

## Are you NEW to ROUND DANCING?

Check the [you2candance](#) website !

Watch the fun, then use the site's resources to find a club near you  
if you do not live in Upstate New York or Northern Pennsylvania

According to [you2candance](#), **ROUND DANCING is best described as choreographed ballroom dancing for couples**. It is a social, non-competitive activity, for fun rather than competition. On the dance floor, choreography is directed verbally by a **round dance cuer**, enabling all couples on the floor to dance the same steps at the same time. This “cuer” guides the dancers through the figures in each routine, thereby eliminating the need to memorize, and making it challenging for the mind as well as the body.

There is no prize for being perfect: it is **DANCE FOR THE FUN OF IT!**

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Following is a **very short HISTORY OF ROUND DANCING**, condensed from a write-up appearing in a website of Central Missouri Square&Round Dance Clubs, with added dates and quotes from original sources.

It was published in the 2016 May-August issue of **The Coordinator**.

Dance has been a part of human life since before recorded history, but couple dancing - especially closed position dancing - are of “recent” origin, dating to the late eighteenth century Europe. Our modern Round Dancing developed along with Square Dancing from the American pioneer days. The early dancers did not want to stop dancing between tips, so would then dance such things as simplified waltzes, polkas and schottisches. Over the years, the inclusion of the more modern ballroom rhythms and figures were introduced, so Round Dancing is not “the old dances coming back again” as **Lloyd Shaw** said in his 1949 **Round Dance Book**, it is a new way to dance them!

Just as Square Dancing became more complex, so did Round Dancing. Routines grew in number and became more precise. A whole new area of teaching/learning/challenge opened up when Latin rhythms were added. And when some of the English ballroom moves found their way into round dance routines, giving greater importance to body and head position, additional terms and definitions had to be introduced.

Not all dancers were pleased with those changes, as many were quite content with the easy two steps and waltzes. This led to the development of "levels" of Round Dancing based upon the steps in the dance, the timing and timing changes, positions and sequence. Nowadays, round dances are divided into four groups: **Easy Level (I), Square Dance Level (II), Intermediate (III, IV, V), and Advanced (VI)**. This classification gives an idea of the difficulty of a dance - which is often far from the reality, hence the common expression “This dance is NOT

a Cue-and-Do!" To standardize Round Dance figures, the American organization **ROUNDALAB** was established in 1976 - it publishes a manual offering guidelines for all aspects of the activity.

The increasing complexity of Round Dancing had a major impact on the Square&Round Dancing community. (1) Many dancers found that they are no longer interested (or able) to memorize that much material. They began to ask for help from the round dance leader to prompt them (or cue them) through the routine of the dances. Round dance teachers and leaders discovered they were becoming **Cuers** (!) and found that cueing encouraged larger numbers of dancers onto the floor. Some areas of the country opposed cueing for a long time, feeling that dancers should learn the dances and be able to dance them only to the music, as they had done in the past. However, success silenced most of those "purists" and the cueing of round dances is now almost universal in the world of Square&Round Dancing. (2) There has been also a tendency to separate Square Dancing and Round Dancing - a tendency that some old timers find unfortunate, since they are branches of the same tree. The separation occurred particularly at the higher levels of both Square and Round Dancing: at major festivals, one finds separate halls for rounds; most states have a separate Round Dance festival; and there is even a National Round Dance festival.

There was also numerous clubs devoted wholly to Round Dancing. In 1971, Frank and Iris Gilbert founded the **National Carousel Organization** (NCC) to promote clubs that danced the same "high intermediate to advanced" dance material, published in a newsletter, so that dancers could dance anywhere in the country. By 1995, there were 256 NNC clubs nationwide. They are now part of the larger International Choreographed Ballroom Dance Association organization (ICBDA).

In Corning NY, square dancers David and Dottie **Griffiths** became passionate round dancers, then round dance teachers and cuers, and started the Da-Do-Rounds. That club became Carousel Club #59 in 1976 and remained under Griffiths leadership for 30 years. When her husband passed away in 1995, Dottie continued to cue for dances and to teach Round Dancing in her Hammondsport home, right next to lovely Waneta Lake. She is currently the only round dance teacher in the Finger Lakes area.