

Contra Dancing at Boston Pride March

by John Gintell

At about 12:30 on Saturday we launched off in the Boston Pride Parade. Nineteen of us were ready to dance at the start and more people joined in during the ~1¼ hours of the march. We were led by Chris Ricciotti's bus (exhaust pipe extension sent the exhaust up instead of backwards) containing the sound system and decorated with banners made by Wes on each side saying:

*Lavender Country and Folk Dancers
Boston Gay and Lesbian Contra Dancers
Dance tonight in JP
Beginners, Singles and Couples all welcome*

The bus was also adorned with shiny colored streamers and rainbow flags. David Downs was the sound engineer and Dean Allemang (Dino) the caller. Liz Augustine and Jim LaBonte were the Marshals at each side. So there we were contra dancing in front of 60,000 people handing out about 800 fliers with info about that night's Pride Dance in JP as well as Camp, our JP dance series, the Northampton and NYC dance series, and JP English. It was fun. Dino working with Linda Leslie (who couldn't come because of a back injury) constructed some dances that would work while we were moving forward and while stopped (a state that changed quite frequently!). It seemed that we always got to lines forward and back just when we were moving so there was lots of catching up to do. Its quite a challenge to dance when you can't always hear the music or the caller because of all the noise and the beat of the Brazilian music from the flat bed truck a few groups in front of. But it worked; lots of people got to see us contra dancing (probably the first time some had ever seen it).

I'm sure we'll do it again and we will be looking at how to make some improvements. It was great exposure and it looks like it had immediate payoff. The pride dance at JP (Dino calling with Spare Parts) was a grand success. We had lots of new people, I think it was record attendance and quite a few of the new people stayed to the very end and many asked to be on this e-mail list (welcome!). A few people remarked how welcoming our group is to newcomers, and especially to beginners who were dancing quite well thanks to the teaching by Dino and the help from other dancers. Thanks to everyone who participated in the planning and execution of the march. Special thanks to Dino who called without stopping and to Chris who made the CD of music, rigged his bus and drove it for the whole march. It is splendid evidence of the strength of our community that we can pull off events like this and the NEFFA food - both with lots of participants.

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