved in music of all periods. John also performs traditional American and Celtic music on guitar and mandolin. Mr. Holenko is on the faculty of Charleston Southern University where he directs the guitar program. He is the creator of the Fretwork radio program on South Carolina Public Radio, and is the coordinator of the Fretwork Concert Series for Piccolo Spoleto. Holenko received degrees in guitar performance from the New England Conservatory, and the University of Southern California, studying historic performance at both institutions, and premiering many new works.