

Mp3 Contratopia - Smitten

Contratopia



Smitten

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High energy original, acoustic instrumental tunes performed on violin, English concertina, mandolin, piano, oboe, banjo and percussion by a band featured at contra dances from Montana to Florida. 11 MP3 Songs FOLK: Traditional Folk, WORLD: Celtic Details: Contratopia is a contra dance band composed of two musicians from Minnesota and two from northeast Iowa. Erik Sessions (fiddle), Patrice Pakiz (piano, oboe, percussion), Pat O'Loughlin (english concertina and banjo) and John Goodin (mandolin and guitar) began playing together in late 1999 and decided that the rewards of working together outweighed the challenges of geographical separation. Many groups of dancers have enjoyed Contratopia's unique musical approach at events from Bozeman, Montana to Asheville, North Carolina and the band anticipates continuing to share their enthusiasm for jigs, reels and waltzes with dancers for a long time to come. The group has played frequently for dances in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area and has completed three tours of the mid-Atlantic region playing in Baltimore, Philadelphia, Glen Echo and Frederick, MD and Richmond and Bluemont, Virginia. The band has also enjoyed a successful tour of North Carolina dance hotspots. Contratopia has been the featured band at dance weekends in Minnesota, Montana, Wisconsin, Iowa and North Carolina and has played for workshops in Scandinavian dance, English Country Dance and general couples dancing. In addition to live performance the band has recorded three CDs: Smitten (brand new) Hands Four, are collections of mostly original reels, jigs and waltzes. Ballroom Echoes is a collection of mostly original waltzes. Occasionally the band ventures into the hinterlands of Winneshiek County, Iowa to play concerts and dances in Decorah, where Erik and John make their homes. Erik Sessions has taken his years of classical training and combined it with a wide variety of musical interests and experiences to create a powerful fiddling style. He honed his skills as a founding member of the popular Twin Cities band Pig's Eye Landing at countless dances and contributed to

several of their recordings. Erik is well known as a composer of exciting tunes and his "It Ain't the Heat, It's the Humidity" (the first track on Hands Four) is featured in the popular tunebook The Portland Collection. Patrice Pakiz is a rhythmically compelling pianist who keeps dancers on their toes and her oboe playing and percussion accents help keep the Contratopia sound interesting. She is also a member of Macha Tri, with Laura MacKenzie and Mag McDermott, and is prominently featured on their CD, The Bear Dance. Patrice's jazz background and her unerring harmonic sense are fundamental to Contratopia's improvisatory approach. Pat O'Loughlin has deep roots in the Twin Cities dance community as a player, a caller and an organizer. His english concertina, hammer dulcimer and banjo playing have been an important part of many groups over the years, in particular, the long-running bands Thistledown and Colerain. He is also nationally known as a builder of high quality harps. In Contratopia Pat serves as both an instigator and an anchor, alternately encouraging the group to stretch out and to behave itself. He is particularly interested in encouraging the band to play new tunes. John Goodin has played guitar and mandolin in a variety of styles for a Long Time and holds the distinction of being the oldest Contratopian. As a composer he has written several pieces for mandolin orchestra that have been performed around the world and recorded in Germany, Greece and the United States. He has also published a collection of fiddle tunes, Blueberries to Boston, available from Plucked String, Inc. Many of the tunes on Hands Four are by Goodin and were written expressly for the band. Like all the group members John has a strong interest in improvisation and a belief that being a little unpredictable makes the dance more fun.

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