

Grand Square 55.3 – May 2013

Tips for Your Tips

A series devoted to helping you become a more confident dancer

The Sound of Music

To borrow from a famous song, the dance floor is alive with the sound of music. Music is what makes our activity *dancing*, not merely a caller moving human chess pieces around the floor.

First, there is the flavor of the music. Peppier tunes give a bounce to your step, while smooth tunes make you feel like you are gliding across the dance floor. Sometimes, familiar songs entice you to sing along with the lyrics.

Square dance music has a consistent beat. The beat helps keep you and your fellow dancers stepping at the same time. This is particularly evident during a Promenade; there is a rhythm and feeling of togetherness when everyone in the hall steps “squarely” on the beat.

Part of the mission of CALLERLAB, an international organization of square dance callers, is to maintain a list of the calls that are used in the various dance programs. For each call, there is a definition (how to execute the call) and a timing note (suggested number of steps to complete the call). Squares move more smoothly through the calls when dancers do not rush, but instead spend the full count for each part of the call. A perfect example is Grand Square, where four beats/steps are allotted for each “side” of an individual’s square. When executed accurately, nobody gets stepped on. This is particularly important if Grand Square is called from a starting position other than your standard static square. Interesting note: When Grand Square *is* called from a standard squared up set, you will have two facing lines after six steps, if done accurately! The proper execution of calls becomes even more necessary with the more intricately timed calls (such as Relay the Deucey and Teacup Chain, in the Plus program). In these cases, proper pacing helps to maintain the square’s symmetry during the execution of the call’s various parts.

Not all dancers are aware that singing calls have a structure to their choreography that corresponds to the structure of the song. A singer’s structure is break, figure, figure, break, figure, figure, break. The break (frequently starting with Circle Left, Grand Square, or Ladies Chain/Promenade) is the “chorus” of the song. The figure (frequently starting with Heads/Sides Promenade Half, or Square Thru Three) is the “verse.” A woman should be with her opposite man when the middle break is called, and should be back with her original partner for the end break. So, if your square breaks down during the figure choreography, the breaks are your opportunity to straighten things out, if you so choose. Also, since the breaks are during the song’s chorus, they are opportunities for dancers to sing along during a Circle Left or Promenade home, which adds to the enjoyment of the dance.

Let the beat of the music guide you. Let the “feel” of the music move you. Enjoy the *dance!*

What topics would YOU like me to address in future columns? I would really appreciate your feedback. Please contact me at ltpt1@yahoo.com or 732-577-9413. Happy dancing!

Jan Thompson