

The Magic of Merrill

32-bar reel for 3 couples

Devised by Lyle Ramshaw, for the San Francisco Branch of the RSCDS

Lead tune: I recommend the Cape Breton version of “Return from India,” as in *Jerry Holland's (first) Collection of Fiddle Tunes*. Be warned that early editions of this collection have a repeat mark at the end of bar 8 that you should ignore; the first eight bars are A, the remaining four bars repeated are B, and you make 32 bars by playing ABAB. Note also that Jerry or his Cape Breton colleagues have altered the tune significantly from the older version that is found on page 8 of *Kerr's First Collection of Merry Melodies*, including swapping the A and B parts.

- 1-2 1s and 2s set on the sides.
- 3-4 2s cast up to first place while 1s cross down (no hands) into double-triangles position, facing the opposite side.
- 5-6 2s, 1s, and 3s set as in double triangles.
- 7-8 1s turn their first corner 3/4 by the right hand, leaving first woman between the 2s and first man between the 3s.
- 9-12 Half reels of three across the set, 1s giving left shoulder to the person on their left — that is, first woman to second woman and first man to third man.
- 13-16 Right-shoulder half reels of three on the sides, 1s on their own side; on bar 16, 1s pass left shoulder* to face first-corner position. Corners connect the previous half reels to these with extra quarter-loops, as in John Drewry's dance “Bratach Bana.”
- 17-24 Half a reel of four on the first-corner diagonal and then on the second-corner diagonal; 1s pass right shoulder on bar 20 between the two half reels and pass right shoulder again on bar 24 to second place, own side.
- 25-32 2s, 1s, and 3s circle six hands round and back.

Repeat, having passed a couple.

Merrill Hall, designed by Julia Morgan, is the primary dance space at the Asilomar Conference Grounds, where the San Francisco Branch hosts a magical dance weekend each autumn. The hall is named for Mary Sroufe Merrill (1853-1924), who became Asilomar's first director in 1913.

With luck, these directions should be available at:

<http://ramshaw.info/dances/MagicOfMerrill.pdf>

* When dancing as first man, I enjoy acknowledging my partner as we zoom past each other during bar 16, our left shoulders almost brushing.