

Working With Squares and Rounds by Tim Marriner

Ever wonder why one dance seemed fun filled and energetic and another seemed to drag on forever? More often the difference is due to communication. Officers and dance leaders can either work collectively to provide a great dance experience or can work separately likely pulling it apart. A great dance does not happen intuitively.

Music and complexity of choreography create a mood that affects the ebb and flow of the entire event. When callers and cuers are working alternately it is important to communicate and observe the work of each other. Great dance leaders instinctively blend their styles to complement each others dance form to increase the overall dance experience. Working as a unit they can craft a dance program that provides maximum enjoyment by all. If the opposite occurs the event can feel choppy, stop and go, as if being a part of a tug of war match rather than a dance; or worse yet, a funeral dirge.

The following guidelines are offered to support the success of dance events that offer both squares and rounds.

- > Determine ahead of time what equipment is required, who supplies it, and when it must be provided. Stipulate needs in a contract, especially if a turntable is required.
- > Before the event communicate any special needs or space required, such as table arrangement, steps, lighting, decorations, or computer stands. Ensure they do not inhibit any leader's performance.
- > Coordinate with the dance officers how the program is to be scheduled and maintained.
- > Coordinate with the dance officers expected lengths of breaks between dances.
- > Coordinate with the dance officers if a food break is to occur and what is expected during such a break.
- > Coordinate with the dance officers if workshops are expected or not.
- > Coordinate with the dance officers the CALLERLAB Program and Phase of dance expected.
- > Coordinate with the dance officers if a dance theme must be followed.
- > Coordinate with the dance officers if announcements and prize drawings are going to be made and when.
- > Arrive early to set up equipment and introduce yourself to all the leaders and officers involved.
- > Don't set up equipment or change things while the other leader is working.
- > Do allow time for the other leader to set up if necessary.
- > Discuss with all dance leaders any special quirks regarding the sound equipment.
- > Understand how your equipment works and is to be connected before it is time to start.
- > If a sound check is needed share signals to communicate if some change is necessary.
- > Walk the floor perimeter while the other is working to assure there is proper balance between voice and music.
- > If an input jack must be changed, turn off the volume to avoid loud static or pops; including microphones.

- > If plugs or settings need to be changed between leaders be courteous and return or replace them as found after you are finished.
- > Be careful and consistent with volume control plugs or settings.
- > Provide your own microphone. Don't expect to use the other dance leaders.
- > Create a good rapport with the other leaders. Use proper showmanship techniques.
- > Be polite, move off stage when the other is working.
- > If folks wish to have a conversation or sign books please be courteous and move away from the staging area to allow the other leader to start work without distraction or noise.
- > Don't taunt or distract the other while they are working.
- > Share programming intent with the other leaders.
- > When working alternately provide similar music or rhythms to assure flow when transitioning between dance forms.
- > Try to avoid music that would cause the room to become silent.
- > Offer a variety of music styles that awaken the spirit.
- > Be attentive to the others needs. Offer assistance if necessary.
- > Over the microphone thank the other leader for their work.
- > Offer to assist the other with taking down the equipment.
- > Don't pack up your equipment or decorations while the other leader is working.
- > All dance leaders should thank the dancers, officers, club, visiting dance leaders for attending.
- > Don't rush out of the hall; shake hands.
- > Smile! Be friendly. Enjoy what you are doing.

For years our dance activity has enjoyed a well balanced program of entertainment by combining both square and round dancing. This union provides added value to both dance forms that is enjoyed by many. Keep these guidelines in mind the next time you share a program with another dance leader. If followed, these guidelines could provide you with more work simply by being a part of a truly enriched dancing experience that others will want repeated!