

Methods of Choreographic Management

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There are five methods of choreographic management as documented by CALLERLAB. They are Reading, Memory, Mental Image, Modular, and Sight Calling. A successful caller will utilize more than one method. It is best to understand as many methods as possible in order to have the necessary tools to work under any circumstance. A brief summary of each follows.

Reading: This method of choreographic control requires the caller to read a prepared script of written material. The material is often printed on card stock or may be read from a computer screen. The routines are usually worked out from a static square to a resolve point. The caller must still observe the dancers while reading the material in proper order. If the caller skips a line or misses a call, the routine will fail. If dancers break down, the caller continues to read for other sets to finish the routine. Most callers write choreography much harder than they can create off the cuff, so the caller must judge the dancers ability writing material they can handle. Usually, the caller has differing degrees of written material to adjust the appropriate mix of difficulty. There are many well know callers that read. It is not, however, the most effective method of choreographic control and is often discouraged.

Memory: This method of chorographic management requires the caller to actually memorize entire dances from start to finish. The caller still watches the dancers to observe proper timing but does not rely on their ability to resolve the square. Routines are worked out ahead of time and put to memory. While this system of calling was once common, total memory callers are rare today as it is limited by their ability to remember an entire dance. There is no way to vary the material as it has been memorized to fit one way. Failure to remember, the caller will be lost.

Mental Image: This method of chorographic control is not just tracking a dancer in one's mind. A caller working this method must know how each call works and if the action creates a ladies chain effect or not. They then must follow steps to maneuver dancers to a known Allemande Left get out spot in order to resolve the square. There are specific rules to follow that will change the Allemande spot within the square depending upon where the call was used. Even if a caller does not fully utilize the entire Mental Image

method, being able to understand the basic dynamics can be helpful when using other methods.

Modular Calling: Modular calling is one of the more popular methods of choreographic control. It requires the caller to remember small sequences of calls known as Modules. The caller constructs a pattern by combining these various short series of commands that take the dancers from one known position in the square to another known position. The caller memorizes hundreds of different sequences that either create a Zero or nothing effect, or an Equivalent effect equal to something else. Other memorized sequences include Openers or Closers that create interesting starting or ending patterns. Set Up and Get Out modules are also developed to provide a wide variety of interesting combinations of sequences. A caller knows how to string these different short sequences together to move the dancers to known places in the square. A caller proficient with this method of choreographic control can interchange material at will or as necessary to achieve a high rate of dancer success.

Sight Calling: While many callers recognize sight calling as the most versatile of all calling methods it can be very difficult to manage. There are simple forms of sight calling that move dancers back to the same starting position known as Isolated Sight. Another sight approach allows the caller to move two couples around the square; then, return them back into the same relative position anywhere in the square for resolution. Full Extemporaneous Sight Calling is the most difficult form of sight calling. It requires the caller to identify and remember a primary and secondary adjacent couple before moving the dancers into patterns, then be able to move the dancers through a unique formula to resolve the square.

There are many variations of these recognized methods of choreographic control. Callers often use multiple methods or interchange between methods to best suit their calling needs. For example, Sight along with Modular calling provides multiple ways to keep track of the dancers even if a mistake is made. The key is to find a way to move the dancers successfully to provide maximum entertainment.