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This book is, I believe, the first "Caller Text" that was written for modern (as different from traditional) square dance callers. The draft was written in 1961 & 62 which was, I believe, the second or third year that I taught callers. As I review this new digital version formatted by Gardner Patton I am struck by how “current” the information in it is today (2019).

I had attended Ed Gilmore's school for callers in Glenwood springs, Colorado in 1959 to learn what I could from his teaching. I came away feeling that there was a real need of a text book that would provide detailed information about the basic skills. This set of notes for my 1961/62 classes was my first attempt to provide such a document.

At that time my classes for callers ran once a month and had no starting or ending time. Many callers came until they had completed the curriculum and then returned intermittently for several years thereafter. In 1966 I had enough confidence in what I had written that I put it out in a book form and printed 50 copies. At that time there was no document available that attempted to provide the basic information needed to become a modern square dance caller. As I review the book today I believe there are still few other documents available that address the “basic” elements of calling MWSD.

Jim Mayo
2019-01-19

Note: There are two calls used in this document that are no longer in use in the MWSD activity. They are Cross Trail and Dixie Chain (used only 5 times.) Cross Trail can often (but not always) be replaced with Couples Half Sashay and Pass Thru.

# CALLING

# FOR

# MODERN SQUARE DANCING

**JIM MAYO**
**1966**

# CALLING FOR MODERN SQUARE DANCING

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First Edition 1966
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# INTRODUCTION

This book has been written as a textbook for use in teaching modern square dance callers. It does not pretend to include everything that a caller should know but it does contain a great deal that has never before been available in printed form. When I first began to teach people to call about seven years ago I repeated the search I had made when I learned calling myself. I discovered that there was no book available from which to learn the fundamental elements of calling. So far as I can tell this is still true. There are books that go into choreography extensively and much has been written about music and tradition. You can read about the more advanced aspects of calling in many places but little has been written about the mechanical aspects of calling modern square dancing in terms that have meaning for the beginning caller.

No book can be written that will teach you to call. I have tried to include here the detailed information that will make it easier to learn from an experienced caller either in a class or by the apprentice system. I expect that few callers will find anything of importance to disagree with in this book. An attempt has been made to stick to facts or at least to label clearly those opinions that are included. It is my hope that the availability of such a book will free caller-teachers from the routine questions and give them the chance to pass on to students their special knowledge and skill.

This is not a complete textbook. It is a first attempt at making information available in book form that has been shared in the past only by word-of-mouth. I would hope that others would also write for the beginning caller and thus, in time, the accumulated knowledge of callers might be recorded. The information printed here has come to me from many teachers as well as from my own experience. Among the many, three stand out for the very specific help and guidance they gave to me personally. With great appreciation I acknowledge the effort expended on my education by Ralph Page, Al Brundage and Ed Gilmore.

# Chapter 1 - MUSIC AND THE CALL

Throughout the history of man dancing has involved matching the movement of the dancers to a beat or rhythm. This beat has bean set in different ways, by beating on a hollow log with a stick, by the American Indians with their drums, by the southern mountain square dancers with the clogging of their feet on the floor, whatever way the rhythm is kept, dancers time their actions to match it. Modern square dance music also has a beat. The bass fiddle, drum or sometimes the piano is used to maintain the steady rhythm that makes it possible for the dancers to move together, all taking their steps at the same time.

## TYPES OF RHYTHM

In square dance music there are three basically different kinds of rhythm. The most frequently heard is the "BOOM chuck, BOOM chuck," of the bass fiddle making the "BOOM" and the guitar chord filling the "chuck". Because of the way this beat is written musically, it is called 2/4 (two - four) time. Another common rhythm is 4/4 (four - four) time which is a steady "BOOM, BOOM, BOOM, BOOM." The third rhythm, used less frequently, is 6/8 (six - eight) time and is perhaps most descriptively written "RA ta ta, RA ta ta, RA ta ta, RA ta ta." You may find it easier to recognize these rhythm patterns from the types of music. The 2/4 time is common in Dixieland jazz while the 4/4 is what you usually hear from a marching band. 6/8 time is found in the Irish jig. The importance of this for the square dance caller is that if your music is loud enough for dancers to hear, most dancers will time their steps to its beat. Your voice should match the beat of the music. If it doesn't, many of your dancers will find the choice between your beat and that of the music an uncomfortable and tiring one. This chart shows the relationship among the three types of rhythm and the dancers' steps.

| Dancers | Step | Step | Step | Step |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2/4 | Boom chuck | Boom Chuck | Boom Chuck | Boom Chuck |
| 4/4 | Boom | Boom | Boom | Boom |
| 6/8 | RA Ta Ta | RA Ta Ta | RA Ta Ta | RA Ta Ta |

## PHRASE

Each four steps the dancer takes makes up a sub-phrase and two sub-phrases (8 steps) make a phrase in square dance music. The first beat in each phrase is a little bit louder (or heavier) than the other seven and in most recorded square dance music you can hear these heavy beats quite plainly. Your dancers can hear them too. With rare exceptions, all square dance music is made up of 8 beat phrases. Usually, there are 8 of these phrases (64 beats) in a musical pattern and after every 64 beats, the musicians go back to the beginning and play the same pattern again, repeating as many times as necessary. The 64 beat musical unit is called a chorus and is found in both patter and singing call music.

## MELODY AND HARMONY

So far we have spoken only about the rhythm; music also has a melody or tune and it too is important to the caller. The melody is made up of sounds of varying pitch: it is what you hear when a song is sung or played one note at a time. All the sounds that come from an orchestra, other than the one note at a time that is the melody, are either rhythm or accompaniment or both. If the accompaniment does not harmonize (sound pleasant) with the

melody note, anyone who is not tone-deaf will find it uncomfortable to hear. Therefore, the caller must, at all times, sing or speak either on the same note as the melody or one that harmonizes with the melody note. This is true of both patter and singing calls.

Harmonizing with the melody does not mean that you have to change the pitch of your voice every time the melody note changes. In many songs, one note will harmonize with every note in the melody and, while it would be boring to hear, you could speak your patter calls on that one note and still be harmonizing. To avoid the monotonous sound of a single note, find two or three notes and use them all. If you do not find these notes instinctively, you can usually find them in the accompaniment that the orchestra is playing. The bass instruments, the bass fiddle or trombone or the piano player's left hand, are using the notes you want. If you listen carefully to the lowest notes you can hear, you will find a few notes repeated in a regular sequence. This is called the "bass pattern" and if your voice follows the same pattern, it will harmonize with the melody. It may take a bit of practice before you can readily find the base pattern, but once you have found it in any one record you'll recognize it quickly every time you use that record and the pattern will be successively easier to find in other recordings. Work expended on developing a melodious sounding call is well worth the effort; it is often the mark which distinguishes the good caller from the less able. Don't inflict yourself on dancers until you have learned to make your call harmonize.

## TEMPO

The final important characteristic of square dance music is its speed or tempo and this can be deceptive. Music speed is the number of beats per minute. When dancers are dancing with the music, this also refers to the number of steps they are taking every minute. Since most calling these days is done to recorded music played on a variable speed record player, the control of music speed depends entirely on the caller. It is generally agreed that 124 beats per minute is uncomfortably slow for modern square dancing and 150 beats per minute is uncomfortably fast. These two extremes present a wide choice and the correct speed depends on many factors such as the age and experience of the dancers, the condition of the dance floor, the weather, the custom in the area and the type of figure you are calling. As a general rule, if the dancers are not keeping their steps in time with the music, either the music is too fast or your call is off beat. Music that is too slow is more difficult to identify. One indication may be that the dancers appear plodding and lacking in enthusiasm but these same symptoms can reflect problems other than speed of music. As you develop calling experience, you will begin to feel when the speed that was correct early in the evening is either too fast or too slow for the last dance.

In this section we have described the characteristics of music that are most important to the square dance caller - beat or rhythm, the phrase or organization of the music, melody, harmony and the bass pattern, and tempo. Listen to square dance music analytically and learn to distinguish these musical elements. Work with them until your response to them is automatic and you will make square dancing more fun for your dancers.

## FITTING THE CALL TO MUSIC

Once we understand the many aspects of the music we are using, the next important step for the caller is to make his call fit the music. Not only should it fit the beat and melody as described in the section on music, but it should fit the movement of the dancers as well. It is generally recognized that every square dance figure takes a certain number of steps to complete smoothly and unhurriedly. From the basic square position, a LADIES CHAIN will take 8 steps - four to move the girls across the floor and four more to complete the courtesy turn. A RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH from the same position also takes 8 steps and DO PASO takes 12. You can count the

number of steps required for other figures as you dance them. REMEMBER this means smoothly and without rushing. One of the ground rules here is that square dance movements always require an <u>even</u> number of steps.

Given the fact that dancers must hear a call before they can dance it, it follows that the call must precede the dancers' action. It should be there just before they are ready to use it. Furthermore, the best calling fits the call to the music in such a way that the dancers can WHENEVER POSSIBLE start a figure on the first (or heavy) beat of the eight beat phrase, mentioned in the section on the music. The reason for this is more easily observed than described. When the dancing fits the music in this way, it takes on a new life for most dancers. Dancers feel lighter, more buoyant and leave less tired at the end of the evening. Later in this chapter, there is an experiment you can try to show yourself the effect of this technique. It is true, of course, that you may not always be trying to make the dancing easier and less tiring but even when you are not, you will find that knowing how to let your dancers start with the phrase will make it easier for you to get the results you want with any style of calling.

If your dancers are to start a figure - let's say a RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH - on the first beat of a phrase, your call must be completed just as the preceding phrase ends and must therefore begin in the middle of that preceding phrase. If your call takes four beats to say, you must start on beat number 5 of the preceding phrase and use beats 5, 6, 7, and 8 for your call. In a diagram, it looks like this:

| Beats | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| You say | - | - | - | - | HEAD TWO | COUPLES | RIGHT & LEFT | THROUGH |

Your dancers then have the complete call and can start their first step on the next beat which is the heavy beat starting the next phrase.

Using the same kind of a diagram for a whole sequence of figures, you can try a call that is phrased exactly. In this example, the LADIES CHAIN and the RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH are used because each takes just 8 steps to complete and the dancers can than be ready to go on to the next step exactly on the phrase. To call this sequence, start a record and count two or three 8 beat phrases until you are certain you are counting them correctly. Then, start reading on the top line of the diagram saying the numbers silently and the calls aloud.

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | HEAD TWO | COUPLES | RIGHT & LEFT | THROUGH |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | HEAD TWO | COUPLES | RIGHT & LEFT | BACK |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | SIDE TWO | COUPLES | RIGHT & LEFT | THROUGH |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | SIDE TWO | COUPLES | RIGHT & LEFT | BACK |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | HEAD TWO | LADIES | CHAIN | ACROSS |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | HEAD TWO | LADIES | CHAIN RIGHT | BACK |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | SIDE TWO | LADIES | CHAIN | ACROSS |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | SIDE TWO | LADIES | CHAIN RIGHT | BACK |

Now try the experiment previously mentioned. The next diagram is for the same sequence of figures as the one

above but they are presented deliberately "off phrase". Try reading this as above and you should hear the difference. For a more dramatic test, try these two calls on a set of dancers and ask them which they find most enjoyable or just watch them as they dance it. You will see the effect of letting them dance on the phrase.

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | HEAD TWO | COUPLES | RIGHT & LEFT | THROUGH | 7 | 8 |
| 1 | 2 | HEAD TWO | COUPLES | RIGHT & LEFT | BACK | 7 | 8 |
| 1 | 2 | SIDE TWO | COUPLES | RIGHT & LEFT | THROUGH | 7 | 8 |
| 1 | 2 | SIDE TWO | COUPLES | RIGHT & LEFT | BACK | 7 | 8 |
| 1 | 2 | HEAD TWO | LADIES | CHAIN | ACROSS | 7 | 8 |
| 1 | 2 | HEAD TWO | LADIES | CHAIN RIGHT | BACK | 7 | 8 |
| 1 | 2 | SIDE TWO | LADIES | CHAIN | ACROSS | 7 | 8 |
| 1 | 2 | SIDE TWO | LADIES | CHAIN RIGHT | BACK | 7 | 8 |

Accurate phrasing is a cornerstone of good calling but it is a goal more often than a reality. The choreography of modern square dancing makes exactly phrased calling impossible since many movements require more or less than 4 or 8 beats to dance. If you start the dancers into a six beat figure on the phrase, they would have to wait 2 beats after it in order to start the next movement on phrase also. Methods for adjusting the call to produce smooth flowing motions for dancers are discussed in the chapter on timing.

Another important characteristic of a pleasant, danceable call is rhythm. Square dance music, we have learned, is divided into 8 beat phrases with the dancers taking a step on each beat. Between these strong "step beats" are lighter "off beats" which help to establish the rhythm of the music and give emphasis to the strong beats. To identify the off beats, count a phrase as follows: 1 and 2 and, 3 and, 4 and, 5 and, 6 and, 7 and, 8 and. The count is on the beat; the "and" is "off" the beat. To make dancing comfortable, your call should complement this on - off rhythm of the music, not conflict with it. Your call should reflect the on-off rhythm of the music. To establish the rhythm in your call, you do not have to emphasize every other word or syllable. You can put two words or syllables on a beat and two or more on the off beat that follows it. To try this say the following phrase with the accent on the underlined words: ALLEMANDE LEFT WITH THE CORNER GIRL THEN A RIGHT TO YOUR HONEY FOR A RIGHT AND LEFT GRAND. In this call, most of the off beats get two syllables and most of the on beats get one. The important exceptions are the "NER" of corner and the word "HONEY".

Any rhythm maintained without exceptions will become monotonous. Establish a rhythm in your call but be careful not to let it settle into a groove in that it never varies. To see some of the possible ways to vary the rhythm, look at just this one call:

HEAD TWO COUPLES CROSS TRAIL THROUGH
HEAD TWO CROSS TRAIL
HEADS CROSS TRAIL AND THEN
HEAD COUPLES DO THE OLD CROSS TRAIL
HEADS CROSS TRAIL AND LOOK OUT MAN
- - HEADS CROSS TRAIL

These are six ways to vary the sound of the call (and the timing of the command) while

maintaining the basic on-beat off-beat rhythm. Listen to your own calling and look for new ways to say the same things so that you can add variety and interest to the sound of your call while still reinforcing the rhythm of the music with it. The sound of the call is one of the most frequently used standards of good calling. It is possible to be a good caller without rhythm, but not as good as you would be with it. Perhaps more important for the beginning caller, a call with rhythm will convince most dancers that you are a better caller than you are. Rhythmic calling can be practiced easily without dancers. If need be, it can even be practiced without music, although it is probably better and certainly easier to practice with music.

## VOICE TECHNIQUE

A square dance call is a sound that must be heard and understood and the instrument that produces this sound is your voice. To be heard and understood you must use this instrument correctly and correct use of the voice involves several different techniques. The most important of these are projection, enunciation, breathing, control of volume and command. All of these affect each other and it is difficult to consider them separately. Projection is the characteristic of a voice that makes it carry across a room. It is possible to speak in a voice that sounds quite loud to you (inside your head) and yet is too soft outside of you. Projection is not shouting. It doesn't require a louder sound but rather it means getting the sound you produce out of your head so that it can be heard by others. One way to do this is by opening your mouth a little wider. You can compensate partially for the lack of projection with the microphone volume control. When you do, however, you are working your vocal cords harder than they need be worked.

Enunciation is the process of changing the sound produced by the vocal cords into words. It is done primarily with the lips and tongue and is of great importance to a caller because clear enunciation enables dancers to tell the difference between left and right, partner and corner, and the many other words we use. Moving your lips a lot will not guarantee good enunciation, but not moving your lips will guarantee poor enunciation. One caution here: when we say move your lips we mean lips - not the whole jaw. The tongue is also important to good enunciation. Your tongue must move to make the sounds of the letters d, 1, n, and t; but, for good projection, it should be placed forward in your mouth and all but the very tip of it should be relaxed at all times. Proper use of the tongue is a refinement in voice technique difficult to accomplish without the help of a voice coach. The beginning caller would be well advised to concentrate on using the lips for proper enunciation.

Breathing is important to a caller because without it calling is more work than it need be. Taking a deep breath while calling can be difficult but essential since it takes a lot of breath to call. Most people expand and contract the chest while breathing and this requires that the breathing muscles raise the whole rib structure to make room for the breath. If you will keep the chest expanded with the chest muscles, then the breathing muscles which are just below the chest need only expand the lungs to make room for the breath and you can get more air into you faster and more easily. When you are breathing properly the chest should stay fully expanded during both inhaling and exhaling. The only contraction is that of the diaphragm just below the chest.

Control of the dynamics (or loudness) of the sound you are producing is also a function of breathing. A louder sound is produced by causing more breath to pass the vocal cords. This breath is sent on its *way* by the same muscles you use in breathing and to maintain a constant volume you must learn to control them so the breath is expelled at a constant rate. Much of this muscle control is involuntary and automatic but you will make better use of your voice if you understand how it is produced and practice

controlling it.

The final aspect of voice use really has little to do with the voice. It is command and is most directly affected by your state of mind. Command is that characteristic of a voice that gets people to respond to it. Some people can say things in a convincing way that gets the attention of others. Command quality in a voice reflects your mental attitude. If you have confidence in what you are saying, if you really believe that what you are saying is right and important to your audience, then you will be more likely to have the sound of commend when you speak. This does not mean loudness. You have probably all heard someone say "I will do it" quietly but forcefully, leaving no doubt in your mind that he meant just what he said. There is a caution here, however. It is regrettably easy to add harshness to your voice when you strive for conviction. You can not snarl at your dancers or order them about. They are in search of recreation and pleasure and the sound of your voice as you lead them about should reflect an awareness of this.

## CHOICE OF WORDS

The next important part of the call is the choice of words. There are several different ways to say most square dance calls. Consider the figure GRAND RIGHT AND LEFT. Callers have gotten dancers to do this figure without ever saying these words just by saying "around the ring you go" at the right time in a call. The GRAND RIGHT AND LEFT is often called RIGHT AND LEFT GRAND and sometimes RIGHT AND LEFT EIGHT. Callers select these different wordings according to many factors and no one is the best choice at all times. As an example of a situation where the choice of words is critical, consider the sequence HEAD TWO COUPLES STAR THROUGH THEN RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH AND THE SAME TWO STAR BY THE RIGHT. The use of those particular words will lead many dancers to do a STAR THROUGH rather than the desired RIGHT HAND STAR at the end. To help more of the dancers to do the movement correctly, change the wording to HEAD TWO COUPLES STAR THROUGH THEN RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH AND THE SAME TWO COUPLES MAKE A RIGHT HAND STAR. The difference between STAR BY THE RIGHT and MAKE A RIGHT HAND STAR is only a choice of words but it can make the difference between smooth dancing and chaos on your dance floor. This is only one example.

You will find hundreds more where a minor change in the words you use or the order in which you use them will make your calling easier to understand and dance to. The only way to find and remember them is by experience. As you call, watch your dancers carefully and when they make a mistake, analyze it to see whether it was caused by the words you chose for the call or the sequence in which you used them.

Choice of words can be important in a different way. The call is HEAD COUPLES RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH THEN COUPLE #1 DOWN THE CENTER AND SPLIT THE RING. The question is, which couple is #1. Most of the time we expect that a RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH does not change a man's number but usually in a call of this type we want the new #1 couple to go down the center. The point, regardless of what is technically correct, it that this call will cause confusion on the floor unless you add the word NEW before #1 COUPLE in your call, You must not only add the word - you must stress it and make it stand out in your call.
In our first example, the STAR THROUGH, the important point was the sequence in which you used the words. The second example here points out that your call can sometimes be made much clearer by the addition of a word. Again, the only way to find the best wording for a call is to keep a constant watch on the effect of your calling and wherever you find dancers hesitating or

doing the wrong movement or the right movement with the wrong person, look for a way to make your call easier to understand.

## KEY WORD EMPHASIS

Very closely allied with the correct choice of words to use in your call is the stressing or emphasis of the importance of "KEY" words. Not all the words used in a call are of equal importance and the dancers will understand your call better if you can make the most important words stand out from the rest. In the call FOUR LADIES CHAIN the word FOUR is the one that gets everyone listening; when you say HEAD COUPLES SQUARE THROUGH THREE QUARTERS the THREE QUARTERS is likely to be missed by some of the dancers. An even more obvious example is the call HEAD LADIES DIXIE CHAIN in which the word DIXIE changes the outcome completely. Your problem as a caller is to do everything you can to assure that your dancers hear and notice these "key" words. You want to give such words extra importance.

There are several ways in which key words can be emphasized. Perhaps the first way that comes to mind is to say them louder, a good method that is frequently used. In fact it is probably used too frequently to the detriment of other equally effective techniques. The effectiveness of any one method of key word emphasis is weakened by over use as the dancers become immune to it. The secret in adding emphasis is to make the key word sound different and nothing that you do repeatedly will sound different for long. You must use a variety of the following techniques singly or at times combining two or more to add even more importance.

The rhythm of square dance music and that of most callers alternates a heavy beat with a lighter beat. In a musical phrase, the 1st, 3rd, 5th and 7th beats are stronger than the even numbered beats. A word or syllable spoken on the odd numbered or heavy beat will have more emphasis than one on the lighter even numbered beat. If the first word is on beat #1 of the phrase, it is better to say HEAD COUPLES RIGHT AND CIRCLE TO THE LEFT than to say THE HEAD COUPLES RIGHT AND CIRCLE TO THE LEFT. The first wording emphasizes HEAD and RIGHT and CIRCLE which gives the dancers the instructions they need, even if they didn't hear the other words at all. The second rhythm may cause them to hesitate while they try to decide whether you said HEAD or SIDE.

Another technique for stressing words is to break the rhythm pattern. Particularly with two or three syllable words you can speak all the parts with equal strength even though they fall on both strong and weak beats in the music. Instead of saying <u>AL</u> LE MANDE <u>LEFT</u> you can say <u>AL LE MANDE LEFT</u> and these syllables will be more noticeable than they are when given in the same rhythm as the rest of the call.

Musical pitch can be used to add emphasis in several ways. In general, a word spoken on a pitch higher than those around it will stand out and, increasing this effect even further, you can lead up to it with the words preceding by speaking them in an ascending musical pattern. If you put a sequence of words all on the same note, the first word on a different note will get more attention than the others. If you have a really good musical ear, you can change from a major to a minor harmony and make a word really command attention. That one, however, is for musicians only.

In a singing call, you can make a whole phrase more important by changing from singing call style to patter calling. You are then varying both the pitch and the rhythm. Instead of

following the melody with your voice, you might follow the bass pattern and instead of using the rhythm of the words in a song, you switch to the heavy-light beat of a patter cal1. To make just one word stand out in a singing call you can speak it rather than sing it, again changing both rhythm and pitch or either one without the other.

Another method for increasing emphasis - this one more useful in patter calls - is to leave a silence before the important word or words. If your patter call style is one in which you are saying something most of the time, your dancers will be alerted by a break in this steady flow. You thereby will have gained more then their usual attention and what you say next will be better understood. The silence need not be prolonged, just long enough to establish a change in the usual pattern.

Repeating a word is an obvious attention getter. You have probably heard or used this method already. It is particularly handy when your call is something unexpected such as JOIN HANDS AND CIRCLE TO THE RIGHT - RIGHT - RIGHT.

The last technique for emphasizing key words or phrases is the changing of the music volume - DOWN. When you turn the music down, you increase the relative importance of your voice. The effect is similar to speaking more loudly but is easier on our voice and adds variety to your box of attention-getting tricks. All of these methods for increasing the importance of key words are valuable tools. Dancers must not only listen; they must hear your call and they cannot ask you to repeat it. Your calling will be easier to dance to if you can make it easier to understand. It is no accomplishment to confuse dancers; the skillful caller is the one who reduces confusion to a minimum and keeps his floor moving smoothly. Key word emphasis will help you do this.

## PATTER

The difference between "Prompting" and "Calling" is patter. In a prompt call, only the instruction is given, while in what we know as patter calling, additional words are included between instructions to maintain the rhythm of the call. These additional words are called patter and they can be made to do more than just maintain the rhythm. The most important use of patter is to hint at a call that is coming. It does this by rhyme. You have probably heard the call CIRCLE TO THE LEFT AROUND YOU GO THEN PARTNER LEFT FOR A DO PASO. In this call, the words AROUND YOU GO are patter and the word GO rhymes with the DO PASO and gives the dancers a little advance warning of what is coming.

Patter that precedes and hints at the call is "Leading Patter". It leads the call and gives the dancers help in understanding the call because they can guess at what follows. Some other examples of leading patter are:

HEADS GO FORWARD AND <u>BACK YOU SAIL</u>
THEN THE SAME TWO DO A CROSS TRAIL

<u>KEEP ON WALKING WITH THE GIRL YOU'VE GOT</u>
THEN PULL HER THROUGH AND GO RED HOT

LADIES CENTER AND BACK <u>TO THE BAR</u>
GENTS TO THE CENTER WITH A RIGHT HAND STAR

Look for other places in your call where you can use leading patter. It can be helpful to your dancers. On the other hand, watch your calling carefully to be sure that you don't use MISLEADING PATTER.

The other important type of useful patter is "Trailing Patter", This is rhyming patter that is given after the call to help your dancers be sure they are doing the right thing. An example of trailing patter is HEAD COUPLES WHEEL AROUND THEN RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH WITH THE TWO YOU FOUND. Both leading and trailing patter help your dancers to understand your call more easily and anything that does this makes for smoother and better dancing. Look for ways in which you can use more of both. They will add interest and understandability to your call.

# Chapter 2 – Choreography

A square dance caller is a choreographer. He creates or selects dance patterns either before the dance or by improvisation as they are being done by dancers. This can be one of the most exciting aspects of calling and the improvisation of new dance patterns under pressure is regarded by some as the greatest challenge in calling. It requires a thorough knowledge of the technique of calling, better than average dancing skill and total concentration.

Before a caller is ready to try on-the-spot choreography, he will probably spend a long period in which he carefully plans his dances in advance and doesn't deviate from the plan except in an emergency. Let us, then, start by examining the objectives of good choreography and ways of reaching these objectives without considering the means of doing this at high speed. Even without the time factor, it will seem to the novice that it is impossible to consider all of these factors while you are calling. It is indeed impossible for all but the most experienced callers for whom many of these techniques have become so automatic that they no longer demand attention.

## BODY MECHANICS AND SMOOTH FLOW

The first objective of square dance choreography is to make the action flow smoothly most of the time. The movements that the dancers make should be natural and comfortable. Sudden stops and changes of direction should be kept to a minimum. The term "Body Mechanics" is sometimes used to refer to the ways in which people move naturally. Square dance actions should not require movements that are inconsistent with body mechanics. While this sounds simple enough, it is sometimes anything but simple to accomplish. The first step toward good choreography is to make sure that the dancers are in proper position to do the next figure of the dance. Don't call HEAD COUPLES DO A 1/2 SASHAY AND THEN RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH ACROSS THE SET. That is an illegitimate call and can not be done within the usual rules of square dance action. Another obvious mistake is the call HEAD COUPLES RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH THEN ALL FOUR COUPLES PROMENADE (unless you then add KEEP ON WALKING DON"T SLOW DOWN). Without this addition it is not possible for the dancers to obey the rule to stop a promenade in the men's home position. You have all encountered this calling mistake - it is almost the only common choreographic error that dancers can recognize as a mistake.

The next rule for smooth flowing action is that dancers should seldom have to use the same hand for two consecutive figures. If the men are in the center in a left hand star, the next call should not be PARTNER LEFT FOR A DOS PASO. If the head couples are doing a square through in the center, the next call can not be ALLEMANDE LEFT because the last hand used in a SQUARE THROUGH is the left. This situation is perfectly clear when a hand is actually being used but it becomes a little unclear when the figure is, for instance, a DOS A DOS in which neither hand is used. The rule still holds. Do not follow a right-handed figure with another right-handed figure. In the previous example, IF A HAND WERE USED in the DOS A DOS, it would be the right hand making the DOS A DOS a right-handed figure. If you try calling the sequence DOS A DOS YOUR CORNER THEN THE MEN STAR RIGHT for experienced dancers, you will see why it is an incorrect call. Most of the men will probably at least start to make a left hand star even though your call clearly said RIGHT. The left handed figure is easier and more natural following the DOS A DOS.

Most square dance figures are either right or left handed, even when no hands are actually used. Some, however, use a different hand for the ladies than that used by the men. The clearest example of

this in current use is the STAR THROUGH, but the SWING is also at least partially in this category. The SWING is accepted as a right-handed figure and for the men it clearly is, but women have to make a somewhat awkward adjustment to do a LEFT ALLEMANDE following a SWING. The men have their problems in this category too. When a RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH is followed by a SQUARE THROUGH, the men must choose between a firm lead for the girl in the courtesy turn or a premature move to free the right hand for the next call. From this discussion, you can see that it isn't always possible to alternate right-handed and left-handed figures but for smooth choreography, the attempt should be made whenever it is possible.

Another major factor in the smooth flow of a square dance is the number and kind of body adjustments on the part of the dancers that are required to get into position to do a figure. These adjustments aren't the major disruptions caused by an incorrect call but rather, changes required because a dancer is just slightly out of place to do the next figure smoothly. Usually it is either just the girls or just the men that are out of position, not both. The most common example of this is HEAD COUPLES SQUARE THROUGH THEN RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH WITH THE OUTSIDE TWO. As the ladies pull by with the left hand to end the SQUARE THROUGH, they are on the outside edge of the square. They could easily walk outside around their corner but to do a RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH they must make a sharp turn in to move between the side couples. A sequence that forces the head gents into the same kind of adjustment is HEAD COUPLES LEFT SQUARE THROUGH THEN FIND THE CORNER LEFT ALLEMANDE. If the side ladies don't anticipate with a move away from their partners, the head gents will have to make a sharp turn in to take their corners by the left hand.

Some adjustments are necessary in square dancing and cannot be avoided at all times, Good callers know where these adjustments occur and can avoid them when they want to. The reasons for avoiding them are that they are uncomfortable, they tire dancers, and they make a figure more difficult to dance. If all your figures require adjustments, your calling will seem to have less variety and interest than you could create by including some figures that are smooth and flow naturally. In the same category with body adjustments, are combinations of movements that are, of themselves, uncomfortable to do. One of the first that comes to mind is DIVE THROUGH, CALIFORNIA TWIRL. At most dances, there isn't enough room in the center of the square for the couples in the middle to do that figure and even when there is room, it is uncomfortable to come from a crouch (the dive through) into an arch for the twirl. It is just as difficult and uncomfortable to do a 1/2 SASHAY following s DIVE THROUGH. Watch for these as you dance and avoid them as you call.

## CONFUSION CONTROL

A second objective of good choreography is confusion control. In the section of the SOUND OF THE CALL, we mentioned several points that can cause confusion among the dancers such as incorrect choice of words, lack of key word emphasis and misleading patter. Our statement then that it is no accomplishment to confuse the dancers is still true. The skillful caller is the one who can keep confusion on his dance floor to a minimum and choreography is one of the most important parts of confusion control. Its effect on the dancing goes far beyond the obvious fact that confusion is guaranteed if you call a figure that you dancers don't know how to do, For this discussion, we will assume that you are choosing figures that are appropriate for the experience of the dancers and talk only about the ways in which good choreography can make it easier for dancers to do calls they know.

The factors of hand sequence and body mechanics already mentioned have an effect on the difficulty the dancers will have in doing the figures. Anytime your call requires an adjustment or the use of the same hand twice, it will be more complicated and the least experienced dancers will have trouble with it. If dancers are in any doubt about what they should be doing, they tend to do the natural thing and if you have asked them to do something that does not naturally follow the movement just completed, they are likely to make a mistake. Dancing mistakes and uncertainties are the main source of confusion among dancers, and your efforts to reduce confusion will make the dancing smoother and better.

Square dance choreography is basically the selection of what figure to call. This means both the individual square dance movements such as RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH, LADIES CHAIN, SQUARE THROUGH, etc. and the larger unit or sequence of these movements that we also refer to as figures. In choosing material to control confusion, it is important to consider the group for which you are calling. Material that will cause confusion in a group just graduated from a class may be simple and easy for a more experienced group. Much will depend on what the group is used to doing and you may find that the sequence DIVE THROUGH, PASS THROUGH, SQUARE THROUGH causes no trouble in a class near the end of their lessons but completely throws an experienced group. The reason will be that the caller for the class has used this figure many times but the more experienced group has only encountered it once or twice. Even though they all know how to do a SQUARE THROUGH, its use in this position may confuse them.

Uncertainty about what a group is used to complicates the job of choreography when you are calling to dancers new to you. The only way to do it is to watch the dancers carefully as you are calling and notice what sequences cause trouble for a large percentage of them. Then either avoid these sequences or use extra care when you call them. An example of the type of choreographic change you can make to avoid sequences that are giving dancers trouble, consider the following figure that is quite likely to give many dancers some troubles.

> ALL FOUR LADIES CHAIN 3/4
> HEAD COUPLES DO A HALF SQUARE THROUGH
> THEN SQUARE THROUGH 3/4 WITH THE OUTSIDE TWO
> NOW LEFT SQUARE THROUGH 3/4 IN THE CENTER
> WHILE THE OUTSIDE TWO CALIFORNIA TWIRL
> NOW SQUARE THROUGH 3/4 AND HOLD OUT YOUR HAND
> THERE'S THE CORNER LEFT ALLEMANDE

Complications in this pattern result from the need to call it with very little time between the calls in order to keep the dancers moving. In lines 5 and 6, you are asking the side couples to complete a CALIFORNIA TWIRL without delay and immediately start a SQUARE THROUGH 3/4 with a couple that can not be seen by them until the very last second before they must start the movement. While you are saying line 4, you are also asking the sides to stay facing out of the square with nothing to do, a situation they rarely encountered in most square dance figures.

To simplify this figure and still save the unique idea in it which is the LEFT SQUARE THROUGH 3/4 followed by a RIGHT SQUARE THROUGH 3/4 to a LEFT ALLEMANDE, try this change:

ALL FOUR LADIES CHAIN 3/4
HEAD COUPLES RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH
THEN PASS THROUGH AND SEPARATE AROUND JUST ONE
INTO THE MIDDLE LEFT SQUARE THROUGH 3/4
THEN SQUARE THROUGH 3/4 WITH THE OUTSIDE TWO
THERE'S YOUR CORNER, LEFT ALLEMANDE

You have replaced lines 2 and 3 of the original with calls that are more common for most dancers and you have eliminated the CALIFORNIA TWIRL for the sides that was line 5 and this makes the action much easier. There is another possible change for the same figure to simplify it somewhat less. Check the following with the original and see if you can understand what makes it easier for most dancers?

ALL FOUR LADIES CHAIN 3/4
HEAD COUPLES DO A HALF SQUARE THRCUGH
THEN RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH WITH THE OUTSIDE TWO
OUTSIDE TWO DIVE THROUGH
THEN LEFT SQUARE THROUGH 3/4 IN THE CENTER
NOW SQUARE THROUGH 3/4 WITH THE OUTSIDE TWO
AND THERE'S YOUR CCRNER LEFT ALLEMANDE

These three versions of the same figure show the effect of choreography on the complexity of the dancing. Minor changes in a pattern that do not affect the basic idea can make a tremendous difference in the difficulty the dancers will have in dancing the figure. The reason we have labeled this "Confusion CONTROL" rather than confusion reduction is that you may not always be trying to make your figures easier or less confusing when you change the choreography. It is almost as important for a caller to avoid material that is too easy for a group as it is for him to avoid material that is too difficult. Experienced dancers will get great satisfaction from dancing a figure they recognize as difficult and they will get bored if they have to do "just RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH and LADIES CHAIN all evening". The best course for a caller is to adjust his material (plan his choreography) to suit the experience and dancing ability of the group for which he is calling. To do this well requires that he be able to make choreographic changes in his figures when necessary. Making the changes is not the only problem in choreographic confusion control.
You must know what changes will make a figure more difficult and what will make it easier. Our examples above mention some of these things but it is difficult to be specific in this matter. The list that follows is of types of dancing actions that frequently tend to make a figure more difficult. To simplify a figure you can look for ways to avoid this type of action;

Any time you change from two couples working to all four couples working with anything other than a LEFT ALLEMANDE.

EXAMPLE: HEAD COUPLES STAR THROUGH THEN PASS THROUGH THEN <u>RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH THE OUTSIDE TWO</u>

Any time you call a figure in other than its most common form.

EXAMPLE: HEAD COUPLES DO A 1/2 SASHAY THEN <u>SQUARE THROUGH</u> (Lady is on man's left)

Any time you repeat a figure in a situation that makes it hard to keep track of how many have been done (or called).

EXAMPLE: HEAD TWO COUPLES WHEEL AROUND AND DIXIE CHAIN ON TO THE NEXT AND DIXIE CHAIN
(A ladies chain between these would make it easier)

Any time you are calling different but simultaneous actions for the heads and the sides.

EXAMPLE: HEAD COUPLES SQUARE THROUGH FOUR HANDS AROUND SIDES DIVIDE AND STAR THROUGH

Any time you call for an action between people who can't identify each other as the call is given.

EXAMPLE: HEAD COUPLES LEFT SQUARE THROUGH 3/4
WHILE THE SIDES DIVIDE AND STAR THROUGH
THEN RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH
(Most dancers don't think far enough ahead to realize where they will be for the action of line 3 and who they will be doing it with)

Any time your call requires people to stay in a position that is not common.

EXAMPLE: ALL FOUR COUPLES FACE YOUR PARTNER AND STAR THROUGH
THEN SIDES SEPARATE AROUND JUST ONE

This is by no means a complete list but, as we have said above, much depends on what is common and familiar to the dancers you are calling to. Anything that is unfamiliar will be more difficult than things they have done many times and the only way to identify these is by observation. Observation alone is not enough; you must know what to do about it and be able to do it either by pre-planning or on the spot.

**VARIETY**

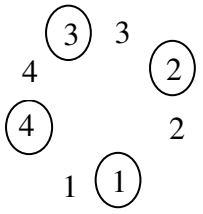
A third objective of good choreography is maintaining the interest of the dancers. The primary method of doing this is by adding variety to your figures. If you repeat the same pattern too often, your dancers will get bored and may even start getting ahead of you as they do the figure for the third and fourth time. You can avoid this by making choreographic changes in the figure each time you call it. This will keep the dancers thinking and interested.

Most sequences of calla have in them one basic idea that is the "heart" of the figure. The rest of the calls in the figure are there to get people into the right position, to lengthen the sequence, to get the right partner back, or to make the action more difficult or easier. You can change most of this "other material" without losing the basic idea of the figure and thereby add variety to your material. One note that we should add here is that one of the techniques of confusion control is to repeat the same thing. The second time through a sequence, the action is not as unfamiliar as it was the first time. Dancers who failed to dance the figure the first time will be able to get through it the second. Variety is a good thing only if the dancers are able to handle it without becoming confused.

As an example of maintaining interest by choreographic changes concider the three versions of the same figure that we showed to illustrate simplifying. For an experienced group able to dance the hardest version, you could start with the easiest which will be interesting once through. When you repeat the figure for the sides, you could then use the version of intermediate difficulty and finally, use the most difficult form of the figure, once each for the heads and the sides. This is just one example. You can do this same kind of thing for almost any square dance figure. From the caller's point of view, this has one major advantage, you can call for dancers with all levels of experience without having to use different figures for each. You just use different variations of the same figure.

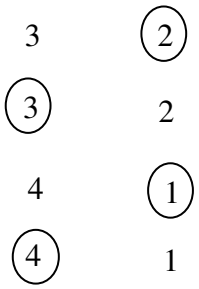
## DIAGRAMMING

Before we go on with this discussion of choreography, you may find it helpful to find a way to study square dance patterns on paper. It is virtually impossible to keep track of the action of eight people accurately in your head. A system for representing that action on paper is useful. It is a help both in working out new figures and in understanding those you already know. One of the simplest systems is to use a number to represent men and a number with a circle around it to stand for a lady. To indicate facing direction, you can use an arrow but you'll probably find you don't need it most of the time. Using this method, the basic square locks like this:



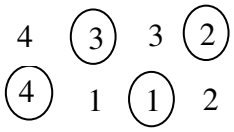

It is helpful always to have the lead position at the bottom of the diagram. Working from the basic square, we can also diagram two other common formations:

The Route Formation
(Two Facing Lines)



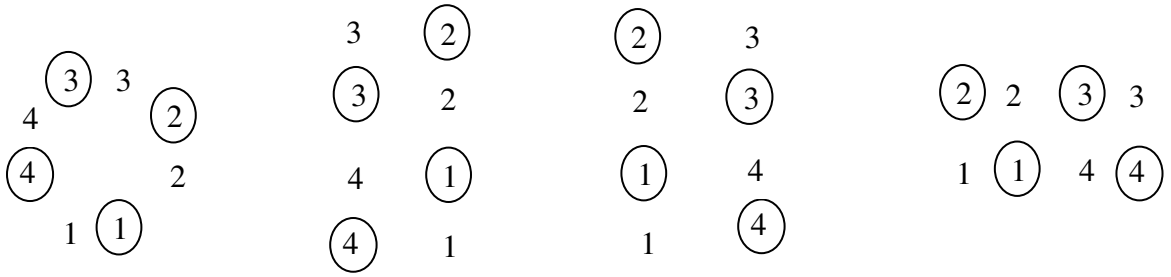

(Heads Lead Right and
Circle to a Line)

The Eight chain Thru
Formation




(Heads Square Thru)

The calls that set up each formation are shown in parentheses under each. This diagramming system can be used to give you a picture of each part of a dance. You show the starting position, then the position after each call. The call that produced that position from the previous one is written under each diagram.




Start | Head Couples Lead Right and Circle to a Line | Pass Thru | Bend The Line

With a little practice, you'll find that you can combine two or three calls and make fewer diagrams per dance. You will also find that you need the arrows less and less. It is well to leave them out unless you need them. Usually, the call written out will let you know which direction each person is facing. The most important exception is the ocean wave formation. In that, it's a good idea to include the arrows.

While we're on the subject of recording square dance calls on paper, we will also mention collecting figures. As you call more and more frequently, you will find that you can remember more and more figures. However, you'll never be able to keep in your head all the details of all the interesting dance patterns you would like to remember. It is well to write them down and keep them in a file or notebook for ready reference. One good way to do this is by diagramming the figure with the calls written out. You are then able to check the flow of the pattern at the same time that you look up the calls when you refer to your file.

## DANCE ORGANIZATION – PREPLANNING

So far we have been discussing choreography in terms of individual figures (sequences of calls). Lets now move on to a larger aspect of this subject; the organization of figures within a dance. For this purpose, a dance is defined not as a whole evening of dancing, but as the patterns called within an uninterrupted musical unit (one recording's worth replayed if need be to complete the pattern). This unit of dancing occurs between the time you say HONOR YOUR PARTNERS, or whatever you say to get started, and your THANK YOUR PARTNER, THAT'LL BE ALL. There are two basically different ways of approaching this "unit of dancing." One is to start calling when the music starts, using whatever calls occur to you in any sequence you can put them together and then to stop, hopefully with everyone back with their original partners in their home position, when you think the dance has lasted long enough. This is "Hash Calling" and its distinguishing characteristic is the lack of a previously thought-out plan. As a rule, there is little repetition in hash calling. The other approach to the "unit of dancing" is to give it some organization - a beginning, an end, and some repeated pattern in between. For lack of an accepted name for this style of calling, we will use "pattern calling." We will consider

these two approaches separately, although many of the techniques overlap and apply more or less to both. "Pattern calling" can be thought of as preplanned choreography in which at least part of the figure is planned by the caller before the music starts. Hash calling, on the other hand, can be thought of as "improvised choreography" in which the sequence of calls is put together as it is called. One important caution is necessary here before we go on to the details of these two techniques; DO NOT TRY TO IDENTIFY ONE OF THESE METHODS AS BETTER OR WORSE THAN THE OTHER - both have an important and useful place in modern square dancing.

First, let us examine preplanned choreography or "pattern calling." There are many ways in which sequences of calls can be organized into figures and the figures into dances. In an attempt to keep discussion of this subject relatively clear, let us define two more words. The first is "Break" and the second is the much abused term, "Figure." Both are sequences of calls and both are parts of a dance. As a vague general rule, a break is a sequence in which all four couples are doing the same thing at the same time while a figure is a sequence in which two couples are doing the same thing and the other two are doing something different or nothing at all. The line between these two is very loose in practice. This definition, based largely on history, will serve for this discussion.

The traditional organization of a dance has been to start with a break (called the introduction), follow this with a figure with the head couples active, repeat the figure for the head couples and then call the same break again. This is then followed by the same figure for the sides twice and the same break for a close. Perhaps you can see the pattern better if we abbreviate it this way - BFFBFFB. You probably already recognized this as the common organization of a singing call. The most important characteristic of this pattern is that it is symmetrical and balanced - that is it is the same on both sides of the middle break. Now let's look at ways of varying the pattern without upsetting the balance. Using the same break and the same figure, we could combine them in any of the following ways and still keep our balance;

F B F B F B F
B F F F F B
B F B F F B F B
F B F F B F

There are other possible balanced combinations but this will give you the idea. As long as you don't change the figure or the break in the patterns above you have maintained perfect balance.

The advantages of perfect balance will be summarized later but many of the advantages ate maintained, even when the balance is less than perfect. By comprising with perfects balance, the additional advantage of flexibility or variety is gained. The extreme of variety is the no-repetition hash call but some variety can be introduced in a balanced pattern. Using a subscript to indicate this difference, our basic pattern looks like these:

$$B_1\ F\ F\ B_2\ F\ F\ B_3$$

We can vary the pattern by changing the order in which the heads and sides do the figure. Again using the subscripts $_h$ for heads and $_s$ for sides these variations are possible;

$$B_1\ F_h\ F_s\ B_2\ F_s\ F_h\ B_3$$
$$B_1\ F_h\ F_s\ B_2\ F_h\ F_s\ B_3$$

This same type of variety can be introduced in any of the balanced patterns we have shown.

The next step in adding variety is to change not only the breaks but also the figure and the diagram then looks like this:

$$B_1\ F_{1h}\ F_{1s}\ B_2\ F_{2s}\ F_{2s}\ B_3$$
or this:
$$B_1\ F_{1h}\ F_{2s}\ B_2\ F_{1h}\ F_{2s}\ B_3$$

The extreme of variety possible within this organizational framework is, of course, to have each break and each figure different. This approaches hash calling but even so retains some of the advantages of the balanced pattern.

The advantages of balanced patterns have been mentioned several times. If you play a scale on a piano and leave off the last note, it sounds incomplete. If this paragraph were all one sentence with no periods in it, you could find it difficult to understand. If a newspaper ran all its stories together without paragraphs or headlines, most people would find it dull reading. People like to understand things and, at least partially, they find organization, system and patterns pleasing. When you use a balanced pattern, the dancers are able to understand the organization of the dance. In their minds, they are able to divide it into sections and if they make a mistake in one section, they can console themselves with the fact that they "made it through the second time." When you reach the end of a balanced pattern, dancers sense the terminal quality of the pattern and are not left awaiting "the last note" that completes the scale. The dance is a complete unit that has a beginning, a middle, and an ending.

You may be saying to yourself "I've never heard anyone complain to a caller that he didn't put an ending on the dance or that they couldn't understand the organization of the figure," and your quite correct. Few people are aware of these reactions but disorder can convey a sense of unease and restlessness they find difficult to identify. This general sense of "something wrong" may appear in a variety of other complaints that appear to have little basis in fact. Dancers may complain that the floor is sticky or that they can't hear or they may just convey a sense of dullness that your calling fails to dispel. You may not be able to connect the complaints that you hear to the lack of balance or organization in any way but usually there will be some reaction to this element of confusion. If you call unorganized patterns to the same dancers over a period of time and encounter vague problems that do not yield to your usual remedies, consider patterning your dances carefully for a time. The effect of balanced patterns is hard to document but powerful all the same. Look for signs of organization in the figures used by the callers you most admire. You won't find it constant and neither do we recommend that you use it unfailingly, but the best of even the "HOT HASH" callers will have a clear organization in their patterns at least half of the time.

## SINGING CALLS

When we move from patter calling into the realm of the singing call, the organization of the figures is no longer optional. In a singing call, your pattern must end with the end of the record and, perhaps even more important, with the end of each chorus. Rare indeed is the caller who can do this without carefully planning the organization

of the figure before he starts the call. Few callers try to use different breaks in a singing call and fewer still will run the risk of making up the figure as they go along. The result of a mistake is too obvious and the recovery from it too difficult. Some callers can do it and it can be very effective when well done, but it takes experience, practice and an unerring musical sense.

In general then, with singing calls, we are using a figure and a break that have been learned in advance and from which we will not vary. This is preplanned choreography in every detail. However, even though singing call records come with a call written out for you, the responsibility for good choreography is still yours. You can not assume that the figure that comes with the record is a well choreographed or timed correctly. Most of them are not. All the principles discussed in the first part of this section apply to both patter and singing calls. In selecting a singing call, carefully analyze the figure used on the recording and if need be, correct it or replace it with one of your own or with a good figure from another singing call.

The problem of fitting a different figure to a singing call brings us to the subject of singing call organization. Most of the singing call records available now have seven 64-beat choruses of the song and the usual organization of the dance is the standard balanced pattern BFFBFFB. There are some records available with only six choruses and the pattern there is usually BFFFFB. An occasional record will be found to have eight Choruses with either this pattern: BFBFBFBF or four times through a 128-beat figure with no break at all (either 80 or 96 beats). Very rarely will another variation be found, namely a chorus of more than 64 beats.

With this information about singing call organization, let's go back to the question of selecting records and figures to go with them. There is only one good measure to use in selecting a singing call record and that is musical quality. The tune should be one you like, played with a steady rhythm or beat, and it should sound pleasant when played on your sound system. The orchestral arrangement must be such that you can learn and follow the tune all the way through the record. For some callers, this last point is more important than for others. Some records are recorded with only the melody played faintly or not at all. The intention is that the caller will provide the melody with his voice. Unless you are a reasonably good singer, you will probably be happier if you avoid this type of record. One other important factor in selecting a record is that it should interest you and command some enthusiasm from you. It is difficult to do a good job on a singing call unless you are enthusiastic about it and want to pass on pleasure to the dancers.

Since most singing call records have a 64-beat chorus, any figure that takes 64 steps to complete will fit any of these. The words of the call may not fit musically, but the figure will fit choreographically. This means that you can use the figure from one of these singing calls with most of the others and the same is true of the breaks. You have thus found, the means of cutting down on the number of figures you have to learn and you also have a way to use a singing call record that comes with a poor figure. When you get a new record, pick a good figure from a discarded singing call, use it with the new record and for all practical purposes, you have added a new dance to your repertoire. Unfortunately, this is only a partial solution for a very new caller who doesn't have a backlog of unused singing calls but it is something to look forward to.

There is another way of salvaging a good record that comes with a poor figure and that is to write your own figure for it. For this discussion, we will limit ourselves to records with a 64-beat chorus. Usually the figure that comes with a record has, somewhere in it, a basic idea that is different. The rest of the figure is the same kind of filler material that we discussed earlier in patter calls. Since a singing call figure must be exactly 64 steps long, the filler material is usually there to make it fill the 64 beats. Thus, if the basic idea is choreographically good, you can usually keep it and change the filler material

to correct the faults. In fact, the most common fault with singing call figures is too much filler making the figure more than 64 beats long. This can be easily corrected by removing something - an extra hand turn, or a forward and back.

Another problem with singing call figures is that they are sometimes too difficult for an average group to be able to dance easily. In a singing call, this can be even more of a problem than it is in a patter call because you are less free to compensate for the dancer's troubles by leaving extra time and adding extra words. When you have a singing call that you can not use because it is too difficult, the principles mentioned in the section on confusion control can be used as a guide in rewriting the figure. There is, however, the additional, restriction that when you are through rewriting, there must be 64 steps in the figure or it won't fit your record. As a general rule in writing or rewriting a singing call, it is better to start by completing the action in less than 64 beats. The reason for this is that steps can be added to a figure easily - taking them out can be a real problem.

One excellent source of singing call figures not to be overlooked is your file of patter call figures. Singing call figures differ only in the 64 step limitation and in that moat singing calls include a change of partner each time through the figure. The partner change can be added easily with "SWING YOUR CORNER AND PROMENADE" or "WALK PAST YOUR PARTNER SWING THE CORNER AND PROMENADE." The 64-beat limitation can be met by adding or subtracting filler material from the patter call as necessary. One caution with regard to partner changes: be sure that the same two girls don't dance the figure four times while the other two are always in the inactive couples. This occurs with a corner or right hand lady progression if you do the figure first for the heads then sides and then heads and sides again. You can avoid it by using either HHSS or HSSH for your pattern.

This is not, by any means, all that can be said on the selection of singing calls, but with these principles applied, practice and experiment will help you in the development of your skill. If you now call regularly for a group, you can try your rewritten singing calls and tell by watching the dancers whether you have been successful. One of the important aims of this material is to point out what to look for when you are experimenting. With singing calls, some errors are obvious, either you completed the pattern at the end of the tune or you didn't - but some choreographic troubles are more difficult to spot than they would be in a patter call. For instance, it is very important that the singing call be well-timed and clear because musical limitations give you less freedom to compensate. If your experimenting is done with a very experienced group, you may not notice some confusing point that will cause trouble with a less experienced group. Always be on the lookout for ways to improve your singing calls, even when you think they are near-perfect.

## IMPROVISED CHOREOGRAPHY HASH

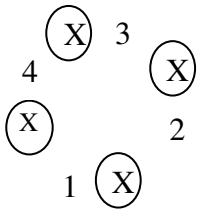
The hash caller's problem of dancer position can be described quite simply. At any time during the calling of a figure, the caller should know the order (we call it sequence) of the men and the location of their partners. This is a two-part problem but one which can be limited substantially with one fundamental rule. The rule is never call any non-symmetrical action. By this, we mean that whatever any person in the set does must also be done by his (or her) counterpart in the opposite couple. In other words, if lady one does a SWING THROUGH with the opposite man, lady three (and gent one) must also be doing the same. If lady one does a STAR THROUGH, DIVE THROUGH, PASS THROUGH, then lady three must also he doing the same action at the same time. To illustrate the opposite, you can not call COUPLES ONE AND TWO RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH without destroying the symmetry. If at any time you were to divide the set through the middle, both halves should be exactly the same.

The two parts of the problem of keeping track of dancers are sequence (of the men) and ladies' position. There are only two possibilities for the sequence of the men. They are either IN proper order or OUT of proper order. The men are IN order in the basic square formation when gent two is to the right of gent one and gent four is to his left. When the gents are thus IN sequence, a PROMENADE does not require any gent to pass another to get to home position.

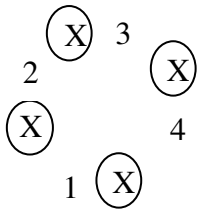
The matter of ladies' position is not quite so simple except in definition. The "proper" position for girls at the end of a figure is with their own partners. This is the goal; the primary reason for keeping track of position. However, even with symmetrical action, there are a variety of possible positions in which the girls might be. The simplest position change is a shift of all the girls one, two or three places to the right. With that type of shift, all the men have either corner, opposite or right-hand lady for a partner. If one man has his opposite, they all have their opposite. The only symmetrical variation of this potation shift for the ladies is to have two of the girls crossed over," i.e. in a position exactly opposite that in which they would be with a simple shift.

It is perhaps easiest to think of these positions by means of the diagrams we have discussed earlier. For the present, consider only the "basic" formation and the arrangement of 8 people within it:

FIRST, THE MEN:

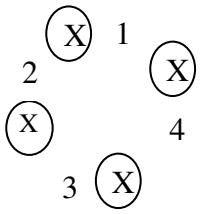



IN Sequence

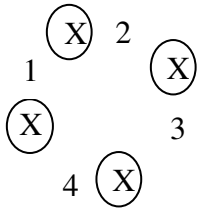



OUT of Sequence

Notice that it doesn't make any difference from which position you view the square or whether the number one man is in "home place." The men are either IN or OUT of sequence.

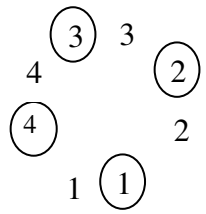



IN

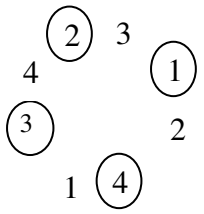



OUT

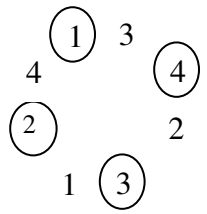
Checking the ladies, notice that their position is only important in terms of the men. All the men are represented in these diagrams in "home" position. To give names to the various possibilities, we can identify the girl with the number one gent and whether two of the girls are “crossed” over.



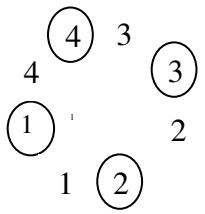

Partner (PTR)




Corner (CNR)

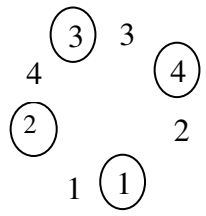



Opposite (OPP)

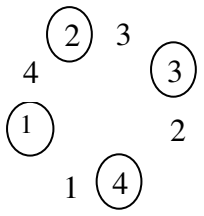



Right-Hand lady (RHL)

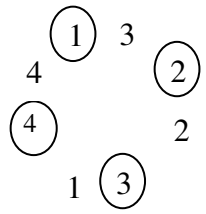
The four positions diagrammed above are the four "normal" positions. There are also four (and only four), positions with two girls crossed over and we can identify these by naming the girl with gent one and indicating the CROSS.



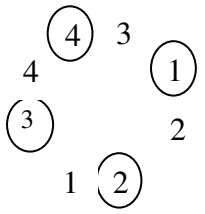

PTR X




CNR X




OPP X




RHL X

It is also possible to arrange a set of four couples so that two men are side by side and as a result, one doesn't have a partner. This arrangement is a special case easily convertible to a variation of the basic square and can be overlooked. These diagrams show that there are 8 possible arrangements of girls and two (IN or OUT) for the men. Thus we have a total of 16 positions within which we must be prepared to keep track of dancers. There are a number of approaches to that problem.

**VISUAL**

The most obvious technique to consider is a visual check of position and this is a valuable tool. In

theory, fixing in your mind, before the call, the partners and sequence of men in one set would permit you to call anything that came in to your head. When ready to stop, you would merely get all the people in that set back to starting position. What could be simpler? The only drawback is that those dancers may have made mistakes and, in returning them to original order, you put everyone else on the floor into the wrong place. If it weren't for this one drawback, there would be no need for any other technique for keeping track of dancer position.

Unfortunately, it frequently happens that the one set you picked out makes mare mistakes than you would think they could. In fact, callers some-times get to feeling that the one sure way to "jinx" a set is to try to use them for a visual check. This doesn't mean the visual system has to be scrapped. It is still very useful.

You can greatly increase your chances of having a useful check by using three sets instead of one as your reference and by picking the most reliable dancers to watch. The job is also made easier by the fact that you don't have to check all 8 people in each set; two couples will do, if you stick to symmetrical patterns in your calling. Using the visual check, if you can get the set arranged so that one man (any one will do) has his partner or his right and his corner with her partner to his left, then the whole set must be in "proper" position (barring an unsymmetrical mistake or call).

However, no matter how careful you are and no matter how reliable the dancers, the visual method can never be enough, by itself, to completely solve the position-sequence problem for callers when they are improvising choreography.

## EQUIVALENTS

Another system that is used by many callers to help them keep track of dancer positions is based on equivalents. This system assumes that the caller knows the effect of most of the standard square dance actions on the position of the dancers. Then, when he encounters a new figure or sequence of calls that he wants to use, he studies it carefully to find how it affects positions. He then finds what he must add to the sequence to make it accomplish exactly the same thing as a sequence with which he is familiar.

Let's consider an example of this technique. Most any caller can follow the position of dancers through this sequence:

> EVERYBODY SWING YOUR CORNER AND PROMENADE
> SIDE TWO COUPLES WHEEL AROUND

If you had called this you would probably have several, sequences you could use from there to get everyone back to place. However, not as many callers are sure of everyone's position after the call:

> HEAD COUPLES PASS THROUGH - SEPARATE AROUND 2 TO MAKE A LINE
> FORWARD 8 AND BACK THEN WITH THE OPPOSITE BOX THE GNAT

If you diagram this last sequence, you will find that each man has his original corner for a partner and that a RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH will put all the gents back into the proper order. If you then notice that the addition of the RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH puts everyone in the same place they

were after the first (WHEEL AROUND) sequence, you have established an equivalent. Any of the sequences you would have used to straighten out the couples in the first case will now work equally well in the second case.

Taking the same process in reverse, try to find several sequences that all equal the same thing. In the first example, the call gave each man his original corner for a partner and established lines with the men in proper order. Now look at other calls that accomplish exactly the same thing.

1. 4 LADIES CHAIN 3/4 THEN ALL PROMENADE
   HEAD COUPLES (OR SIDES) WHEEL AROUND

2. HEAD LADIES CHAIN TO THE RIGHT
   NEW HEAD LADIES CHAIN ACROSS
   ALL 4 COUPLES PROMENADE THEN HEADS WHEEL AROUND

3. ALL 4 LADIES CHAIN ACROSS - HEAD LADIES CHAIN TO THE RIGHT - NEW SIDE LADIES CHAIN ACROSS - ALL 4 COUPLES PROMENADE - HEADS WHEEL AROUND

4. HEAD 2 COUPLES GO RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH -
   SAME 2 STAR THROUGH PASS THROUGH - STAR THROUGH

5. ALL 4 LADIES CHAIN - HEAD COUPLES STAR THROUGH - PASS THROUGH - STAR THROUGH THEN RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH

6. HEAD 2 COUPLES PASS THROUGH - SEPARATE AROUND ONE -
   FORWARD 8 AND BACK AWAY - THOSE WHO CAN DO A HALF SASHAY

7. ALL 4 LADIES CHAIN - HEAD 2 COUPLES RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH
   HEAD 2 COUPLES PASS THROUGH AND SEPARATE AROUND TWO
   FORWARD 8 AND BACK LIKE THAT - WITH THE OPPOSITE BOX THR GNAT

8. ALL 4 LADIES CHAIN - HEAD TWO COUPLES SQUARE THROUGH 3/4
   SEPARATE AROUND JUST ONE - FORWARD 6 AND BACK AWAY
   THOSE WHO CAN DO A HALF SASHAY THEN RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH

9. HEAD TWO COUPLES RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH
   THEN CROSS TRAIL AND SEPARATE AROUND ONE TO MAKE A LINE

10. ALL 4 LADIES CHAIN - HEAD COUPLES CROSS TRAIL AROUND JUST ONE
    MAKE A LINE OF FOUR THEN RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH

11. ALL 4 LADIES CHAIN 3/4 AROUND –
    HEAD COUPLES LEAD TO RIGHT AND CIRCLE TO A LINE

12. HEAD LADIES CHAIN TO THE RIGHT - HEAD COUPLES STAR THROUGH -PASS THROUGH -
    CIRCLE TO THE LEFT AND THE HEAD GENTS BREAK TO MAKE A LINE

13. ALL 4 LADIES CHAIN - HEAD TWO COUPLES DO A 1/2 SQARE THROUGH THEN 1/2 SQUARE THROUGH WITH THE OUTSIDE TWO - BEND THE LINE

14. HEAD TWO COUPLES SQUARE THROUGH THEN RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH THE OUTSIDE TWO THEN 1/2 QUARE THROUGH AND BEND THE LINE

This is a partial list to illustrate the general principle that all of these accomplish exactly the same thing and can be used interchangeably to add variety to your figures. You don't have to worry about keeping track of the dancers each step of the way. You know that when you have finished any one of these sequences, your dancers will be in the same place they would have been if you had done one of the others. If you then add the simplest way out of this situation (which is: RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH THEN STAR THROUGH), you have 14 different figures you can call. If you learn one more way out of that situation, for instance: STAR THROUGH - DIVE THROUGH - SQUARE THROUGH 3/4, you now have 28 figures. Notice that what you did to add the second way out was to find an equivalent to the first way out. These two are a special type of equivalent, however, because they both accomplish nothing. The dancers are in the same positions after they have done the sequence as they were in when they started. Sequences that accomplish nothing are called ZERO FIGURES or MOVEMENTS and this brings us to the next system we want to mention.

**ZERO FIGURES**

The ZERO FIGURE system is not really a way of solving the problem of keeping track of the position of the dancers; it is a way of avoiding the problem temporarily. A ZERO FIGURE is a sequence of calls that leaves the dancers in exactly the same place they were when the sequence started. They are useful in two ways. The first advantage they give you is time to think. If, while you are calling, you reach a point where you think you know the correct positions of the dancers but you aren't quite sure, you can call a ZERO FIGURE that you know well. This you can do without having to follow the dancers through each part of it and while they are doing the ZERO FIGURE you may be able to check and assure yourself that you were right (or wrong). Another situation in which thinking time is a valuable commodity occurs when you have decided that you would like to vary the figure you have been calling. A ZERO FIGURE called at this point will give you an interval during which you need not watch the dancers while you decide what variation you will use.

When you encounter a new call or a new sequence of calls, it can sometimes be helpful to look for changes necessary to make it a ZERO MOVEMENT. Sometimes just the process of finding a way to turn a sequence into a zero will let you understand the sequence but, if it doesn't, you will have found a way you can use the new sequence without getting yourself lost. STUDY these examples of ZERO FIGURES; You have just called a WHEEL AROUND from a PROMENADE and you want time to think. These will give you time and leave your dancers exactly where they were

RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH - RIGHT AND LEFT BACK
STAR THROUGH - RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH - STAR THROUGH
PASS THROUGH ON TO THE NEXT AND PASS THROUGH
2 LADIES CHAIN - SAME LADIES CHAIN BACK
PASS THROUGH WHEEL AND DIAL - DOUBLE PASS THROUGH 1st COUPLE LEFT, 2nd COUPLE RIGHT
SQUARE THROUGH 3/4 - BEND THE LINE - RIGHT AND LEFT

THROUGH PASS THROUGH - BEND THE LINE
CROSS TRAIL AND U-TURN BACK - RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH

To examine the other way of using ZERO FIGURES, analyze the call WHEEL AND DEAL. The sequence in which you probably first encounter the WHEEL AND DEAL is this

HEAD TWO COUPLES LEAD TO THE RIGHT AND CIRCLE TO A LINE
PASS THROUGH - WHEEL AND DEAL - DOUBLE PASS THROUGH
FIRST COUPLE GO LEFT AND THE SECOND COUPLE GO RIGHT

The second 2 lines of this call are a ZERO FIGURE. At the end of it your dancers are back in the same lines they were in before the PASS THROUGH. If, from that line, you had called:

PASS THROUGH - WHEEL AND DEAL - DOUBLE PASS THROUGH -
FACE YOUR PARTNER (or its equivalent) CENTERS IN AND CAST OFF 3/4),

you would again have established two lines but this time you would have two girls on the right hand end and two men on the left. If you then called another PASS THROUGH - WHEEL AND DEAL, you might find it quite difficult to know where your dancers were. But, if you can find a quick way back into the original lines after that second WHEEL AND DEAL, you can stop worrying about where they are and just use that quick route back to a position you know. That route is

TWO LADIES CHAIN ON THE DOUBLE TRACK
SAME TWO COUPLES RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH

The entire sequence then is as follows:

HEAD COUPLES LEAD TO THE RIGHT AND CIRCLE TO A LINE
PASS THROUGH - WHEEL AND DEAL - DOUBLE PASS THROUGH
FACE YOUR PARTNER - PASS THROUGH - WHEEL AND DEAL
TWO LADIES CHAIN ON THE DOUBLE TRACK
SAME TWO COUPLES RIGHT AHD LEFT THROUGH

At the end of line No. 5 you are right back where you were at the end of line No. 1. Now let's go back to the end of line No. 3 and again call

DOUBLE PASS THROUGH
FACE THE MIDDLE - PASS THROUGH - WHEEL AND DEAL

Once again it is quite difficult to keep track of each person through this sequence but if you can find a quick way back to the original lines, intervening changes can be ignored. This time the quick way he is:

DOUBLE PASS THROUGH - FACE THE MIDDLE

Lets again take a look at the whole sequence.

1. HEAD COUPLES LEAD TO THE RIGHT AND CIRCLE TO A LINE
2. PASS THROUGH - WHEEL AND DEAL - DOUBLE PASS THROUGH - FACE THE MIDDLE
3. PASS THROUGH - WHEEL AND DEAL - DOUBLE PASS THROUGH - FACE THE MIDDLE
4. PASS THROUGH - WHEEL AND DEAL - DOUBLE PASS THROUGH - FACE THE MIDDLE

The sequence written out in this way should make it apparent that three times through this 4-call sequence is a ZERO FIGURE. It gets you back exactly where you started. Armed with this knowledge of how to make a ZERO FIGURE out of the WHEEL AND DEAL call, you can have a tremendous flexibility in its use.

This analysis of the WHEEL AND DEAL action using the ZERO FIGURE system is an illustration of the use of the system which is even more valuable than its ability to give you thinking time. You will find that this method of analyzing a figure is useful with almost any one you choose. When you know what is required to turn it into a ZERO, you will understand it better than you did.

The three methods we have discussed, VISUAL, EQUIVALENTS, and ZERO FIGURES, are all a tremendous help to a caller in solving one of his major problems but none of them provides the whole solution. There is no shortcut to experience in calling figures and keeping track of the dancers as they do them. These systems can help you to make fewer mistakes while you are practicing but they can't solve the problem with a few easily memorized rules. One thing that can be done to make the learning easier is to define the problem carefully and to be sure that your attention is directed into the most profitable channels. In short, systems provide not a method for solving the problem but a method for learning how to solve it.

## FORESIGHT

Foresight is a catch word to remind you of a way of starting to learn how to keep track of dancers as they move through the figures. The principle is simple: NEVER CALL ANYTHING UNLESS YOU KNOW, BEFORE YOU CALL IT, WHERE EACH OF THE DANCERS WILL BE WHEN THEY HAVE FINISHED IT. If you are a beginning caller, following this principle will probably force you to call only the most basic calls when you are calling hash. This restriction applies only to hash calling; it does not change your use of preplanned figures at all. When you are calling preplanned patterns, you have planned them so that the outcome is known. All of the techniques we have described apply primarily to hash calling. They can be helpful to you in preparing, but they don't become essential, unless you are facing your dancers without a plan.

The goal in keeping track of dancers as you call is to be sure that you can, whenever you want to, get each person back to his and her original partner and get each couple back to their original place in the square. The critical call in this regard is "PROMENADE (HOME)" when one or more men are out of their proper sequence. No other call depends on proper sequence to be legitimate and even the PROMENADE does not require that the men have their original, partners - only that they be in proper sequence. Thus, your primary concern is that the men be in proper sequence before you call PROMENADE (HOME).

The only other important factor in keeping squares straight is the position of the girls. It is assumed that a set of dancers who have made no mistakes will be paired with their original partners at the end of the dance. A secondary problem, related to the ladies' positions, occurs on

the call ALLEMANDE LEFT. Dancers have become conditioned by common practice to expect to do the ALLEMANDE LEFT in a patter call with their original corners. There is, of course, no violation of square dance choreography if an ALLEMANDE LEFT is done with someone other than the original corner, but dance habits may introduce problems of which the caller should be aware. Newer dancers, in particular, are liable to make a mistake if your call requires a sudden change of corner and when your intent is to make dancing easy, you should avoid this situation. A change of corner will occur, even when each man is with his original partner, if the men are out of sequence.

Remember - THE ONLY TWO - factors involved in keeping track of dancers in the set are:

THE SEQUENCE OF THE MEN
THE POSITION OF THE LADIES.

To have foresight, we want to know the effect of a call before we use it. Therefore, we need to know how each call or series of calls changes the sequence of the men and the position of the ladies. Notice that we said "call or series of calls." It is not necessary to know the effect of each step of a series of calls if you know the effect of the whole series and are certain the dancers can complete the entire call. For example, in using a ZERO FIGURE, the condition of the two important factors remains unchanged and the caller need not concern himself with the outcome. In fact, with <u>any</u> series of calls, if you know what the series accomplishes, you need consider each part of it only if there is a possibility that you may want to change the calls before the series is completed.

Now practice thinking in terms of the effect of a series of calls. Read each of the following examples and decide for yourself how the calls change position and sequence of dancers. Assume that each series of calls begins with the men IN sequence with original partners, and give your answer in terms of the men's sequence - IN OR OUT - and men's partner - PTR, RHL, OPP, or CNR. Then check your answers and if you were wrong, try to figure out where you made the mistake. To check position when the set is in an 8 chain through formation, imagine the center people turned to face the center of the set.

<u>FROM THE BASIC SQUARE POSITION</u>

1. HEAD COUPLES RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH
   Answer: OUT with PTR

2. FOUR LADIES CHAIN, HEAD COUPLES RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH
   Answer: OUT with OPP

3. HEAD COUPLES SQUARE THROUGH, SWING THE GIRL. YOU MEET
   Answer: IN with CNR

4. HEAD COUPLES 1/2 SQUARE THROUGH, SWING THE GIRL YOU MEET
   Answer; OUT with RHL

5. HEAD COUPLES 1/2 SQUARE THROUGH, RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH THE OUTSIDE TWO SWING THE GIRL IN FRONT OF YOU
   Answer: IN with RHL

6. HEAD COUPLES 1/2 SQUARE THROUGH, THEN 1/2 SQUARE THROUGH WITH THE OUTSIDE TWO
   Answer: IN with RHL

7. HEAD COUPLES LEAD TO THE RIGHT AND CIRCLE TO A LINE
   Answer; IN with PTR

8. HEAD COUPLES CROSS TRAIL AROUND ONE TO A LINE OF FOUR
   Answer: OUT with RHL

9. HEAD COUPLES PASS THROUGH, SEPARATE AROUND TWO TO A LINE FORWARD 8 AND BACK, WITH THE OPPOSITE BOX THE GNAT
   Answer: OUT with CNR

FROM A LINE OF FOUR POSITION

(Still assuming original partners and gents in proper sequence as the starting point)

1. PASS THROUGH, BEND THE LINE, SQUARE THROUGH THREE QUARTERS
   Answer: OUT with PTR

2. RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH, SQUARE THROUGH THREE QUARTERS
   Answer: OUT with PTR

3. TWO LADIES CHAIN, PASS THROUGH BEND THE LINE, TWO LADIES CHAIN
   Answer: OUT with OPP

4. STAR THROUGH, EIGHT CHAIN THROUGH, SWING THE GIRL YOU MEET
   Answer: OUT with PTR

5. STAR THROUGH, SQUARE THROUGH THREE QUARTERS, ALLEMANDE LEFT, PROMENADE
   Answer: IN with PTR

6. STAR THROUGH, RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH, ALLEMANDE LEFT, PROMENADE
   Answer: IN with RHL

7. STAR THROUGH, DIVE THROUGH, PASS THROUGH, STAR THROUGH
   Answer: OUT with OPP

8. STAR THROUGH, DIVE THROUGH, PASS THROUGH, 1/2 SQUARE THROUGH
   Answer: IN with OPP

While it is very important for a caller to know the effect of his next call on the dancers' positions, there is a step beyond even that. There is a great difference between knowing whet effect your call will have and choosing the call to accomplish a desired dance movement. It is the difference between knowing where you have been and knowing how to get where you want to go. Control over the outcome of the patterns called can be increased by indexing your mental

catalog of calls by what is accomplished by the call rather than by the call itself. One beneficial consequence of this revised mental indexing is a drastic reduction in the number of categories required. If you list all the calls you use with their outcomes, you will have as many index cards as you have calls. But, if you list desired sequence and position changes and then list all the calls that accomplish each change, you will have only a few index cards. To illustrate this idea, look at this sample index card.

MOVE LADIES TO OPPOSITE MAN AND CHANGE SEQUENCE

FROM THE BASIC SQUARE:

1. FOUR LADIES CHAIN, HEADS (OR SIDES) RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH
2. HEAD LADIES TO THE RIGHT CHAIN, NEW SIDE LADIES TO THE RIGHT CHAIN, HEADS (OR SIDES) RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH
3. ALLEMANDE LEFT FOR AN ALLEMANDE THAR, GO RIGHT AND LEFT TO MAKE A STAR, SHOOT THE STAR AND PROMENADE THE NEXT, HEADS WHEEL AROUND AND RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH
4. FOUR LADIES CHAIN THREE QUARTERS, HEADS (OR SIDES) SQUARE THROUGH FOUR HANDS, RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH THE OUTSIDE TWO, SWING THE ONE YOU FACE
5. HEAD LADIES TO THE RIGHT CHAIN, NEW SIDE LADIES CHAIN ACROSS, HEADS (OR SIDES) 1/2 SQUARE THROUGH, SWING THE ONE YOU MEET

FROM A FOUR IN LINE SETUP:

1. RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH, ALL FOUR LADIES CHAIN
2. TWO LADIES CHAIN, PASS THROUGH, BEND THE LINE, TWO LADIES CHAIN
3. STAR THROUGH, DIVE THROUGH, PASS THROUGH, STAR THROUGH
4. TWO LADIES CHAIN, SQUARE THROUGH THREE QUARTERS, BEND THE LINE RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH, TWO LADIES CHAIN
5. CROSS TRAIL, SKIP ONE GIRL, SWING THE NEXT

With this kind of a mental catalog, it takes only 8 index cards to accommodate the outcome possibilities. There are four possible arrangements of the girls if you will correct a "crossed over" position with TWO LADIES CHAIN and two possibilities of sequence. If, in your catalog, you have ten ways of working with each of these situations, you have, for all practical purposes, an infinite supply of hash. While it may appear that all you have to do is to memorize these 80 sequences to be a hash caller, it is unfortunately not that easy to be a hash caller because memory is slow and unreliable. Memorizing words is seldom of any help to a caller. If memory is involved in hash ceiling at all, which is questionable, it is a memory of situations and dancer locations - a mental image of a set. Before a series of calls is useful, it must occur to you when you need it. This access to calls stored in your mind is made easier when you have used the calls, probably as part of a pre-planned figure. People learn in different ways, but careful analysis of past calling experience is the easiest, most reliable, and quickest way to gain skill. Writing out a list of 80 call sequences is a worthwhile exercise because it forces you to analyze each sequence to be sure it is correct and accomplishes what you expect. You would probably increase your store of useable sequences only insofar as you would have gained a better understanding of some actions you do not now fully understand. But, when your list is complete, you would gain nothing by memorizing the entire list and you would quite probably lose what benefit you gained from making it.

You don't become a hash caller by memorizing and if you could, you wouldn't be a GOOD one. Even if memory were reliable enough and fast enough, it wouldn't facilitate the flexibility that makes a good hash caller.

Even the tremendous variation possible with 80 different series of calls (if you use them 6 at a time, there are 300 million possible combinations) would not guarantee you good choreography. A good square dance figure, whether hash, preplanned, or singing, has a smooth flow and logical coordinated design that makes it interesting to call and to dance. Just gluing together sequences will not necessarily produce a good figure. One of the measures of a caller's skill is his ability to find, borrow or create interesting figures. It is certainly possible to get by with just repetition of fairly standard calls, but to be a GOOD caller requires more than this.

One of the techniques of figure design that illustrates the disadvantages of memorizing is the use of a theme idea. This is a way of giving a figure a logical, coordinated design. In a particular dance, for instance, you might take as your theme the call ALLEMANDE THAR and its variations of wrong way thar, girls in the center, throw in the clutch and various sequences following the call SHOOT THE STAR. In this example, the frame work for which your figure is built is the ALLEMANDE THAR and the constant return to the THAR pattern gives it a feeling of unity. The THAR is not too hard to keep track of but suppose your theme was the SQUARE THROUGH from lines of four. This is not easy to keep track of. In order to keep control of the pattern, in a hash call, you must really understand the effect of the various possible actions involving the SQUARE THROUGH from lines of four, and it is extremely unlikely that you can do this by memorizing words. The only way to learn to understand an action is to use it, watch its effect, make your mistakes and learn by them. This is calling experience and there is no shortcut. As we have said many times in these pages, we can't give you an instant route to calling skill.

The important message in the concept of FORESIGHT CALLING is: IF YOU DON'T KNOW HOW YOUR NEXT CALL WILL AFFECT THE STATUS OF SEQUENCE AND LADIES' POSITION - DON'T USE THAT CALL. Remember what you wanted to call and when you get home after the dance, work it out on paper or in your head and find, out what effect it would have had. Then, try it at your next dance. As you gain more experience you will find that, as the dancers go through the action, you are likely to realize that it is equivalent to something you know, or you may be able to think of how to make it a ZERO FIGURE while you are calling it. Even if you don't find the way out as you are calling, you may be willing to gamble on a visual check and hope that the set(s) you are watching will get through this action so that you can rely on your ability to get them straightened out by visual techniques. But as you do this, know that it is a gamble and don't do it unless you are willing to lose.

Choreography and, specifically, the problem of keeping track of dancers while calling, has been the main subject of several books. We would encourage you to read them all. With the constantly changing group of "Basic" calls that is characteristic of today's square dancing, you will probably never learn all that you would want to know about this subject. You can be certain that no one has the whole answer and anything you can find out will probably help. The best known books that offer help on the problem of keeping track of dancers while calling are:

Bell, D and Dawson, B, The Keys to Calling, 1863 Alta Vista,
Sarasota, Florida, 1961

Gotcher, Les, Textbook of American Square Dancing. 14641 East
Palm Avenue, La Puente, California: Les Gotcher Enterprises, 1961

Holden, R and Litman, L, Instant Hash, 7309 Greenleaf Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio, 1961

Michl, Ed, Build Your Hash, 1601 Hay Avenue, Coshucton, Ohio, 1963
In addition to these books, there are some calling aids available that you may find helpful during the

early stages of learning.

For working out your own calls:

CHECK-A-KALL Checkers, $2.00 Postpaid from
American Squares
6400 North Leaf Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60646

THE PATTER PLANNER Dancer Dolls, $6.95 from
Hilton Audio Products
3409 Randolph Avenue
Oakland, California 9402

For suggestions on dance patterns:
CALLERS CUE-CARD SYSTEM, For information write to:
Hilton Audio Products 3409 Randolph Avenue
Oakland, California 94602

SQUARE DANCE DOMINOES, Set of 50 - $3.50 from
Lloyd Litman
7309 Greanleaf Avenue Cleveland, Ohio 44130

Other useful information on choreography and a wide variety of additional square dance topics is contained in the monthly issues of;

AMERICAN SQUARES
6400 North Leaf Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60646

SETS TN ORDER
462 North Robertson Boulevard
Los Angeles, California 90046

One final bit of advice is to keep dancing every chance you get and to pay careful attention to the choreography every time you dance. The more familiar you are with a dance pattern, the better you will be able to use it in designing your own figures whether preplanning at home or under the pressure of hash calling. One of the saddest pictures in square dancing is that of the caller who starts calling too soon after he has learned to dance. He usually never progresses as a caller beyond his stage as a dancer with too little experience to dance smoothly and to handle complicated figures with ease.

# Chapter 3 - TIMING

Good timing is probably the most important single characteristic of good calling. Study carefully the calling of the best known and best liked callers and you will find that their styles differ widely, some have good voices and some do not, some are showmen and others just call. But those who have survived the test of time have one thing in common; they rarely get the call too far ahead of the action on the floor and they just as rarely make the dancers wait for a call. This is good timing and it is extremely difficult to achieve. The process changes from one group to the next, from one hall to the next and even from the beginning of the evening to the end. It is just as important in singing calls as it is in patter calls and can most easily be practiced while you are actually calling for dancers because dancers in motion highlight timing errors. For this latter reason, you will rarely find and inexperienced caller with good timing. It takes time to develop.

Timing is of prime importance in that it alone determines whether the dance flows smoothly into a coordinated whole or is a series of separate actions that dancers must do one at a time. If you have ever danced in a set where everyone could do the figures easily and where the calls reached you just as you needed them and no later, you have experienced the unique pleasure that perfect timing can give to dancers. Dancing at its best is a continuous motion for all the dancers. It is a smooth flow in which there are no sudden starts or stops and one action proceeds into the next without interruption. To reach this goal requires good dancers doing figures they can dance without too much thinking. It also requires a caller who can give his calls at exactly the right time, not so far in advance that the dancers must remember too many calls or rush through them and never so late that they must stop and wait. Good timing also, incidentally, requires good choreography, but this we've discussed in an earlier chapter. Timing, simply, is when to give the call in terms of the dancers' progress through the figure. No matter what you call or how you call it, you have timing. It may not be <u>good</u> timing but whenever you utter a series of calls, you have some kind of timing. Good timing depends on many things. Timing that is good in one situation may be poor under different circumstances. Careful timing of a call can make it possible for dancers to get through more complicated figures than they otherwise could. You can make dancers run or slow them down by adjusting your timing and timing changes can also help you to handle the ever-present differences in dancer ability. Timing can make your teaching more effective and your calling career last longer. Let's try to find out what makes good timing.

We have said that timing is "when the call is given in terms of the dancers progress through the figure." There is another way of saying the same thing: how much thinking time is allowed for the dancers between the time they hear the call and the time they must act on it. For now, let us assume that the dancers we are calling for are of about equal ability, have all been taught to take one step for each beat of the music, and do not take deliberate shortcuts in executing figures. In trying to establish correct timing, we are really trying to decide how long it will take the dancers to hear the call, understand it and become ready to do the action. With the ideal group we have assumed, that time should be the same for each dancer on the floor.

In discussing timing, "real time" in minutes and seconds is not much help because the speed of the music varies. A much more valuable unit of time is beats in the music. Since our ideal group takes one step for each beat of the music and they never take shortcuts, it takes each one the same time (number of beats) to complete the action of each call. This gives us a measure we can really count on. Using this measure, lets consider how long it takes to dance some of

the basic calls, From a basic square formation, the call HEAD TWO COUPLES RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH takes 8 steps (beats) - 2 to touch hands in the center, 2 more to continue to the opposite side and 4 to complete the courtesy turn, drop hands and be ready for the next call. With the same kind of analysis, we can develop a list like this:

| | |
|---|---|
| RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH | 8 |
| LADIES CHAIN | 8 |
| CROSS TRAIL | 6 |
| ALLEMANDE LEFT | 6-8 |
| GRAND RIGHT AND LEFT | 10 |
| DOS A DOS | 6 |
| DOS PASO | 12 |
| SQUARE THROUGH | 12 |
| 1/2 SQUARE THROUGH | 8 |

Now let's look at a timing problem, using the information we already have. Again we make some assumptions: 1.) our ideal group, 2.) the calls as written here given in 4 beats each, 3.) on the first beat following the end of the call, the dancers will be taking the first step of the action. Consider this call*:*

HEAD TWO COUPLES RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH
HEAD TWO LADIES CHAIN ACROSS
SIDE TWO COUPLES RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH
SIDE TWO LADIES CHAIN ACROSS

At four bents per call, it will take a minimum of 16 counts to give these four calls. The action called for takes 32 steps to complete. If you just rattle off these calls with no pause between them, you'll be *way* ahead of the dancers when you're through and there will be mass confusion on the floor. Remember that the first four steps of both RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH and LADIES CHAIN have the active people in the middle of the set. Getting active people from both the heads and the sides in the center at the same time will result in collisions and confusion.

Now let's analyze the call (given without pauses) and the action 4 beats at a time.

| BEATS | THE CALL | HEADS ACTION | SIDES ACTION |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1-4 | HD CPLS R&L THR | Waiting | Waiting |
| 5-8 | HD LADIES CHAIN | Cpls Cross Cent | Waiting |
| 9-12 | SIDE CPLS R&L THR | Courtesy Turn | Waiting |
| 13-16 | SIDE LADIES CHAIN | Ladies Cross Cent | Cpls Cross Cent |
| 17-20 | Silent | Courtesy Turn | Courtesy Turn |
| 21-24 | Silent | Waiting | Ladies Cross |

From this chart you can see that during beats 13-16, both the head ladies and the side couples are trying to get across the set at the same time. Also notice that the call LADIES CHAIN is completed just as the couples start to do the RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH and 4 beats before they can start the CHAIN, By adding two 4-beat pauses to this call, the collision can he avoided and each action can be called so that the dancers start it as soon as the call is completed. These two pauses are the minimum that will produce good timing for this call.

| BEATS | THE CALL | HEADS ACTION | SIDES ACTION |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1-4 | HD CPLS R&L THR | Waiting | Waiting |
| 5-8 | Silent | Cpls Cross Cent | Waiting |
| 6-12 | HD LADIES CHAIN | Courtesy Turning | Waiting |
| 13-16 | SIDE CPLS R&L THR | Ladies Cross Cent | Waiting |
| 17-20 | Silent | Courtesy Turn | Cpls Cross Cent |
| 21-24 | SIDE LADIES CHAIN | Waiting | Courtesy Turn |
| 25-28 | Silent | Waiting | Ladies Cross |
| 29-32 | Silent | Waiting | Courtesy Turn |

Now think back - we said that these calls required 32 beats of dancing action, yet no one was moving during the first 4 beats and the action is complete at the end of 32 beats. The explanation is that during beats 17-20, two 4-beat actions took place at the same time. This is called overlapping figures and when no conflicting actions are involved, causes no trouble. In fact, by rearranging the order in which we give these same four calls, we can increase the overlap even further.

| BEATS | THE CALL | HEADS ACTION | SIDES ACTION |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1-4 | HD CPLS R&L THR | Waiting | Waiting |
| 5-8 | SIDE CPLS R&L THR | Cpls Cross Cent | Waiting |
| 9-12 | HD LADIES CHAIN | Courtesy Turn | Cpls Cross Cent |
| 13-16 | SD LADIES CHAIN | Ladies Cross Cent | Courtesy Turn |
| 17-20 | Silent | Courtesy Turn | Ladies Cross |
| 21-24 | Silent | Waiting | Courtesy Turn |

By allowing two non-conflicting actions to use the same 4 beats, we fit the 32 steps of these calls into only 20 beats of music (all couples were standing during the first 4 beats). The call was given without pauses and yet notice that each dancer action started on the first beat following the end of the call for that action.

In the same way that we just compressed the 32 steps of action into 20 beats of music, we can also expand it to use the full 32 beats.

| BEATS | THE CALL | HEADS ACTION | SIDES ACTION |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1-4 | HD CPLS R&L THR | Waiting | Waiting |
| 5-8 | Silent | Cpls Cross Cent | Waiting |
| 9-12 | SD CPLS R&L THR | Courtesy Turning | Waiting |
| 13-16 | Silent | Waiting | Cpls Cross Cent |
| 17-20 | HD LADIES CHAIN | Waiting | Courtesy Turn |
| 21-24 | Silent | Ladies Cross Cent | Courtesy Turn |
| 25-28 | SD LADIES CHAIN | Courtesy Turn | Waiting |
| 29-32 | Silent | Waiting | Ladies Cross |
| 33-36 | Silent | Waiting | Courtesy Turn |

In all of these examples after the starting call (first 4 beats), there is always some action going on in the set. There is no time when all 4 couples are waiting for a call. If there were, the call they were waiting for

would have been too late. In each of the last three examples, the timing was technically correct yet it was different in each example. Technically correct timing means that no call comes too early and at no time is the whole set waiting for a call before they can dance. However, from these examples we can see that, within that definition, great variety is possible. The most important effect of these variations is to make the sequence of calls easier or more difficult for the dancers to do. The more action the dancers must fit into a given number of beats, the more hectic the dancing becomes. Beginners who have just learned the RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH and LADIES CHAIN would probably get through our fourth (32 beat) version of this figure but would have trouble doing the third (20 beat) version.

The examples we have been considering show one aspect of timing and the effect it has on dancing. That aspect is the amount of dancing action that is fitted into a given number of beats of music. There is another related but different aspect to timing that is more difficult to illustrate, work with and see the effect of. It is concerned directly with haw long and how well the dancers can remember a sequence of calls. We all know that the call must be ahead of the action, but how far ahead. The answer varies depending on the experience of your group and the complexity of the series of calls.

In an attempt to understand the problem, consider the fairly common sequence of calls from an 8 CHAIN THROUGH set up: DIVE THROUGH PASS THROUGH, STAR THROUGH, RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH, SQUARE THROUGH. It is difficult to say exactly how long it will take dancers to do this much dancing, but let's assume that without rushing, it will take 8 beats to do the first three, 6 beats for the RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH (the couples are closer together than the basic square formation and don't need the two steps to get right hands joined) and 12 beats for the SQUARE THROUGH. Now study the charts below which show two different ways of timing this call. During the first 2 beats of the call we assume the dancers are completing the action that brought them to the 8 CHAIN THROUGH position.

| **BEATS** | **THE CALL** | **THE ACTION** |
|---|---|---|
| 1-2 | DIVE THROUGH | Completing previous call |
| 3-6 | PASS THRU-STAR THRU | Dive Thru – Pass Thru |
| 7-8 | R&L THRU | |
| 9-10 | SQUARE THRU | Star Thru |
| 11-30 | Silent | R&L Thru – Square Thru |

| **BEATS** | **THE CALL** | **THE ACTION** |
|---|---|---|
| 1-2 | DIVE THROUGH | Completing previous call |
| 3-6 | PASS THRU –Pause 2 | Dive Thru, |
| 7-8 | STAR THRU | ,Pass Thru |
| 9-10 | R&L THRU | Star Thru |
| 11-14 | Silent | Right & Left |
| 15-16 | SQUARE THRU | Through |
| 17-30 | Silent | Square Through |

The difference between these two ways of calling the same thing is 6 beats of silence. In the first version, the call is continuous and takes 10 beats to say. In the second, we have left a 2-beat silence on counts 5 - 6 and a 4-beat silence on counts 11 - 14. The call words still take just 10 beats to say so we end the call on count 16. Look now at the dancer action and the call during beats 9 - 12 in the first example. As the dancers are finishing the STAR THROUGH, the call says SQUARETHROUGH and in any group of dancers, at least some would do just that, leaving out the RIGHT AND LEFT

THROUGH entirely. Any caller watching the floor could see that the dancers were not ready for the SQUARE THROUGH call, and would hold back. After all, he is a full six beats ahead by then. But what about the call, RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH? The call has just been given when the dancers start the STAR THROUGH. Might some not do a RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH instead? We are splitting hairs, you say? TIMING IS A SPLIT-HAIRS PROBLEM.

Careful attention to the problems of timing becomes even more important without the assumption of an ideal group of dancers. In a real situation, you will always find dancers of varying experience, skill and reaction time. Under these conditions, timing is usually a matter of compromise between exactly correct timing, which leaves no extra time between the dancers` execution of each action, and a slower timing which gives the dancers some thinking time in addition to the exact numbers of beats required to complete each action. One place where this need for extra time is most obvious is in a beginner's class.

During the first few weeks of a class the most important thing we are teaching is how to listen and react to a spoken word. The biggest difference between new dancers and experienced dancers is reaction time. The beginner must have more time between hearing the call and reacting to it than he will require a year later. There are two possible ways of giving him this extra time. The less desirable one is to call as though the beginner were always taking 2 to 4 extra steps to complete any action. He won't. Once he knows what he is supposed to do, even a beginner, if he has been properly taught, will dance the action in the correct number of steps. But, he will use any extra beats you allow to think about the call and this builds bad dance habits. The better way to give the beginner extra time is to give your calls so that they are completed not just as he is ready to start the action, but 2 to 4 beats earlier than that. The dancer then has time to think about the next action as he is completing the one he is in. The trouble with this second system is that whenever the figure is at all complicated, the beginner will not be able to do two things at one time (complete one call and think about the next).

As with most aspects of timing, calling for beginning dancers need not force a choice of one method to the exclusion of the other. The best callers use both timing techniques while teaching. On the calls the class has been doing for several weeks, the "think while doing" system will keep the action flowing and give dancers a more satisfying, smoother feeling. When the call is an action they have just learned, the "think then do" system will make it easier for them to dance the figure. It is also possible to use a blend of the two techniques as a call becomes more familiar to a class over time. As with so many aspects of calling, judgment and experience are the key factors in how successfully you handle this blending.

The use of timing to make dancing easier is not limited to beginners. In fact, skillful use of timing is one of the most important factors in good calling, whatever the ability of the dancers. A finely developed sense of timing makes it possible for the most experienced callers to keep the floor dancing through much more complicated patterns than can callers with less skill in timing. The best known and best liked callers in the activity have different styles, with different types of material to call, called "on phrase" or not but, without exception, their timing is excellent. This one aspect of calling most reliably separates the good from the almost good.

In spite of its importance, timing is an elusive and changeable thing. A sequence of calls given with near perfect timing would probably be too slow if repeated immediately with the same timing. Few dancers are directly aware of timing and may notice only when they had to wait for a call. The rare comments on a caller's timing are likely to be vague: "His dances really flow," "He is so smooth to dance to," or simply, "that was a great dance." However, many of the mistakes that dancers make are caused by the

caller with poor timing. But, perhaps fortunately, the dancers do not know this and take the blame on themselves.

Do not fool yourself in the same way. If dancers have trouble with action you know they can do, analyze carefully your timing of the call. Many newer callers complain that the professional visiting callers attract better dancers and can therefore use more complicated (and interesting?) figures. This is usually not true. The top callers are able to get your dancers through more complicated figures than you can because their timing is better than yours.

Our definition of good timing, unwieldy as it is, says the dancers should never have to wait for a call and that it should never get to them so early that they forget it before they are ready to use it. With a mixed group of dancers, this usually gives you a narrow time gap in which to give the call. You will have to compromise between the faster reaction of the experienced dancer and the shorter memory of the never dancer. You will have to delay your call as long as you can so the newer dancers have a shorter time to remember, but not so long that the experienced dancers have to wait. This is by no means always possible, so aim for the middle ability in the group.

In real life, some dancers move through an action faster than others. It is obvious that if we keep letting the slow ones take a little longer than the others, sooner or later either the faster dancers must wait, or the slower ones get too far behind to continue, unless we find some way to equalize the two. There are some calls which can serve as such timing equalizers. A SWING is one if the slow movers will take just one turn while the faster dancers take two. PROMENADE AND DON'T SLOW DOWN is another in which the fast sets take more steps than the slow sets. CIRCLE LEFT or RIGHT accomplishes this and there are some places in a call where waiting is less annoying to dancers. After a PROMENADE, they will wait or swing at home before starting the next pattern. Unfortunately, experienced dancers, given too much waiting time, tend to develop styling mannerisms (kicks, gestures, stamps) which add little to the flow of the dance.

Experienced dancers doing figures that are easy for them can get by with wide variations in timing but when the figure is unusual and calls for an action that is relatively unfamiliar, even they need timing help. A little of the "thinking time" given in class will go a long way to keep the dancers out of trouble. A common error of new callers in this situation is to call the whole figure slowly when only one small section of it is troublesome. A better technique is to call at normal speed until you reach the trouble spot then give a few extra "thinking beats" and continue on again at normal speed. Few if any dancers will notice the slowdown because they need the extra time. Another situation in which timing is particularly critical is a long "hand turn" sequence such as DAISY CHAIN or TRIPLE ALLEMANDE because slight variations in reaction time tend to multiply and each part of the action is short. In these actions, dancers can easily get out of phase. A good caller can control the potential confusion by stopping a DAISY CHAIN or TRIPLE ALLEMANDE any time the dancers have left hands joined by calling an ALLEMANDE THAR. This is an equalizing figure that will give the slower dancers a chance to catch up.

Another important use of timing is to keep a floor of dancers moving together. We think of timing usually as adjusting the call to fit the movement of the dancers, but this can also work in reverse - to make the dancers adjust their action to fit the call. Recently the words, "Clipped Timing" have been discussed a great deal by callers, "Clipped Timing" means not allowing enough beats for an action to permit the dancers to do it smoothly and without rushing. If you clip a couple of beats off of each action by giving the next call too soon, you can make the dancers run and increase their confusion

considerably. People who dance to "Clipped-time" callers regularly learn to save time in doing figures; they do not go forward and back, they just lean in and out and they make less than a turn for a swing. There are those who felt that dancers who are forced to run in this way are being clipped of the best of square dancing.

Even dancers who are used to clipped timing can usually be slowed down by keeping the call just a little slower then their speed calls for. You may ask "Why bother?" and our answer is to make your job easier. Clipped-time dancers have no way of staying together. Some move faster than others and thus, the advantages of careful timing which you have learned to depend on to help people dance no longer work. Clipped-time dancers frequently cannot handle any but the simplest material because they cannot be given the help of good timing. If you can slow them down and get the whole floor moving together, you can give them a program with more variety and interest than a caller who must call at their pace. The dancers won't know how you did it but, fortunately, most will have a better time if the whole floor is dancing together than they will when only those who run the fastest are moving.

One final aspect of timing is its use in singing calls. This is an area that is frequently overlooked even by callers whose timing of patter calls is excellent. There are good reasons for this oversight. Unfortunately, many of the figures that come with singing call records are poorly timed if you call them exactly as written. Since many callers memorize the words on the call sheet and call them just as they are written, they cannot make the necessary adjustments for various floor considerations. On a very crowded floor, a RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH may take 6 beats instead of the usual 8 from a basic square formation. If you are singing a memorized call, there is nothing you can do to adjust it when you want to use it with a group of beginners.

Many leading callers, whose timing on patter calls varies flawlessly to fit the situation, subscribe to a belief that we feel is incorrect. They think the words of a singing call must have the same rhythm as the words of the original song. Acting on this theory, many writers of singing call figures work very hard to fit the call words into the original rhythm and frequently, in the process, ruin the timing of the call making it much more difficult than it need be to dance. We believe that calling is different from just singing a song and that a caller's first loyalty should be to good timing. Our primary responsibility is to keep the dancers dancing. If we can do that and still follow the rhythm of the original words, all the better, but we should never sacrifice ease of dancing to fidelity to the original song. However, a musically good record need not be discarded just because the figure that comes with it is poorly timed. One possible solution is to rewrite the figure as we described in the discussion on singing, call choreography. If the figure allows the right number of beats overall, only a minor change in the arrangement of the words of the call may be needed to place the instruction words correctly. Take a critical look at singing calls in terms of timing and recognize that you have not only the right to change them, but also the obligation to be sure that, as you call them, your timing is correct for the dancers. This may require on-the-spot changes, such as leaving out a SWING or DOS A DOS for a beginner group or adding an extra action if the floor is crowded.

The lack of specific directives in this chapter on timing is, at least in part, a reflection of the fact that timing is a variable thing. It depends on many unpredictables such as condition of the floor, experience of the dancers and even season of the year and temperature in the hall. You will have to make your own adjustments according to the situation as you find it. All we can hope to do here is to make you aware of the effect that timing has on the dancing and to encourage you to experiment with timing in the constant effort to improve your calling.

# Chapter 4 - PROGRAMMING

Programming is a very important aspect of calling that is seldom given much conscious thought by callers. It is the selection of what to call during an evening of dancing. The success of your dance frequently depends as much on what you chose to call as it does on the way you called it. You might call a particular figure or singing call especially well only to have it fall flat because it was the wrong time for that selection. There are many things to consider in choosing the right dance for a particular situation. Some of the most important of these are: experience and skill of the dancers, their expectations (workshop, advanced dancing, recent graduates material, one night stand for non-dancers, etc.), familiarity of the dancers with your calling style and voice, weather, floor condition, what has been called earlier on the program, and what you expect to call next. No two situations call for exactly the same solution and there is a tremendous variety in the situations you may face. The perfect choice for the last dance in an evening at a club for which you call frequently is perhaps not the best choice for a festival at which you are allotted a single tip. There is a difference between these two situations, but what is the difference and how do you decide what is best for each? This is the problem of programming.

Perhaps the easiest way to approach the problem is to consider what can be accomplished by choosing carefully what you will call. First, consider an evening's program for a group of reasonably experienced dancers who are familiar with your calling, the standard situation for a club caller. First we want variety, within this evening's program and between this program and the one you called at the last dance for this group. Before you can set up your program to give variety, you should decide what dancers remember. Dancers remember some things but there are others which you remember and they forget. They may remember a singing call tune, but seldom the figure. They may also be able to tell you that the last patter call had a WHEEL AND DEAL (or an 8 CHAIN THROUGH, SUSIE Q OR STAR) but how many of each or whether all of these, they can't tell you. They will remember its difficulty by whether or not they made mistakes; or even, if they think you didn't see their mistake, will call it easy no matter what it was. Dancer’s memories are hard to predict, but if you do four patter calls in a row starting with HEAD COUPLES LEAD TO THE RIGHT AND CIRCLE TO A LINE, most dancers are likely to think you've done the same dance all night long, even though you varied whatever followed the line formation.

## VARIETY

This gives us some guidelines for emphasizing program variety. In each patter call, try to include something different for the dancers to remember. It should be something distinctive which will focus their attention. You might be able to call the same basic figure all night long without dancer awareness if you change the opening and include a different, distinctive zero figure each tine. In fact, we have seen this done but it is doubtful that it could be repeated very often without generating boredom among dancers. There are better ways to generate variety in your program. Use several different types of figures in an evening. Figures based on star actions are quite different in character from those that work from lines of four or from a "goal post" formation. Some figures keep all four couples dancing while others move two couples at a time. Action out of an 8 CHAIN THROUGH set up is markedly different from a diagonal action (HEAD GENTS AND THE CORNER GIRL). There are Line-of-Three figures, Ocean Wave figures, LADIES CHAIN actions. It is important to note that many actions that seem similar to the caller may seem quite different to the dancers. For instance, a figure using 1/2 SQUARE THROUGHS one after the other may seem quite different to a dancer than the same figure done with STAR THROUGH PASS THROUGH. For the caller, the problem of keeping track of the dancers is the same either way but to the dancer, these two are not the same at all. In an evening's program, try not to use the same type of figure too many times. (There are times

when you may work hard to use almost identical figures all night long, but these are special situations about which we will say more later.)

The problem of variety in singing calls is largely one of music selection. Very few dancers can identify a singing call by its figure and even those few can do it only with the most familiar tunes. It is true that if you used the exact same figure with two or three singing calls in the same evening, some of your dancers might notice. Dancers remember the music of a singing call but hardly ever remember the figure. Don't repeat the music too frequently and you need not worry unduly about singing call variety.

## FIGURE DEVELOPMENT

Aside from variety, careful programming can improve the ability of the dancers to master difficult figures. We'll call this program development. To get this effect, the early part of your program should include parts of a more difficult figure you expect to use later. For instance, if you plan to use a figure with a SQUARE THROUGH out of lines of four with the girls on the men's left, you might use earlier a SQUARE THROUGH for just two couples from the basic square formation with the girls on the men's left. If you wanted to use a TRIPLE ALLEMANDE, you might prepare dancers for it by calling the same action without the promenades. These are simple examples but the technique works even with a complete figure. In one patter call, you might use half of the complicated action you're anticipating. In the next one, use the other half and on the next patter call, you can put the two together. If you vary the set up, most of your dancers will be unaware of the development and those who are may forgive you your method of helping them to dance the figure easily.

This process of development works particularly well with new singing call figures. If you would like to use a particular figure in a singing call but you lack confidence in the dancers' ability to do it smoothly, patter call it early in the evening so that you can give them a little extra time and help where they need it. When you use the singing version later, they'll breeze through without trouble and only you will know that they would never have made it without your help. One word of caution here: resist the temptation to tell them, any of them, what you have done. You will not get the appreciation you sought and you will destroy the pride of accomplishment you just worked so hard to give them.

## CHALLENGE

Before we start a detailed discussion of an evening's program, consider some leadership philosophy. Ask yourself what the dancers want and expect from this activity. We think it's safe to say that every dancer would like to dance every figure without a mistake. Some people have learned to live with their mistakes quite well, others have not, but we think all would be happier if they never made mistakes. This can be assured for those willing to dance only easy material that they know well. However, many dancers get bored if they think they know what's coming next. They want to be challenged, in fact they want to struggle - AND WIN. You'll never hear dancers say they want to be defeated; they want to be challenged, to be tested and to prove they can pass the test, A few people are more of a problem; they are out to prove that they are the BEST dancers. They want the caller to prove this for them by calling in such a way that only they continue to churn through the figures successfully. This minority can win only when others lose and the caller who caters to them exclusively will find his group growing smaller as fewer dancers keep up the pace.

Assuming then, that most dancers would like to have their dancing skill tested and found adequate, how do you as a caller do this for them? It would be easy if everyone at a dance had the same skill, but whether on

the first night of a class or at a private club of the best dancers in an area, this is never true. The caller must always contend with a mixture of skills. If you push the best dancers to the outer limit of their ability, you will lose a large part of the floor, but if you call material that everyone can get through without effort, you run the risk of boring a large part of the crowd. The saving factor in any groups is that only a small part of the crowd is at either extreme of ability and between 60% and 80% of the group share a similar degree of skill. The ability of this majority will vary somewhat from one dance to the next and it is this average ability of the group that determines the "level" of the dance.

If you agree that dancers would like to be able to dance every figure without a mistake, it follows that the best and most popular caller in the long run is the one who is able to keep most of his floor dancing most of the time. In fact, we'll go further and remind you of a classic comment - "Any idiot can stop the floor, it takes a caller to keep them dancing". If you repeatedly lose or confuse a large part of the crowd, it isn't because you can't keep them dancing, it is because you won't. You are calling material that is too difficult for the dancers the WAY YOU ARE CALLING IT. Another caller with more experience, and/or better timing, and/or better choice of words and emphasis might be able to get these same dancers through the same figure. If he couldn't, a better caller would know enough about the difficulty of the figures he uses to anticipate and control the outcome. If a caller regularly loses a large percentage of his floor, it must be assumed that he is too poor a caller to do anything about it or that he is too stubborn to try. There is no need to feel too proud (or egotistical) to admit a calling error which can be corrected. In any event, it cannot be blamed on the dancers.

Faced with the problem of keeping people dancing without being bored, the caller must learn to interest dancers even when their skill is not being pushed to the limit and occasionally must make them think their skill has been tested even when it has not. He does this with program variety, calling ability, and care in choosing material. By careful attention to the techniques discussed under the subject of "Confusion Control", a caller can make it possible for dancers to dance figures that are really beyond their ability. They may not do them smoothly, but at least they don't have the frustration of not making it through at all. This enables the caller to match the ability of the less skillful dancers present to that of the more experienced members of the group. Particularly important in this process are good timing and key word emphasis. With these, you can call figures that are interesting and challenging for the experienced dancers as they do them smoothly and with style, and still make it possible for the less skillful dancers to avoid the frustration of a set "breaking down". However you do it, whether by calling ability or the choice of easier material, make an effort to let people dance and do not say to yourself "If they can't dance it, that's their tough luck". If those who couldn't keep up with you just stayed away from your dances, it would be your loss alone. Unfortunately, you will drive many of the less experienced dancers right back to the TV sets and bowling leagues from which they were so recently recruited into a square dance class, and this hurts the whole activity.

## THE ONE NIGHT CLUB PROGRAM

How can this philosophy be applied to programming an evening of dancing? The early part of an evening is a critical time. Dancers usually do not all arrive before the dance starts; they continue to come while you are calling the first tip. When they arrive, they have been thinking about other things than square dancing, the baby sitter, the day at work or something else. It takes a while for them to shift their attention to the dancing and during this time, they are not as quick to respond as they will be later in the evening. If they are not familiar with your voice and style of calling, they will find it difficult to understand you at first. First impressions are lasting and peoples' attitude toward the

evening is frequently established in the first few dances. It is much more difficult to overcome a bad impression that you have made than it is to improve a neutral impression. If the party starts off with spirit it will continue that way unless something happens to destroy it; but if it starts discouragingly, you will have to work very hard to generate enthusiasm.

Knowing that the early part of the evening is important, what do we do about it? For your first couple of patter calls, stick to known, standard material and call it carefully, exaggerating your pronunciation to make your words easy to understand. Do everything in your power to make sure that everyone gets through these first figures with ease. This is not the time to demonstrate your ability to call faster or more complicated material than the guy they danced to last week. If you must prove that point, save it for later in the evening, but remember that we believe moat dancers measure a caller's skill by how well they can dance to him not by how easily he can lose them. Singing calls provide a way to start building enthusiasm, even while you are using easy, danceable figures. Certainly your first singing call should be very easy to understand; the music should not cover up your words. The second singing call can be a real pace setter but with an easy figure. This is a good place to use music that helps to build spirit in your crowd; a tune they know well enough to sing and rhythm that makes even the spectators start tapping their toes. By using this kind of music here, you will start to inject interest and excitement into the program, thereby beginning the foundation on which to construct a successful evening.

In developing the early part of a program, the goal should be clear. If you are calling for a group that has danced to you seldom, if ever before, you probably share the goal of every caller in this situation: to convince these dancers that they enjoy dancing to you and that you are a caller they would like to hear again. Different dancers look for different things from a caller and no one caller is going to be best in the opinion of all people. But a caller who keeps dancers interested and dancing will probably meet with the approval of the great majority everywhere. Having gotten through the early part of the evening without confusing the dancers, we now move on to a more difficult stage of the program. When the dancers are used to your voice, they have a little more freedom, while dancing, to notice what you are calling and how you are calling it. This is the time to give them something they can identify with you - the dances they'll tell their friends about when they are asked what kind of a dance it was. If you have an unusual figure in your collection, we think this in a good time to use it. At the average dance, our own preference is to use one that is an unusual combination of standard material in the third tip and to do some workshopping in the fourth. The difference between these two is primarily the amount of teaching involved. In the unusual figure, we are teaching just enough to allow the dancers to dance the figure. In a workshop figure, we are attempting to increase the dancer's knowledge of how a particular call can be used, and we try to use that call in a variety of ways in the same figure. This is one of two times during an evening when we briefly expect to lose more than a small percentage of the floor.
For singing calls in these important third and fourth spots, we recommend your best. Remember that people have settled down, become familiar with your voice and are starting to notice what and how you are calling. If you have a singing call you want to feature, we think the third tip is the time to use it. At this point in a dance, people seem to reach a natural peak and the caller can reinforce that peak with the very best he can give them. They are "warmed up", you've had a chance to evaluate their dancing ability so you can be sure they'll have no trouble with the singing call figure and it's early enough so they haven't started to tire.

If you can build enthusiasm successfully to a peak at the third or fourth tip the prevailing mood will carry the rest of the program. Some callers try to build enthusiasm all the way through the evening, trying to top each success with an even greater spirit-builder in the next tip. This can be a mistake for several reasons. A sustained

high level of excitement is exhausting and becomes harder to maintain as the dancers grow tired. If you try to save your highest peak for late evening, you must build so slowly that the early part of your evening, while people are forming their impression of you, may be less than the rousing success that would present you at your best. A third reason for avoiding the long slow build is that we think you get much the same effect much more easily and reliably with an early peak. If you miss the early peak (needles have been known to jump on the last chorus), you can try again. But, if you're saving your greatest for last and something goes wrong, the dance may be over.

After the early high point in enthusiasm, try to back off slightly for the next couple of tips, aiming for what we call "just dancing". Ride the wave of enthusiasm generated early and see to it that you do nothing to dampen the spirit of the crowd. In these tips, the material should treat the impression that the dancing skill of the crowd is being exercised but that everyone is able to handle the figures quite well. There are several techniques that can help create this impression. Figures of standard calls that everyone knows well will keep the floor moving at a good smooth pace. If you then add an occasional surprise, you will keep the dancers on their toes and thinking that the figures are testing their ability. Surprises are not difficult to add. If you call one pattern the same way twice and then change it slightly, you'll catch some dancers off guard. As they hesitate you have a choice, you can leave them a little extra time to recover from the surprise or you can cut the time a little short and thereby lose the weaker dancers. We believe you will be better liked if you let dancers get almost lost and make a great recovery. The best surprises for this purpose are small changes in the figure. If you make a large change or change figures completely, you run the risk of not being able to get them through. The following are the type of small changes we mean:

> You've been calling:
> HEAD COUPLES CROSS TRAIL AROUND ONE TO A LINE OF FOUR
> Try this instead:
> HEAD COUPLES 1/2 SASHAY THEN PASS THROUGH AROUND ONE TO A LINE
>
> From a line of four you've been calling:
> CROSS TRAIL LEFT ALLEMANDE
> Try this:
> DIXIE CHAIN AND GIRLS GO LEFT, MEN RIGHT, LEFT ALLEMANDE
> Or this:
> STAR THROUGH, PASS THROUGH, LEFT ALLEMANDE
>
> You've been calling:
> HEAD COUPLES WHEEL AROUND, STAR THROUGH, SQUARE THROUGH 3/4
> LEFT ALLEMANDE
> Try it this way:
> HEAD COUPLES WHEEL AROUND, STAR THROUGH, SQUARE THROUGH 3/4
> U TURN BACK, GRAND RIGHT AND LEFT

An added advantage of the type of "little surprises" we have given in these examples is that even if some people don't do just what you have called, they are not very far out of position for whatever comes next. In fact, if they continue to dance the figure as you were calling it, they come out in the same place as those who danced successfully the surprise you called. This means that you have tested the ability of the better dancers without forcing the less experienced members of the group to bear the frustration of breaking up their sets. You have created interest and challenge for the good dancers while letting everyone dance. This balance between challenge for the experienced dancers and possibility for the

less experienced is not easy to maintain. The problem of mixed levels of dancer experience is one of the most difficult for a caller to solve. We are suggesting a partial solution. We believe that you cannot lose the floor repeatedly without leaving your dancers unhappy, and we are also convinced that you cannot "call down" to the lowest level of ability all evening without making the experienced dancers unhappy. All dancers have come expecting an enjoyable evening; anything you can do to add challenge and interest for the more experienced without losing the less experienced helps to minimize the problem.

We have discussed programming for two-thirds of an evening. At this point, consider rebuilding enthusiasm toward a second peak in the next to last tip of the program. Perhaps you will want to use another unusual figure; consider the need for a walk-through. It's better to avoid a walk-through, but not at the cost of having the dancers miss the point of your figure. Sometimes it is possible to walk through just a part of the figure, the part that will cause trouble, without spoiling the interesting part of the action. For a singing call at this point, we try to use one like the second with driving, enthusiasm-building music and a fairly easy figure.

The last third of the program may be the best place for the most "high level" figure of the evening. Other callers may prefer to place this material earlier but our reasoning dictates this timing on the grounds that the most experienced dancers present are entitled to something they can really get their teeth into and we hope, by this point in the program, to have convinced the less skilled dancers that they can dance most of what we call. We hope that we have built their confidence enough to sustain them through the more complicated material. Our own choice is to make this a "hash call" for tighter control than is possible with a long preplanned pattern that depends on completion for dancer satisfaction. Our pattern for this hash is to modulate easy and more difficult material and to finish with everyone dancing. Our object here is to give the best dancers as much challenge as we can without reducing the satisfaction of the rest too much. How much this is, is a purely subjective decision and, for your future popularity with this group, a very important one.

You might follow this with your second feature singing call. We like to close the evening with a smooth-flowing, easy patter call and a quiet type singing call. Some callers prefer to end with a real excitement-building singing call and the choice would seem to depend on whether people may be a little tired. One last caution; resist the urge to close with a fast difficult patter call. Ideally, dancers should be left wanting more and if they go home tired, angry and frustrated, the chances are good that that is all they'll remember about your dance.

## PLAN AHEAD

These last few pages have suggested a plan for designing an evening's program for a regular club dance. This is not intended to be an ideal program plan. It is merely one that we have found to work well for us and we offer it for your use and modification. It is a good idea to have a written program for the dance even when you don't know much about the group you will be calling for. It is easier for most callers to change a pre-planned program at the dance than it is to make one up as you go along. However, if you do plan your program in advance, it is essential that you be willing and able to change it as you go along. You can't anticipate all the conditions which might require a change from what you have planned. A crowded floor can make it uncomfortable to use some figures and a slippery floor may make others actually dangerous. Perhaps you would like to fill a request or perhaps the average ability of the group will be much better, or worse than you expected. Preplanned programs are a guide to help you at the dance but don't use them rigidly in the face of the unexpected.

## THE CLUB CALLER'S PROGRAM

The program we have been discussing is based on the assumption that you are calling for a group of experienced dancers who are unfamiliar with your calling. This is not the only situation in which you are likely to find yourself. Some of the other situations will call for some modification of this basic plan. The more common situation for a beginning caller, after he has taught a class, is a full evening of calling for a group familiar with his calling. It will also probably be one of a series of regularly scheduled dances - the club caller situation. The club caller will usually be able to warm up the group faster than an unfamiliar caller thereby moving the whole program schedule ahead a bit.

We also feel that it is the club caller's responsibility to keep increasing the skill and dancing knowledge of his club so in our normal club program we would usually replace one of the "unusual" figures with another workshop figure. One handicap the club caller has is a lack of variety. It takes constant work to keep the dancing interesting for a group for which you call frequently. The little surprises we have mentioned are only surprises the first few times you use them and therefore you must keep finding new ones if you are to use this technique very often with your own groups. The compensating advantage that the club caller has is a much better knowledge of the skill of the dancers. He can know in advance what will give his floor trouble and just where he will have to be careful with his call. Perhaps the most important advice for the club caller is to make use of the added knowledge he has in the design of his program.

## THE WORKSHOP

Another variation in the program arises when you are calling a workshop. Although it is frequently difficult from a dancer's point of view to tell the difference between a dance and a workshop, this is not desirable. There should be a difference and the way to make that difference is with your program design. In a dance, your goal should be a minimum of walk-throughs and explanation. You should choose your material so that these are not necessary. For a workshop program, you should try to pick material that will teach something and this will require that you teach more. A workshop is not a workshop if all you do is call more complicated figures without explanation. It doesn't become one until you add sufficient explanation for the group to be able to dance what you are calling without trouble. For a workshop program, we like to select a theme figure and work with it in a variety of ways. Perhaps the theme is SQUARE THROUGH. You can then use full and fractional SQUARE THROUGHS, LEFT SQUARE THROUGHS, SQUARE THROUGH from a line of four, SQUARE THROUGH with the girls on the gents' left. From these variations on the theme, you should be able to put together a half dozen or more patter call figures, all quite different from each other that will just about fill your program. In a workshop, we try to use the singing calls as relaxation points making sure that no one has trouble with any of them.

## THE NON-DANCER PARTY

Most callers, sooner or later, are faced with calling a party for non-dancers. This is a unique programming situation and a very important one for you as a caller and for square dancing as an activity. At such a party, you are given an opportunity to present dancing as a recreation to many people who could easily become an active part of square dancing. Such a party can be a springboard for a new class or club; thus, being able to do a good job on this type of dance is a valuable skill. The key is fun, always important in square dancing, but even more so here. The important difference between

the non-dancer party and the first night of class is that the party group need not remember anything the next day or week, other than how much fun it was. Your program can be filled with systematic repetition of patterns to make the sense of accomplishment greater. Call so that the dancers can memorize the pattern. They're unlikely to get bored in a single night, particularly if you change music and small details of the pattern. In a class, you want to train the dancers to listen to the call. At a non-dancer party, you aim to have them dance the pattern successfully and enjoy it. A walk-through before each dance won't bother anyone at the party.

Just one final point on this kind of program; for your singing calls, choose the most easily recognized popular tunes in your record case changing the figures to simple RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH, CHAIN and STAR patterns that can be done after a brief walk-through. For patter calls, use a variety of lively music with a strong beat that, conveys to the party-goers the pleasures of dancing.

# Chapter – 5 TEACHING

It is well recognized that people will enjoy doing something more when they know how to do it well than if they do it badly. Thirty years ago, square dancing made use of a few figures only and it was fairly easy to take a new couple into a group of experienced dancers and teach them what they needed to know in an evening or two of dancing. This is still generally true at the traditional square dances that continue to be popular in many sections of the country but modern or "Western Style" organized square dancing has increased the number of figures used and the complexity of the dances so that a newcomer venturing among experienced dancers the first time he tried square dancing would be hopelessly confused.

To make it possible for people to learn to dance, most square dance callers teach classes. Indeed, classes are the backbone of this form of recreation. Without them and the people they introduce to square dancing, the activity could never have grown to its present popularity. A caller has a responsibility to teach and thereby contribute to the continued growth of the activity. From the caller's point of view, however, there are even more important reasons for teaching classes. It is the easiest way for a new caller to get started. If you start with a group that has never danced before, they are much less critical of your calling than experienced dancers would be. It is also true that dancers have a very strong tendency to like the calling of the person who taught them to dance more than they like that of other callers of equal, or even much greater, skill and experience. Teaching is the best way to build a following of dancers.

## METHOD

Enough of the reasons for teaching, most callers hardly need convincing on this point. The next important step is how to teach. In a square dance class, the most important thing you are teaching is square dance figures and these begin with an explanation. For purposes of this discussion, let's assume you are teaching a RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH. In explaining the figure, there are three important parts you must cover - where it begins, how it is done, and where it ends. The RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH begins with two couples facing each other. To do the figure, each of the four people walks forward to give a right hand to the opposite person (man to lady, lady to man). They walk past each other and, still facing the same direction, the man holds out his left hand and his partner puts her left hand in his. He then puts his right arm around her waist and she walks forward around him as he turns in place until they both face the other couple. Being strictly accurate, the man does not turn in place; he backs up slightly as he turns. This figure starts with two couples facing each other and ends when the two couples have exactly changed places. You have just read a detailed explanation of the RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH and your students need to know at least that much about it to do it correctly.

Explanation is the first step in teaching. The second step, usually combined with the explanation, is to let the students slowly walk through the figure. In this stage of teaching, the most important word in your vocabulary is STOP. You will cut the work of teaching (and learning) by 75X if you can make sure that the first time your dancers try a figure, they do it correctly. As you are slowly walking them through (making sure that no one gets ahead of you), if you see someone starting to make a mistake, say STOP and teach them that this means to "freeze" right where they are. Then you can correct the mistake before they get a chance to do the figure wrong. Never let some of the group get ahead of you during this first attempt with a new figure. Experienced dancers who may be filling in squares at the class are sometimes the worst offenders on this score but the word STOP will help you

maintain control with them as well as with your class.

The next steps in the teaching process are practice and the correcting of errors. You have taught the figure - now call it and watch carefully. As soon as you see someone having trouble with it, stop and walk everyone through it again changing the words to say the same thing in a slightly different way and stressing the part that gave them trouble. This process of calling while watching for errors and then correcting the errors should be repeated until you can no longer see any errors. Another technique that will help at this stage is to change partners and then repeat the walkthrough. Sometimes the new partner will, by doing the figure correctly, help the person who doesn't understand it.

The final step in the teaching process is to explain and practice the variations of the figure you have taught, keeping in mind that in some cases, you may not want to teach all the variations at the same time. With RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH, you probably taught it with the head couples doing it first and then for the side couples. In the same class you might well teach HEAD COUPLES TO THE RIGHT WITH A RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH and the same for the sides but you probably will not want to teach ALL FOUR COUPLES RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH until quite a bit later in the lessons.

## ORGANIZATION OF MATERIAL

We have now covered the steps in teaching a figure but this is only one of the many important aspects of good teaching. Another is the organization of the material you are going to teach so that it progresses logically from one step to the next. It is perfectly possible to teach a TEACUP CHAIN or any ocher figure to a group of people on the first night of a class. The next question to ask is "Is this the best choice of a figure to teach the first night?" and I think you will agree that it is not. But what is the best choice - how do you decide?

Perhaps the best basis for choosing the order in which figures should be taught is the order in which they appear most frequently in dancing so that your students will get the most practice on the figures they will encounter most. This is not the only factor to consider, however, another important one is what will you, the caller, want the students to know so that you can use the figure you have taught them. For instance, you might teach HEAD COUPLES WHEEL AROUND from the promenade but what would you do then if you hadn't yet taught the RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH or some other figure that would work from the resulting alignment of the dancers.

Another factor in selecting a teaching sequence is that figures are similar and the principles you taught in one can help to explain the next, For example, the RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH and the PASS THROUGH are quite similar. If you teach the RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH first, you can explain that in doing a PASS THROUGH the couples go through each other just as in a RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH but without taking hands. You can also point out the difference between the two while they are both fresh in the minds of your students stressing that the RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH has a courtesy turn while the PASS THROUGH does not.

It is true of most square dance figures that no one by itself is any more difficult than any other but some figures have much more complicated variations than others. It is well to teach the easier things before attempting the more difficult. These, then, are some of the reasons that might be offered to justify the selection of one teaching sequence over another - the moat frequently used figures first, the simpler figures

first, similar figures grouped together, or simply because you want to use one figure in later teaching and working with another. These are by no means the only possible reasons but they represent a starting point. Decide on the best course organization for you. The important thing in planning a teaching sequence is not which figure comes first. It is far more important that you know why you selected the sequence you use so that you don't overlook the points you wanted to stress.

At the end of this chapter is a list showing one possible sequence for teaching square dance figures. The notes on the list indicate why the items are in this particular order. As we have said, this is not the only good teaching sequence nor is it even necessarily a good one for you, but if you will make a similar list showing the order you prefer and the reasons for it you may find it helpful as a guide for your teaching.

## WHAT TO TEACH

While teaching square dance figures is probably the most important part of a square dance class, it is certainly not the only thing that should be taught. Some other important subjects for the lesions are: how to keep the dancing timed to the music, dancing etiquette, square dancing background or history, and dancing style. Timing for the dancers is the same thing that a caller means when he speaks of timing but from a different point of view. We say to callers "a RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH from home position takes eight steps to complete so in most cases you should allow eight beats of music for the dancers to do it." This statement is valid in part because we teach dancers in beginners' class to take eight steps to do that figure. It is also true that centuries of experience have shown that eight steps is a comfortable number to use in time with the music. Unless you teach your beginners the proper number of steps to use, how are they to know? It isn't necessary to belabor the proper timing of every figure, if you start your dancers off right by building the habit of dancing to the music. If you teach them to use, and let them practice using, eight steps for the LADIES CHAIN and RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH early in the lessons, you will establish a dancing pace for them that will carry over into all their dancing when you teach the correct timing of the LADIES CHAIN and the RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH, you can emphasize it and give the dancers excellent practice by calling for them the phrased exercise that appears in the chapter on Music and the Call. Pick a record with a strong phrase, point out the phrase to the dancers and let them, as a group, say "Go" on the first beat of several phrases. You'll find most of them have no trouble doing this. Then explain to them that they should start to do the figure on the "Go" beat - that your call will come just before it. Then call the exercise correctly phrased. You will have taught them a lot about good dancing. As you check the teaching sequence listed at the end of this section, notice that several figures are where they are to keep the dancers reminded of proper timing. GRAND SQUARE and ALAMO STYLE are two figures that are useful for teaching timing. Whenever you use these and are stressing timing, be sure that your calling is carefully phrased.

Dancing etiquette is a very important subject for your square dance classes. How are your students to know that they should not leave a square when they see another they would rather be in? You must tell them to save them embarrassment. The man with the smell of liquor on his breath is usually out of place at a square dance but he cannot know this unless he is told. For the sake of the group, everyone should know that cleanliness and the use of deodorants is essential for dancing. These things are not always easy to say to a group of dancers over a microphone and under the best of conditions, they require a very careful choice of words to avoid embarrassing the people on the floor. They are, however, things your students need to know and you are the teacher, it's your job to tell them. Don't shirk this duty and remember that you set an important example to them.

The topics I have mentioned aren't the only points of etiquette that should be mentioned. Dancers are well advised to avoid telling someone else how they should have done the last figure, to refrain from telling someone who has just filled an empty space in a square that it is being held for another couple, to walk through a figure cheerfully because there may be someone in the square who could benefit from the help. You can probably add many more to the list. Don't be close mouthed; tell your students anything that will help them to be better and more courteous dancers.

Square dancing has a long and interesting history and knowing something about this background will increase your dancers' enjoyment of the activity. You know that square dancing originated in Europe many centuries ago and that it was brought to this country by the early settlers and has been modified and has developed into a truly American type of dancing. Tell your students these things so they will know too. There are some figures that can serve as a cue to you. GRAND SQUARE has survived in nearly its present form since the very earliest square dances. Dos a dos is a word that has stayed with us since squares (quadrilles) were done in France and is a modification of the French for "back to back". These are examples of the type of information you can give to the class to increase their knowledge of the activity. Learn more about the history of dancing and you will find many other interesting bits of information you can pass on to your class.

Another important point to cover in your classes is dancing style. Experienced dancers usually end a promenade by twirling the girl under. Your dancers will do this too - why not teach them early in the class how to do it correctly and smoothly. When you start the very first night, before they take the first step, is the time to tell your class about the shuffling step that is used in square dancing. Tell them to keep their feet on the floor and slide them along. If you don't, they'll jump hop and skip until you do tell them and habit patterns once established are hard to change. Teach your class how to do the twirl that follows a swing before a promenade and the first time you call ALLEMANDE LEFT following a swing explain to them the comfortable and safe way to direct their partner toward her corner. These are points of dancing style and as the teacher you should include this in your instruction. Don't leave it to chance hoping that the class will pick up style by watching experienced dancers. They'll have enough problems when they first join experienced dancers without making them learn styling too.

## CALLING FOR CLASSES

One frequently overlooked aspect of teaching square dancing is the importance of good calling. Many of the techniques that we all recognize as important when calling for experienced dancers are doubly critical in the beginners' class. It is often said that teaching a class is the way to get started calling and this is true but only because the beginners don't know enough to blame the caller for their (and his) mistakes.

All of the points we are about to bring up are discussed in detail in other chapters but here we will mention the way in which they are particularly important in a class. Choice of words and timing your call will usually make the difference between beginners being able to do what you call or being confused by it. One call in particular illustrates this well. It is HEAD LADIES TO THE RIGHT - CHAIN with experienced dancers the usual call is HEAD LADIES CHAIN TO THE RIGHT given far enough ahead so it may be completely spoken before the head ladies are in position to be

able to do it. If your call is not started until the head ladies are in position, or it is the first call in a dance, even experienced dancers will start the chain straight across and then rapidly have to readjust to go to the right. Beginners haven't learned to think fast enough to make the adjustment and will frequently get all the way across before they realize the error. When you do this intentionally to experienced dancers on occasion, it can be funny and they may enjoy it. When you do it regularly to beginners, they get frustrated and find square dancing is more work than fun. They have no way of knowing that this is a joke or that you could make the call easier for them and they certainly lack the confidence to place the blame for their mistake where it belongs - with you.

There are two factors at work here - one is the choice of words and the HEAD LADIES TO THE RIGHT CHAIN is a better choice; clearer, easier to understand and to act on. The other factor is timing. If you can get the call completed early enough - before the dancers are in position to do it, the HEAD LADIES CHAIN TO THE RIGHT call will work satisfactorily with experienced dancers but one of the most difficult things for a beginner to learn is remembering one call while he is doing another. When calling for a class a basic rule is to time your call so that it comes just before they need it, don’t try to get them to remember a call for very long. As your class gains experience you can increase the lead time if you must, but at the beginning, to avoid frustration, the lead time should be very close to zero.

Another important characteristic of good calling that becomes even more so in a class is voice command. Experienced dancers have been taught that a caller's call is an instruction they should react to. Beginners don't have this training - you are giving it to them. If you give your call in a voice that doesn't insist on response, you will have more trouble than you need have with your class. Part of what produces a voice quality that gets response is confidence. When you give instructions or a call, you must be absolutely convinced that what you are saying is correct. If you are not, your voice will have a question in it and the dancers will question before they react. When you say something in a class - right, wrong or otherwise - say it as if you meant it. The quality of command in your voice will also help you with the discipline in your class. You can't snarl at your class and require them to toe the line - remember they don't have to come. If, when you say "Everybody on the floor, let's dance", you can say it in a pleasant voice but also one that lets them know that it never occurred to you that someone might not get up - they'll all get up. This is voice command.

Another point related to voice command in knowledge. You can not "say it as if you meant it" if you don't know what you're talking about. While it is possible to call a figure correctly although you don't know exactly how it is done, you can not teach it until you understand every detail of it. One example that comes to mind immediately is GRAND SQUARE. You may think that as a dancer you understand this or some other figure completely, but on first teaching it, you will probably encounter many questions you can not really answer well unless you have studied the figure carefully before you teach it. Dancers ask such questions as "where does a CATCH ALL EIGHT end" or "which way do you face after the CROSS TRAIL?" Anticipate such questions and give an answer you won't have to change later.

The most important reason for being sure your knowledge is adequate is not to save yourself embarrassment. If you teach something incorrectly, even if it's only a slip of a word that you correct immediately, some of those students will have trouble with that point for all their dancing days. If, in teaching the DO PASO, you absentmindedly tell dancers to start with the right hand to partner instead of the left the first time, the damage done cannot be rectified completely by correction. Every word you say to a class is much more important than it is with experienced dancers.

While it is true that most beginning callers start by teaching a class, this should not be taken as an indication teaching is easier than calling. Beginners don't know enough to complain or to leave. Keep a soft spot in your heart for your first class; they are the real heroes in the making of a caller. To be a good teacher a caller must be so sure of the techniques of good calling that he can forget them and concentrate on teaching while still handling well the most difficult calling assignment he will ever face.

## A POSSIBLE TEACHING SEQUENCE - WITH NOTES

| | |
|---|---|
| WALK – CIRCLE LEFT AND RIGHT | To establish the shuffling step and directions with a minimum of explanation. |
| PARTNER AND CORNER POSITIONS | Needed for the DO PASO |
| DO PASO | This is a figure that rarely, if ever, occurs in traditional dancing and is here to convince even those who may have done some “barn dancing” that there is something different for them to learn. |
| PROMENADE | To vary the CIRCLE LEFT AND RIGHT |
| SWING | This is used frequently and requires a lot of practice to perfect. |
| SQUARE FORMATION | All the above is taught in a big circle |
| LOCATION AND IDENTIFICATION | They have to know who you’re talking to. |
| HAND TURNS FOR MEN WITH THE CORNER, OPPOSITE AND RIGHT HAND LADY | To give practice in location and in listening carefully to the call |
| LADIES CHAIN (2, 4, & TO THE RIGHT) | One of the most frequently used figures and useful for teaching |
| RIGHT AND LEFT THROUGH | Same reasons as LADIES CHAIN |
| GRAND SQUARE | Gives a tremendous feeling of accomplishment and helps drill good timing |
| GRAND RIGHT AND LEFT | Teach with a variety of partners before trying the ALLEMANDE LEFT to establish which girl to stop with and drill it with a minimum of confusion |
| ALLEMANDE LEFT | Like ham and eggs (but this may not be a good enough reason) |

| | |
|---|---|
| ALAMO STYLE | Time for more work on timing and don't forget to teach them how to do a two-step balance. |
| OCEAN WAVE | Same as ALAMO except in a line |
| HALF SASHAY | Useful for setting up the SQUARE THROUGH as below |
| SQUARE THROUGH | Teach this first with 4 men doing it together – then with 4 girls and with girls on man's left before doing it with couples. This avoids attempts at courtesy turns. |
| COUPLES LEAD TO THE RIGHT CIRCLE (HALF, FULL TO A LINE) | Stress that the couples being led to should not move until the active couples are standing in front of them. Don't go to meet them or the circle full around has no reference position |
| DIVE THROUGH - CALIFORNIA TWIRL | Be sure to mention that following a DIVE THROOUGH the CAL. TWIRL is done without a call |
| BEND THE LINE | You've got a line – why not? |
| WHEEL AROUND | Point out that this is another way of making a line. |
| STAR THROUGH | This might do better earlier as an easier way to set up lines |
| BOX THE GNAT (AND FLEA) | Stress the differences between these and STAR THROUGH |
| WHEEL AND DEAL | Be sure that you teach all the variations of this not just two couples in a line. |
| DOUBLE PASS THROUGH | It follows WHEEL AND DEAL much of the time and again you might find it easier to teach this first. |
| CENTERS IN AND CAST OFF | What else would you do next? |
| SWING THROUGH | Don't give the impression that DOS A DOS TO AN OCEAN WAVE and a balance at the end are part of this call. |
| EIGHT CHAIN THROUGH | Remember to include the EIGHT CHAIN THREE and others like it. |
| CIRCULATE | Again remember the balance is not part of this action. |
| DIXIE CHAIN | Stress that this ends with the participants one BEHIND the other. |
| DAISY CHAIN | This is a chance to stress the forward and back directions in the set. |

| | |
|---|---|
| CATCH ALL EIGHT<br>SUSIE Q<br>WAGON WHEEL<br>RED HOT<br>ALL 8 CHAIN<br>TRIPLE ALLEMANDE | These are all breaks that your class should at least be exposed to. Point out that the name is intended to serve as a helpful cue and the figure is usually called descriptively following the name |

There are and will be other figures that should be taught in square dance classes but this list will give you the idea and you can work out similar comments for any other figures you include in your teaching. Again I mention that the important thing is not the order in which you teach the figures but rather that you know why they are in that sequence and what is important in the teaching of each one.

# CHAPTER 6 – EQUIPMENT

A very important factor in the growth of modern square dancing during the past 10 or 20 years has been the increased availability of portable public address equipment and recorded music. The cause and effect relationship is difficult to determine; the fact is that most current square dancing is done with a live caller and recorded music. Equipment is a very important subject for square dance callers inasmuch as adequate sound coverage in a hall is essential to square dancing. The activity is, perhaps, unique in its demands on public address systems. In square dancing, everyone must be able to hear and understand almost every word spoken by the caller. At the same time, dancers must hear at least the rhythm of the music and their enjoyment is enhanced if they hear the melody and full instrumentation of the orchestra.

The need for understanding is complicated by the fact that the caller's words are spoken rapidly, not always clearly, and to people who are sometimes involved in their dancing to the detriment of their listening. To be understood under these conditions requires far more than just average reproduction and distribution of the caller's voice to the dancing area. Many commercial sound engineers have discovered this fact to their dismay when they have been hired to provide sound equipment for square dancing activities. The usual commercial sound problem involves projection of a single voice, without interfering sound such as music, to an audience that is not moving and that can give its full attention to that voice. Even then, it is not too important if they miss occasional words. None of these circumstances apply in solving the square dance sound problem.

When the group is small, the solution is easier than it is for a large group, but the requirements are the same. The minimum acceptable coverage requires that everyone dancing be able to hear and understand every word the caller speaks. The solution comes in three parts - the caller, the equipment, and the hall (let's ignore the great outdoors for now.*)* For the caller's part in providing good sound, refer back to the earlier discussion dealing with the proper use of the voice and enunciation. The simple fact is that no equipment exists that can clarify a mumbled call. The best that can be expected of a sound system is that it will not add distortion. It cannot remove an accent, nor can it give emphasis to the proper words for you. Your call must be clear, distinct and even reasonably loud although there is no need to shout.

Assuming the caller is doing his part, we can now move on to the subject of equipment. Starting with the bare essentials, a square dance sound system must have; a means of playing records with provision for varying the speed at which they are played, a microphone to pick up the caller's voice, an amplifier with provision for varying the loudness of voice and music independently of each other, and a speaker to reproduce the amplified voice and music.

Now, in order to go beyond the bare essentials in this discussion of equipment, it is necessary that you know a little bit about the nature of sound. Sound is a varying pressure in the air which moves a person's ear drum. This motion of the ear drum is sensed by the brain as sound. If the cone of the speaker is moved forward and backward rapidly, it sets up a wave of pressure in the air around it. These pressure waves travel through the air, and when they reach the eardrum, they cause it to move in and out, Just as the speaker cone moved, and a sound is heard. The faster your ear drum moves, the higher the pitch of the sound you hear. The greater the distance it moves (because stronger pressure waves are produced by a speaker cone moving a greater distance), the louder the sound seems to you. If the speaker cone moves in and out 250 times every second, the note you hear is middle C and we say the FREQUENCY of the note is 256 CYCLES PER SECOND (256 cps). If we cut that number in half (126 cps*),* the pitch moves down exactly one OCTAVE to the C

below middle C. Cut it in half again and you drop another octave. Every time you double the frequency, you raise the pitch one octave. Most people can hear sounds between about 10-20 cps and 15,000-20,000 cps. Those who can hear a 20,000 cps note are very rare.

The sounds that we hear are almost always made up of a combination of frequencies and it is the combination that enables us to identify how the sound is made. You have no trouble telling the difference between the note C played on a violin and the same note played on a piano. The reason is that even though the loudest of the frequencies you hear in both sounds is 256 cps, the combination of other frequencies present in the sounds is different. The other frequencies are all higher than the loudest (or fundamental) frequency, and they are called overtones. One of the reasons that recorded music doesn't sound exactly like the original live music is that in the recording and reproducing process, the balance of overtones is upset. The reproduced sound, then, does not have a11 of the original overtones in the same combination and relative loudness. One of the important measures of quality in a sound system is its ability to amplify the frequencies as they are on the record without changing their relative loudness.

Loudness is measured in decibels (db) and 1 db is about the minimum change in loudness that the human ear can detect under ideal conditions. Therefore, an amplifying system that has a frequency response (ability to reproduce frequencies) from about 20 cps to 20,000 cps with variations of less than 1 decibel is doing well enough so that its defects are nearly impossible to hear. In reading specifications for amplifiers you will see this measure given as 20 - 20,000 ±1db or 20-20K ± .5db. The symbol means plus or minus and if the loudness can go up ½db and down ½db, the total variation possible is 1db from highest to lowest.

Frequency response is not the only measure of quality in an amplifier. In addition, all, amplifiers introduce various amounts and types of distortions. Fortunately, it is generally true that the better the frequency response, the better the other factors also. This is true because it usually is not worthwhile for a manufacturer to put in the trouble to improve the response of his product, unless he also improves the distortion characteristics. The other, and perhaps even more important, characteristic of an amplifier that is of interest to a caller is the power rating of the system. Power is rated in watts. The Institute of High Fidelity Manufacturers has agreed to give power ratings as the maximum AVERAGE power at which the amplifier will give the frequency response specified. Many manufacturers of square dance systems including Newcomb, Bogen and Califone, rate their equipment in terms of maximum PEAK power at which it will drive the specified frequency response. PEAK POWER IS USUALLY ABOUT DOUBLE AVERAGE POWER.

One rule of thumb is based on PEAK power; it takes two watts of peak power per set of dancers. If your system is rated by the IHEM method, you can plan on about 1 watt per set. One last point on the subject of power and loudness sensitivity: The human ear can detect a change of 1 decibel of loudness under ideal conditions with controlled sound, but for practical purposes, a change of 3 db will be required before there is a readily noticeable change in loudness under normal circumstances. It is important for the caller to remember that to produce a 3 db increase in loudness requires twice as much amplifier power. Consider the following: you have a 10 watt sound system which isn't quite loud enough to do the job in one hall you use. You go out and buy a 20 watt system and say to yourself now it will be twice as loud. In fact, you will just barely be able to notice that it is louder and if you bought a 15 watt system, you wouldn't be able to notice the difference at all. The point

is that there is no sense in paying anything for a slight increase in power. The knowledge gained of the terms used in evaluating sound equipment can be applied directly to the caller's sound problems.

The first piece of equipment must provide a means of playing records, with a provision for varying the speed at which they are played. This means a turning table, a needle to ride the record grooves, a pickup cartridge to change the needle motion into electricity and an arm to hold the cartridge. The turntable, once its speed has been set, should not vary from this speed or the pitch will fluctuate and the music will sound strange. A diamond needle is recommended because any other material wears down, carving the grooves and ruining the records. Pickup cartridges come in two types, magnetic and ceramic-crystal, with quality variations in each. There are few, if any, crystal or ceramic cartridges that meet specifications of 20-20K ±1 db. The amplifier must get at least that good a signal to transmit a quality signal to the speakers. The arm that carries the cartridge determines how much weight the needle uses to stay in the groove and pickup all the frequencies on the record. The more weight required, the more worn the record becomes. On the other hand, a needle jumping out of the grooves is a serious problem for the caller. This occurs most frequently when the dancers cause the floor to shake and thus, the turntable to vibrate. A good quality tone arm with provisions for varying the tracking weight is a helpful supplement when a sponge under the turntable won't solve the problem.

Aside from the music, the dancers must hear the caller’s voice picked up by a microphone. An important factor in choosing a microphone is what it does to the sound of your voice. Again, frequency response is an important measure. To produce the most natural sound, you want the best frequency response but the natural sound may not necessarily be the most desirable. You may have a deep voice and want to reduce the low frequencies as it is amplified. In choosing a mike to modify your voice, be sure to try it with your own system. The same mike on another system with different controls or frequency response may sound quite different.

Another characteristic of microphones in which the choice is less selective is the pickup angle. A wide angle (or omni directional) mike will pick up sound from all sides almost as well as it will pick up directly in front of it. A directional mike, however, will pick up only sound directly in front of it (or, in other words, within its pickup angle). As a general rule, the narrow angle is best for a caller because a microphone with this characteristic will not pick up sound coming from the speakers or the hall. Sound from speakers slightly re-amplified causes noise or distortion; greatly re-amplified, it causes the feedback howl or scream. Surprisingly, one of the most popular mikes with callers is an omni directional mike (the Elactrovoice 636 Slimaire Dynamic). One obvious reason for its popularity is that it is light in weight and easy to hold. Its acoustic deficiencies are compensated for by the technique of resting the microphone against the chin and talking across the top of it. A directional mike, on the other band, must be held approximately 3 inches away from the mouth and addressed directly. Particularly the caller who moves about as he calls finds that maintaining proper position of a directional mike requires much more attention than does an omni directional mike.

There are two different methods of solving the tone control problem without providing a full set of controls, One, now used on Newcomb systems, is a full set of controls that affect both music and voice and one additional "case cut" control for voice only, This permits addition of bass in the music which can then be removed from the voice. The other method, found on Bogen systems, also uses controls that affect both music and voice but then provides a speech filter that removes the bass from the voice. Both are adequate, if not ideal, under most circumstances. A third method of handling tone control is used in Hilton systems. Full

independent control is provided for the music and the mike channel is provided with a single control for both, bass and treble. In addition, a substantial treble boost is built in to the voice. The effect of this is to prevent reducing the highs in the voice below normal. With most voices this is a rare problem but some hall/voice combinations can sound unpleasant.

The discussion, thus far, has assumed that you are interested in one of the commercial systems that come in one or two compact units such as Bogen, Hilton or Newcomb. However, if you start noticing what other callers are using, you will find some callers who travel a lot and face a great variety of halls using equipment with greater flexibility, particularly in the tone controls, than the compact commercial units provide. Over the past few years, callers have worked out some fairly standard solutions to the design of "custom" systems and you may find it helpful to know, at least generally, how these work.

A major disadvantage of the custom systems is that they involve more pieces and weight. In a custom system, each part will be purchased as a separate unit and there are many combinations that work. In choosing electronics for a custom system, there are two major possibilities. Both involve the separation of control over the sound and the amplification of it. The part that gives you control (volume, tone, speech and scratch filters) is called a preamplifier. The part that gives you loudness is called a power amplifier. In some systems, these two parts are combined in a single unit here called a control amplifier. The most completely flexible systems use two separate preamplifiers and a high quality power amplifier. The microphone signal is sent into one preamplifier while the record signal goes to the other. Both preamplifiers allow volume control and separate treble and base can then be combined and sent on to the power amplifier which does nothing but make them loud enough to drive speakers.

Another approach is to use a single preamplifier with a control amplifier having a mike and phonograph channel. The most common control amplifier in this type of system is a Bogen Public Address amplifier. The mike signal goes directly to the control amplifier which is set for the desired tone and volume of the voice. The music goes to a preamplifier where the tone controls are adjusted to compensate for the tone changes caused by the control amplifier settings. No beginning caller should start with a custom system. Use a commercial combination system until you find you need the greater flexibility and know enough about what you want to get the custom features that suit you best.

The final part of this discussion of sound systems deals with the problematic subject of selection of speakers. The best speakers, from the standpoint of ability to reproduce sound as close to the original sound as possible, are both large and heavy. Anyone moving equipment in and out of halls frequently finds that neither excess weight nor size can be tolerated for long and a pragmatic compromise is indicated. The most important speaker requirements for square dance sound are that it be able to reproduce loud sound clearly and that you, and as many others as possible, find the sound pleasant to listen to. Many speakers meet these requirements and they vary in price from about $25 to $200 or more. Some reproduce high or low frequencies better than others. Some do well with both and the best selection depends on your ear and your pocketbook.

In considering speakers and their use for square dancing, some discussion of the box in which the speaker is mounted is in order. It can have a tremendous effect on how well the speaker does its job. There are several ways of mounting speakers of which the most common and the worst is in an open-back box. Another mounting method is the "bass reflex enclosure" which is a fairly large box completely enclosing the speaker (except for the mounting hole) but with a hole in the front. Correctly designed in size of box and size of hole to match the speaker, this

method can increase the loudness of base frequencies. The so called acoustic suspension method, involving a completely sealed box, is best used only with speakers designed for it.

A recent development in speaker systems which has attracted a lot of attention from square dance callers is the "column" or stacked speaker. The stacked speaker system uses several (usually 6 or 8) small, low-power speakers in place of the one or two large, high-power speakers of other systems. These small speakers are mounted, one over the other, in a tall, narrow box which is completely closed. There are several commercial brands of column speakers available, but none that reproduce the full range of frequencies well and are within the weight, size, and cost restrictions of callers. While most are substantially lacking in bass sound, they have, as a group, one unique characteristic that has made them popular for square dance use. Sound from column speakers travels straight out in a wide flat pattern with little upward or downward deviation, giving almost magical success in many halls that are virtually impossible to cover by any other technique.

One column deserves special mention because it was designed by a square dancer who had the knowledge and facilities to do the job right. It is the "Yak Stak" designed by and available from Irvin Gross, Harvard, Massachusetts. One of the problems of column speaker design is frequency range; the greater the range the more difficult it is to maintain the vertical dispersion limitation. The "Yak" range is deliberately limited to 200-7000 cps and as a result the beam is very narrow. Within the frequency limits, the performance is excellent and this speaker has made possible the use of many halls that were unsatisfactory even with good conventional equipment. A further advantage of the "Yak" for callers is that it folds in the middle for ease of carrying.

Anytime you are using more than one speaker, there is a factor you should be aware of even though you will not have to worry about it most of the time when using commercial systems. This is phasing. The speaker cone moves forward and back to produce sound. If you have two speakers operating near each other and one cone is moving forward while the other is moving backward, they will cancel the effect of each other. This will be most noticeable in the low frequencies, but will also drastically affect the intelligibility of the call. There is an involved technical explanation of why this happens but to cure it, all you need to know is that the two wires going to one of the two speakers (either one) must be reversed. If you have more than two speakers, you have the added problem of deciding which of them is wired wrong. To discover this, listen to them in pairs until you find one that produces reduced bass with each of the others. The wires can be reversed from the connector to the speaker terminals on one speaker or from one of the wires that goes from the amplifier to the speakers. If you don't discover this until you get to a dance, remember that if the speakers are separated from each other by 10 feet or more, the effect of phasing is usually unimportant.

An auxiliary piece of equipment that is important to many callers is a monitor, a device which permits the caller to hear all or part of the sound. In some halls, when using only 2 speakers, it is impossible to arrange them so that the caller can hear the music through them. In this situation, it is necessary for the caller to have either another speaker that he can hear or to have a speaker near him which plays music only. Many callers find it helpful to have a "music monitor," even when the speakers are positioned so they can hear them.

There are many ways to provide a monitor. The easiest and cheapest is to position one of the hall speakers so that you can hear it. However, in so doing, you may make it impossible to get enough volume for the dancers without getting feedback. This can be remedied by putting a volume control on one speaker (this is inexpensive and fairly easy to do), then adjusting it so that you don't get feedback, and relying on the other speaker(s) to cover the hall. The advantage of this

method is that it permits the caller to know, at all times, the exact balance of music and voice that is going out to the floor. In fact, the only real disadvantages are that you may not have enough speakers left to cover the hall adequately; or that you have trouble with rhythm or pitch and need more music yourself than good coverage of the floor will permit. If you need (or want) a music-only monitor, most of the commercially available systems make it possible. Most have an output from which you can connect the signal to a separate amplifier and speaker which can then be set to any loudness you desire. Since this provides only music, you have no problem with feedback. There are two or three 20-25 watt amplifier- speaker combinations commercially available but they are quite expensive ($6O-$90). Unless your pitch or rhythm are very poor, you will probably he able to do well with the small 3-10 watt amplifiers available from most radio supply houses. To these, you can add a 5 or 6 inch round or 6 x 9 oval speaker and mount them in a box for a total cost of about $20. As a last comment on monitors, you will find that if rhythm is your problem, you will need to hear the bass notes in the music and should use a larger amplifier and speaker as a monitor. If, however, your rhythm is good and pitch is the problem, you can get by with a less powerful amplifier and smaller speaker.

This necessarily brief discussion of equipment can not begin to tell you all you should know about the subject, but much of what we have not said can and will be learned by experience. As with most of the other chapters, our hope is to point out things of importance so that you will recognize them when you encounter them and will, perhaps, pay more attention and give more thought to your selection of equipment.

The final phase of square dance sound is the hall in which you are using the equipment and how to use what you have to do the best job possible. Every hall is different. Even when two halls have identical dimensions and physical arrangement, the response to sound will not be the same. For the caller, the most important single characteristic of a hall is the amount of sound absorbing material in it and the location of this material. The sound that is easiest to understand reaches a dancer directly from the speaker, but in most halls, he will also hear sound that has bounced off a wall or ceiling on its way to him. The reflected sound will reach him later and will not be as loud as the direct sound. If the reflected sound reaches him more than split seconds after the direct sound audio if it is almost as loud as the direct sound, he will have trouble understanding anything. In some halls, if you stand on the stage and clap your hands, you can hear the echo for as long as 10 seconds. In general, the more sound absorbing material there is in a room, the shorter and quieter the echo. Anything that is not a hard, flat surface will absorb more sound but the best absorbers are fabrics, acoustical ceiling materials and people. Unfortunately, square dancers sometimes make more sound than they absorb and the sound they make can cause just as much trouble as reflected music and calls.

While the obvious answer might seem to be to find a hall with lots of sound-absorbing material, too much such material produces different problems. The hall will seem dead and lifeless no matter how much enthusiasm the dancers have. In addition, it can easily take twice as much power for the same size group in a hall that has too much absorbing material. In this situation, the only way we have found to give some life to the party is to keep background music playing even during the breaks in the dance. This maintains minimum noise level and facilitates sociability among dancers inhibited by the coldness of the room.

The far more common problem is the hall with too much echo and the best remedy for this condition is to use a column speaker. Because of the flat pattern of sound from it, ceiling bounce is reduced practically to zero. Since the column has a wide pattern, a single column will provide adequate sound and this too reduces the number of ways the sound can bounce. The column's sealed enclosure

eliminates any bounce from the wail behind the speaker which can be a major source of trouble with an open-back speaker. Even if you don't have a column speaker, you can take some hints from them as a guide to the best use of your equipment. A single source of sound is better than two. Stack your speakers on top of each other. If you have open-back speakers, hang two or three heavy coats over the back to cut down the back bounce. If you can get your speakers up high and aim them down into the crowd, you can reduce ceiling bounce somewhat and also gain some benefit from the sound absorbing ability of the group. Another thing that may help is aiming your speaker(s) diagonally across the room at a back corner. This reflects the sound across the corner so that it must bounce twice before it gets back to the dancers and each bounce reduces its loudness.

The suggestions in the last paragraph are standard, solutions to the most common problems but sound distribution in a hall can present unusual problems as well. No one can anticipate these for you but knowing what has worked for other callers can be a guide when you encounter the "impossible hall." Our own experience includes a large hall (30 sets dancing) with a low ceiling which was covered with good sound-absorbing material. We put a speaker on a chair on a table on each side of the stage and poured almost 100 watts of power into the two speakers. The sets at the back of the square hall could hardly hear a sound. Careful observation showed that the chair seats tilted slightly, aiming the speakers at the acoustic ceiling which absorbed all the sound. The cure: prop up the back of the speaker to aim it down slightly and reduce the power by about 50%.

Another problem was a long, narrow hall with a low ceiling. A column speaker handled this nicely but regular speakers may require that you use two or three mounted along one of the long walls. In general, the use of all speakers on the same side of the hall with the caller gives the illusion of live sound and helps to keep dancers reminded which is the number one couple. If you must use speakers on both sides of the hall, stagger them or aim them at the back corners. Setting them directly opposite each other will cause the sound from one to cancel that from the opposite speaker where they meet in the middle, producing a dead spot. In another long, narrow hall with a high ceiling and no acoustic treatment, no system seemed to work until finally, out of desperation, we spaced 4 speakers along one long wall ON THE FLOOR.

One type of hall that causes trouble with a column in particular is one with good sound absorber on a high ceiling but with an unbroken, hard, flat back wall. Point a column at that wall and you'll get a loud echo a half-second later. It is practically impossible to call on-beat under those conditions; either use regular speakers aimed at the corners or get the column up high and point it down slightly into the crowd. A hall with a balcony overhanging is another problem. Sound from speakers at the front of the hall will probably never penetrate under the balcony. If you're using a column, the chances are better but still not good. You will probably have to put a speaker under the balcony to get coverage there.

One final word on equipment involves dances held out of doors. Usually, you have no problems with echo but you will find that more power is required because there is nothing to capture and enclose the sound from your speakers. The best solution for this problem is the column speaker which has a tendency to restrict the sound to a limited area. Short of this, place your speakers as high as possible and aim them down into the crowd. The more of your sound you can direct at the dancers, the lower your total power requirement.

Again, the suggestions and information in this chapter will not solve all your sound problems. In closing, it may perhaps be helpful to pass on to you one observation that you can easily verify at almost any large festival. When a large number of callers are all using the same equipment in the same hall with

the same crowd, it will be possible to understand some of them much more easily than others. Many sound problems that are blamed on the equipment or the hall should be blamed on the caller. A skillful, experienced caller who knows how to get the best out of the available equipment, how to enunciate carefully and how to choose words that are easily understood, can frequently call a good dance in spite of the problems. If, in a festival situation, one or two of the callers seems easier to understand, ask them how they did it. They'll be pleased to be asked and, if you listen to the answer, you can learn a lot.

# Chapter 7 - SQUARE DANCE CLUB ADMINISTRATION

Most callers call regularly for one or more organized groups. They are "club callers" and as such, must be concerned with club management. Some callers avoid this responsibility by calling primarily for non-dancers, by working with constantly changing groups under resort or institutional sponsorship or by traveling full time. The avocational caller, however, will likely find himself involved with club politics, problems, and planning whether he wants to or not. Your personal success as a caller is closely tied to the success of your club(s). If your goals in the square dance activity are long-range, you will evaluate your development as a caller by the enjoyment and satisfaction people derive over a period of years from dancing in groups to which you give leadership.

Club management is a skill that you can learn and a talent that you can develop. At the very least, you can become competent enough in dealing with human relations not to hinder the success of your groups. The principles of good personnel management and group psychology apply to square dance clubs also. You can take university extension courses in either one and greatly improve your skill. In this chapter, we'll try to summarize some of these principles and point out the way in which they can help you in square dance club management.

Clubs are organized along at least two distinctive systems, the caller-centered club and the dancer-centered club. There are many examples of success with each and the best choice for you depends on the custom of your area and your personal circumstances and preference. The caller-centered operation places less emphasis on the human relations skills required of the caller, but increases the amount of administrative detail in which he must take part. The dancer-centered program, on the other hand, relieves the caller of much of the day-to-day work but greatly increases the need for him to lead people effectively.

Within each of these two systems of club organization, there are many variations. A caller may own (or lease) a hall and run his entire program in one place, working as much or as little as he wishes with combinations of classes, various levels of club dancing and round dance clubs and classes. He may work in the context of a community recreation department or other institution with varying amounts of direction from a supervisor. He may call in several different halls and specialize in one type of dance. Whatever his decision, if he calls on a regular basis for one group of people, he is, in effect, a club caller. It is possible for a caller to combine both systems by teaching classes under his own sponsorship while also calling for dancer-centered clubs. Some callers work primarily with dancer-centered groups but also run some groups themselves.

In the dancer-centered system of club organization, there are just as many variations. These can involve almost any degree of caller participation, from the group that never hires the same caller twice to the one that never dances to any but the club caller. The caller's voice in managing the club also varies from the caller who takes no part in club affairs and calls a dance program dictated by a committee of dancers (I'm told there are such) to the caller who gives active leadership in all aspects of club operation. Any of the variations in either system may produce a successful club or may fail miserably. The purpose of the remainder of this chapter is to point out the most likely path to success regardless of the organization method.

Although we have little personal experience with the caller-centered program, one essential difference would appear to be who does the actual work of running the group. There is also usually a difference in financial reward. As you might expect, the caller himself works harder when he works alone and he is likely to make more money. In some areas, it appears that the caller-centered groups are larger than the dancer-centered groups. Where this is true, it may perhaps be attributed to the direct and immediate benefits accrued to the caller of any added efforts he expends on behalf of his own group. It may also

be that unsuccessful caller-centered groups disappear more rapidly from the scene. For the purpose of this discussion, we are going to assume that both types of organization must reach the same goals to achieve success and we will concentrate our presentation on ways of getting the best results when dancers share the work. The caller running his own program will certainly find the people-to-people techniques useful on those occasions when he does request help of dancers.

To this end, the goals for a "successful" club must be defined. The standard measures of success for group activities in our culture are money (profits) and members attending. We would like to propose that neither is the very best measure for a square dance club and to suggest some alternatives or extensions. It may be valid that a full time caller whose total income derives from his own program should regard profits as the measure of most importance. Nonetheless, we believe that the profits will be the maximum possible, if our alternate measures indicate a successful club.

The first and most important measure is the participation rate. The higher the percentage of the total active membership that can be depended on to attend a normal club function, the more successful the club. The other measure is the ease with which new active members can be added to the group. Note here that we arbitrarily define an active member as one who attends at least 20% of the club's activities. By these measures, the closed group that always has most of its membership present and has a waiting list of people who want to join, is about as successful as a group can get. These alternate measures of club performance seem equally valid for all the variations of organization and activity. If you have a club in which the members participate every chance they get and others want to belong, you must be using good management techniques in whatever system you're using. If, however, your groups fall short of these goals, consider making some changes in the way you handle the problems that arise.

There are four tasks always present in any square dance club which must be accomplished by some person or group of people. The four are programming, promotion, business, and hospitality, in each case using the broadest definition of the term. In the remainder of this chapter, we will take up one task at a time with particular attention to the division of responsibility. Each of the four tasks of club operation results in interaction between dancers and callers and it is at this point that many otherwise fine callers get themselves into no end of trouble. In general, if your personality is such that you must have your own way and find compromise difficult, you had better run your own program and avoid involving dancers anymore than you must. If, on the other hand, you enjoy negotiation and. would prefer to give a little in your point of view than to generate conflict, you may enjoy the rewards of calling in a dancer-centered program. A little self-scrutiny and the advice of your spouse should help you decide wherein your natural inclinations lie.

We tend to favor a system of club organization which gives dancers a sense of community and fellowship in addition to the pleasures of dancing. Therefore, our discussion of the tasks of club operation will explore extensively the interaction between caller and dancer leadership on each task. The largest single factor determining the success of this interaction is the caller's attitude toward himself and the dancers he works with. If he brings to the situation a genuine liking for people, a sensitivity to their needs and a sincere desire to help them fulfill these needs through participation in the square dance club, he will be an effective leader.

Programming, as used here, refers to the planning of the entire range of group activities. In the simplest form, the caller does this alone. He makes all decisions and plans required to provide a varied and interesting program. The responsibility for parties, trips, guest callers and other such changes from the club's regular dance program may very appropriately be shared with or given to the dancers. Either the

caller or some of the dancers may have unusual skills or resources which might help to make the program variations more enjoyable for all. The caller is generally regarded as a specialist with whom the responsibility for what is called largely rests, the ultimate recourse for dancers who object to the calling being to fire the caller or leave the group. But even in situations where the responsibility seems entirely one-sided, sympathetic communication and cooperation will produce better results.

## WHAT ARE THEY REALLY SAYING?

We have said that the caller's authority should be absolute in matters of square dance program. Yet, over time, one of the most persistent complaints voiced by executive committees is that the level of dancing is too low. Clubs have disintegrated in argument over this one point. Let's use it to examine a technique for working with an executive committee. The first step for the caller is to decide how much truth there is in the complaint. The discomfort in admitting that you may not have been doing your job should not blind you to the necessity of examining yourself. Try to discover why the charge is made and the person or group from which it comes. Does your executive committee include many people in the early, most enthusiastic stages of their dancing life? And does it include those in the group who are the most active dancers? These people sometimes feel a need to prove (to themselves or others) that they are "better" dancers. The easiest way to do this is to get you to raise the level until only they are able to dance. You can comply with their wishes but you do it at the risk that they alone will soon be your entire club. If you wish to help them to find the best solution for the club, consider the underlying meaning of their objections. When they say, "Raise the level," do they mean, "Help us to believe that we are the best dancers." Don't let your own defensiveness keep you from helping them. Very likely, they do dance better than the average and they are striving to be good club officers. Consider the strength of the following argument;

> "You, the executive committee of the XYZ club are, of course, the most active, experienced and best dancers in the group and I'm sure that the club's program doesn't offer much challenge for you. I do try to include something for you, the more advanced dancers, in each program, but don't we also want to consider those who don't dance as much as you do? As club officers, I'm sure you want to do what's best for the club and to accomplish this, we have to be sure we don't push the majority of the group too hard. If what I call is challenging to dancers of your skill and experience, then you can almost be sure it will be too tough for the rest of the group."

You are telling them exactly what they hope is true. It takes a hard group not to follow this line of reasoning. While they can not agree immediately in order to save face, you have probably met the prime resistance. One of the reasons that many callers fail to answer complaints about dancing level (or calling in general) in a calm, reasonable manner is that they feel personally attacked. Most people, when attacked, throw up their defenses and block any further hope of sensible communication. As a leader, you can make your caller-club relationships much more pleasant if you can learn to control your reaction to attack. It may help to look back over our example.

When an executive committee says to the club caller "the level is too low at our club dances," this can easily be the spark that sets off a fight. If you're a little unsure of your ability (modest), you may think they're telling you that you can't call well enough for them. If that's what you hear, you may well grow defensive and reply, "the club can't dance what I'm calling now how do you think you could handle anything tougher" As of then, any further communication is unlikely. You have just told them what they were most afraid they would hear. You said they

couldn't dance. "But," you say, "I didn't mean these people; I meant the rest of the club." That may be what you meant, but that's not what they heard. Anger or any other strong emotion strikes a responsive chord in the listener that can distort his understanding of a statement. It makes a strong impression on all those present which, whether good or bad, will be hard to change.

The next task of club operation is promotion and by this, we mean both internal and external promotion. What is important, is to sell the club members on regular participation in the club program. It is also important, although perhaps less so, to promote the pleasures of club membership outside the group, both with other dancers and with non-dancers. The internal promotion helps to maintain our first measure of club success, participation by active members, and the external promotion acts upon our second measure of club success, the ease of making new, active members.

## PRESENT THE PROBLEM WELL

Promotion is one of those things that everyone is in favor of but about which no one does anything. If you say, “we need more promotion,” everyone agrees. Sit back and wait for suggestions and you're liable to turn grey before you get one. The technique for getting action, instead of agreement, depends on how the problem is presented. In general, it is safe to assume that people will become interested in a problem that affects them more quickly than in one that affects only you. In many cases, the only person with a strong interest in promotion is the caller. To him, the measures of club success frequently mean prestige and personal success, and, at the very least, they mean dollars. Again, how you state the problem to the decision-making group (executive committee or other) may make the difference between positive action or outright rejection.

The best statement of any problem is one that doesn't accuse anyone of shortcomings and doesn't indicate a preferred solution. If, at a board meeting, your goal is to get the club to give a door prize in order to build poor attendance, you have probably defined the problem too narrowly (given your own suggestion), and may find resistance greater than the suggestion warrants. The resistance may come about because the suggestion is your solution to the problem, not theirs. There may also be those who will feel you have accused them of not coming to your dances. Again, it may not be your conscious, intention to convey that meaning, but especially if there is any truth in the complaint, that will probably be how someone will hear what you said. A not uncommon reaction would be for these dancers to shift the blame on you, saying "If you'd call so people could dance, instead of workshopping all the time, maybe we'd have better attendance." Don't react to this attack defensively or you'll be in trouble again. Quite likely, the dancers are defending themselves against your initial attack and even if they are not, you are the one who must have control.

Consider an alternate approach to the problem of lagging attendance that doesn't criticize the people we're talking to and also indicates a genuine interest in any solutions they might suggest. The technique will work with any problem to which the group is seeking a solution, problems of promotion being only one example. Praise the group as a wonderful club to dance with and ask if there isn't some way to encourage the members to be even more regular than they are in attendance. By stating the problem in this way, you have complimented those you're talking to and you haven't given any indication of your own ideas for solving the problem. Everyone will feel freer in contributing to the discussion of this problem and from the pool of ideas several workable suggestions will emerge. If they are slow in picking up the topic, it may be helpful to try to awaken their own personal interest in the problem. Telling them that you are worried about the problem doesn't necessarily increase their concern. Suggest

that perhaps everyone would have a better time if there were more people at the club's dances. Remind them of the high participation of members at some recent event and the enjoyment shared thereby. Whatever you say, put it in terms of them, not yourself. The biggest block to successful problem solving is failure to consider the other person's point of view. To get results, always think, talk, and act in terms of the other fellow's understanding, not your own.

The next task of club management is the business operation. The major items of club business are dues and admission charges, hall rental and use, and hiring of callers. Refreshments, special events, and publicity may also involve money on occasion. In any case, the common theme in business tasks is the expenditure of money. Some groups meet under the sponsorship of a person (hall owner) or organization (e.g. recreation department, school) that handles all the business of the group.

In these cases, the business dealings that involve the caller may be beyond his influence. On the other end of the scale are groups whose financial arrangements with the caller tie him closely to every aspect of club operation. The degree to which the caller is entitled to voice in the business affairs of the club depends on the extent to which he is affected by the policies. At the very least, he is concerned with the survival of the club. A group in which the caller has no direct voice in running the club but in which his fees vary with the success of the club presents the greatest potential for conflict between caller and club. There are many such groups in the square dance activity and it may help to look at a principle of human interaction in terms of the business problems of a club.

## PLANS REQUIRE SUPPORT

The best plan of action in the world is useless unless someone acts on it. The best ideas only work when people believe in them and will support them. If you think the club should move to a new hall, you can't just tell them to move. Before the move actually takes place, the governing body must see that the move is desirable for the group. They may, in turn, have to persuade the membership on this same point. The same is true if you think the club should raise (or lower) its dues or pay the caller more (or less). The point is that how good the plan is frequently has less effect on its success than how well liked it is.

The highway safety slogan about the driver (caller?) who was "right, dead right" applies here as well. Particularly in matters of business, it is necessary to be sure that club planning is backed by popular support. There are two types of business problems from a caller's point of view; those that directly affect his pay and those that do not. Your handling of these will usually be quite different. If your fees are under discussion, the subject of how good a caller you are is likely to arise. When this happens, you may feel attacked and insist on measuring your worth in terms of your pay. In actuality, in a dancer-centered program, the amount you get paid probably has little to do with your calling alone, It depends more on the size of your town, the type of halls available, the general pay practices of your area and your management skill than on your calling. The size of your town, availability of halls, and practices of others are not usually subject to your control but your management skill is.

Before any change in club policies can he acted upon, it requires popular support. You are much more likely to gain popular support for the needs of the group as a whole than for your own good. Particularly when a proposed change affects your income, it is important to minimize this fact in your campaign for the change. Try to present the issues from a perspective other than its effect on your income. You probably became a caller because calling gives you pleasure and satisfaction and this enjoyment communicates itself to the dancers. On their part, dancers enjoy square dancing and they willingly pay to enjoy their hobby. Therefore, it is not unusual for an executive

committee made up of dancers to harbor the thought in the back of their minds that perhaps the caller too should pay for enjoying his hobby, calling, or at least, should not profit from it. Do you have a good answer for this? Would you be satisfied with a fee justified exclusively in terms of equipment, training and travel expenses? You'll do better never to let the question of a change in club operation get confused by the size of your fee.

A business change is only as good as the popular support you can drum up for it. The difference between one affecting your pay and one that doesn't is only that your position in one is known and in the other, may remain private. In the interests of good management, it is desirable that you let the group make as many decisions as possible without interference from you. In matters where you don't have a strong point of view, you will do well to direct your effort toward gaining the widest possible support for whatever decision the group makes. The techniques for doing this will, in some cases, work equally well when your position is known.

During a discussion about a business matter in which you are not emotionally involved, look for ways to promote a unanimous decision or consensus. One step in this direction is to develop the widest possible discussion. Try to get everyone present to state his thoughts. Each person who doesn't speak is one who may have unstated reservations and thus fail to support the decision. Another important technique is to build the confidence of the group in their ability to act on the problem. Frequently, people avoid a decision because they lack confidence in their qualifications. Point out to them that merely being an active participant in the club makes them as well-qualified as they can be to express an opinion and join in a decision. Along this same line, it is helpful in generating support for a decision to keep the goal clearly before the group at all times. Be sure that the purpose of the action doesn't get forgotten in the process of developing a plan. Keep them reminded of what it is they are trying to accomplish.

Other techniques for promoting consensus for a group decision become important when everyone seems to be agreed on the decision. Be particularly careful that every suggestion, especially those in opposition to the prevailing sentiment, gets consideration. You can frequently make a reluctant supporter out of a violent opponent merely by giving him a chance to be heard. At least, his opposition will be diminished by a climate of opinion in which the majority is willing to listen. The last suggestion for generating wide support is that every possible step be taken to assure that each member of the group understands either the problem (or goal) and the final decision. At several points in the discussion, it is well to take stock and this can be accomplished by asking questions that others may be unwilling to ask for fear of appearing stupid.

All of these methods of generating group support can be used by a caller at a club board meeting without, in any way, indicating what he thinks the decision ought to be. This does more than gain support. It promotes the image of the caller as one who is interested first in the "good of the club" and, at least as importantly, in the opinion and participation of even the least forward member of the board. You set an example by your willingness to support the right of your opponents to express their point of view. An extra effort toward fairness on your part will help establish pleasant caller-club relations on business matters.

Hospitality is another of the major tasks of club operation and it has two principal forms. The first is the obvious one of welcoming visitors from outside the group. The other, less obvious but more important, is making the members welcome and comfortable when they attend. It might be possible to carry that process even further and to make them uncomfortable in their absence.

Everyone knows that a visitor who appears at the door and is ignored will not have a favorable

impression of the group. If he then finds that as squares are formed, he and his partner always seem to be left out or, at best, to be in the very last square that is filled, these visitors may easily decide not to return. They may go even further and discourage others from visiting. Many folks, however, have never really given much thought to now the club member feels when he gets the same treatment. It does happen and more often than you suspect. The consideration shown to members very directly affects both proposed measures of club success, the regular attendance of members and the case of adding new members.

Your club executive committee members have themselves had experiences like these and beneath their strong assertion that "nothing of this sort happens at our club" are some good ideas on how to overcome the problem. Digging out these solutions is a two-pert process. First, you must help them to see that the problem exists, a point they will admit reluctantly, and then you must persuade them that a solution is necessary.

## THEY'LL BELIEVE THEIR OWN WORDS

Anytime you are faced with an attempt to persuade, you will find the words of the person you're persuading to be far more effective than your own. In the simplest terms, he will believe himself more easily than he will believe you. This is equally true of groups. They will accept the words of group members sooner than those of an outsider. (Note: there is a sense in which anyone who is persuading others is likely to be regarded as an outsider, even the leader.) In the course of any discussion, you will find others saying things supporting your position. If you repeat these words in stating the problem, you increase your chances of being understood.

For instance, in the discussion of your club's hospitality, one of the group says, "We visited the XYZ club last week and boy, are they unfriendly." This is your cue. You point out that the XYZs probably think of themselves as a friendly group, not as your club does. Perhaps this is an occasion for looking at the club's hospitality. You haven't made the suggestion, a group member made it when he mentioned the other club. All you have done is to support his idea. You are lending the weight of your experience and leadership position to help the group have faith in their own opinions.

If you can watch for your openings carefully and choose your words wisely, you can lead a group without imposing your opinions on them. The less you habitually dominate the group with your own convictions, the more powerful in their effect these convictions are when you really need to let them be known. Your position is strong when you can keep a group pointed along a course of which you approve without claiming for yourself the exclusive right of directing them. This takes skill and practice but is a most rewarding accomplishment. The heart of the technique is to realize that you don't have to be the center of attention to lead a group. When you're on the stage calling a dance, you want applause. At a committee meeting, the ideal is to sit by unnoticed while a capable, smooth-working group makes all the best decisions to create and maintain a successful club. If you open your mouth in this situation, you're a fool. Many club troubles have resulted because callers couldn't resist the temptation to meddle in club management that was working well. The only time a caller has any real need to intervene is when he (or she) is sure a mistake either has been made or is about to be made. It is, of course, better to act before a mistake than after it.

If you feel you must become involved in a club problem, the less your personal involvement is noticed the better. There are all degrees of this method available to you. You may seek group support by attributing your idea to a member of the group even though that person has not voiced the thought. Or you may, as in our earlier example, point out the meaning of something a

member has said. It may only be necessary to repeat someone's suggestion because he didn't say it loudly enough. Banish the words, "I think you aught.." from your vocabulary. If you must come close to that, at least include yourself in the problem and say, "We ought." Best of all, though, keep your opinions out of the discussion if you can. If you think the club should have a hospitality chairman and no one will, make the suggestion, pick the person most likely to have suggested it and say, "Joe had a good idea. He suggested that the club pick a hospitality chairman." Or perhaps two suggestions have been made, one to call couples who have missed two dances and the other to drop such people from membership. You can strengthen the one you favor and maybe even clinch some undecided support by picking someone who is in doubt and saying, "I agree with Harriet that the invitation to return is a good way to keep club members active." Thus, you can test the prevailing sentiment of the group and move closer to a shared decision. You have given your support to the plan you prefer but nothing in your statement says the other suggestion isn't also good. You may sometimes be able to get someone to admit (by his vote) that another suggestion is slightly better than his own idea. You'll seldom persuade him that another idea is good and his is poor.

This chapter has discussed four major areas of club operation and four principles of human interaction. It was not intended that the principles apply only to the area of application in which they were illustrated. They all may apply in any problem-saving conference or meeting. To show this, we have prepared a chart indicating briefly how each of the principles fits each of the club task areas. It is important to notice that with three of the four principles the only difference is HOW something is said not WHAT is said. In the case of support for plans the only issue is, are you willing to compromise for the sake of the group.

| PROGRAMMING | PROMOTION |
|---|---|
| What are they really saying<br><br>Our dancing level is too low.<br>- May mean –<br>Do we dance as well as we think we do. | If you would call what we want the members would attend.<br><br>- May mean –<br><br>We wish you'd help us try to improve attendance. |
| NOT: Why doesn't the Exec plan more parties?<br><br>BUT: What can we do to make club meetings more fun? | Present the problem well<br><br>NOT: Why don't our members attend:<br><br>BUT: Can we encourage our members to attend even more regularly |
| If you can't convince the Exec that a higher level would hurt the club, you'd better raise the level. | If the club members don't want a club-sponsored class then they won't recruit students for it. |
| NOT: I think we have enough dances each month.<br><br>BUT: Bill here just said the ABCs dance only twice a month and their members liked it that way. | NOT: Newspaper ads are a waste of time.<br><br>BUT: How many of you were recruited by a newspaper ad? |

| BUSINESS | HOSPITALITY |
|---|---|
| We like our present system of dues and dance admissions.<br><br>- May mean –<br><br>We're afraid to risk a change | This club is too unfriendly<br><br>- May mean –<br><br>Why haven't I been included in a group of friends? |
| NOT: I can't call in this hall of yours<br><br>BUT: Perhaps something about our hall affects the dancing of the club. | NOT: Be good to my class graduates because your club needs them.<br><br>BUT: Can you suggest ways that we might persuade my class graduates to join this club? |
| Plans Require Support<br><br>If the vote on your raise isn't unanimous you'd better not take it yet. | If only one couple volunteers to be Hospitality Chairman, it'll never work and you really do have a problem. |
| NOT: I wish you'd stop sponsoring guest callers.<br><br>BUT: Several of you have said you don't enjoy the guest caller dances because they're so much work. Are they really worth it? | They'll Believe Their Own Words<br><br>NOT: This club is unfriendly to visitors<br><br>BUT: Alice mentioned that she got a cold shoulder at the RQP's. Do you think anyone feels that way about us? |

We've discussed four tasks of club management in this chapter: programming, promotion, business and hospitality. These are major items that keep recurring for any club whether it is run by the caller or by a dancer committee. We haven't said much about what is the best solution to each problem. This is because we believe that a number of approaches will work equally well and that it is much more important to know how to get a group of people to decide and act upon some plan than it is to know which solution is best. We're also convinced that the best leadership is that done with a gentle touch. If you know what's right, you may try too hard to bully a group into accepting your answer and be too hurt when they don't. All of the techniques discussed here can be used by any member of the decision-making group and they will make the group a more effective one. Over a

period of years with a group, you will notice that some club presidents will be especially effective leaders whereas others are less so. The reason that the caller must be concerned with the problem of good club management is that over time he is the source of continuity for his groups and must shoulder the permanent responsibility for their progress. There are many forms of good square dance club organization. Pick the one that best suits your temperament and ability and then work at it with all you've got.