

## PRESENTATION ON DANCE ROLES AT PCD COMMUNITY MEETING, March 16, 2016

1) Per the Executive Committee's recent email announcement, we want to present our proposal re: “encouraging a more gender-neutral environment where people consider dancing both roles.”

2) First of all, here is what we are **not** proposing:

a) By gender-neutral, we do not mean gender-free, so we are not proposing, for example, that our callers eliminate the usage of the terms gents and ladies.

b) We are **not** mandating or requiring that anyone change their traditional dance role and start role-swapping.

3) In a moment, we'll explain what the EC is proposing, but first a little background.

a) Contra dancing has been quickly evolving lately, especially among young dancers, who like to change dance roles, sometimes doing so back and forth in the same dance. This is becoming more and more a common practice at dance festivals and at dances like Mt Airy and CDNY in NYC where there are many young dancers. And it should be noted that role-swapping is also happening at PCD, and not just by young dancers.

b) So here's what the EC **is** proposing:

1) We'd like PCD to be viewed as a **safe, welcoming, and comfortable** place by our young dancers (and anyone else) who likes to switch roles or who wants to practice or experiment dancing a new role. (For example, some of our young dancers feel uncomfortable if they receive comments about their role swapping, eg “Which one of you is the man this time?”, which although probably intended to be humorous, make them feel a bit unwelcome.)

2) We'd also like to encourage our dancers to try role-switching (**assuming they feel comfortable doing so**). We're not proposing that people try things that they are not ready for yet.

4) Here are the reasons for this new proposal by the EC:

a) We'd like to encourage our dancers to change their expectations and no longer associate dance roles with a specific gender, so they don't automatically make assumptions, eg a man coming at you in a ladies' chain is in the wrong place. As one increasingly popular dance T-shirt says, “Dance with who's coming at you!”

b) We hope that this shift in our dancers' expectations will make more young dancers view our dance as welcoming and that their increased attendance will bring more energy and excitement to the dance.

c) If more of our dancers become comfortable dancing both roles, then they can:

1) Dance with any beginner who can't find a partner

2) Dance when there's a gender imbalance, so they have more choices of dance partners

3) Get to meet and better know people at the dance of both genders

4) And become even better dancers, not to mention have fun!

5) Role swapping is not just something that young people can do. Any dancer with enough experience can try it and and it's fun!

6) **CONCLUSION:** So, just to reiterate, please understand that the EC is merely **encouraging** our dancers to broaden their horizons and to consider trying role-swapping and to be **accepting** of those who are role swapping. We are not mandating or requiring that anyone does this: it is an **option**. We're also hoping that our callers will help guide us in this new endeavor by occasionally encouraging our dancers to try learning a different dance role. Our hope is that our dancers will no longer see the “ladies and gents roles” necessarily as women's and men's roles, but as roles that can be danced by anyone of any gender.