

TIMING -- MUSIC -- CHOREOGRAPHY

THE BALANCING ACT

If we can agree that timing is the glue that connects the music to the choreography, then we should learn as much as possible about all three subjects at the same time from the beginning of our calling experience. In the learning process it usually starts very simply with known factors and then gradually expands to the more difficult. Each step along the way should be mastered before continuing on to the next. In the training of our callers of the future, this should be one of our top priorities.

The art of calling requires that we put the call (choreography) in the proper place within the music (timing) so it can be executed properly. Our job should be to understand this to the best of our ability which in turn would give added weight to keeping these three subjects together in the teaching process. It is impossible to learn timing without the other two. It is possible to learn about music and phrasing but what good is it without the application. The same applies to choreography if it isn't done to the music properly (timing).

Taking the known factors that we have with our choreography, we can learn to apply them to the music in such a way as to give the dancers the phrase of the music to dance whenever possible. If our choreography calls for the dancer to go off phrase for a short period of time, it is possible to bring them back on the phrase of music with another sequence of calls. The choreography would have to be preplanned in order to do this in most cases. In learning with known factors we are also developing a feel for the phrase of music. In realizing that we are trying to give the dancer the phrase to dance to, then we also develop a feel for where to put the next call. The better we become at feeling the phrase of music, the better we are able to give it to the dancer to dance to.

Pre-cuing the calls so that the dancer has the phrase to dance to is what timing and the proper use of music is all about. In many of our singing calls we are already used to pre-cuing Circle Left or Sides Face, Grand Square so that we can sing the words of a song. If you accept this as what we are already doing, then why don't we take it one step further and pre-cue Heads Promenade or Heads Square Thru, etc.? By pre-cuing the figure also would enable the dancer to move out on the phrase of music. This is a small sacrifice for us to make for the dancer's pleasure.

A very important by-product to all this is that it will open the door to learning to cue rounds and contras which will add to our repertoire in the calling field. Of course, the end result will be smoother calling and dancing. Isn't that what we are trying to do?