

# SMOOTH DANCING an overview of the principles

## Introduction

### Slide

In trying to determine what is “smooth dancing” it is necessary to pick a starting point from which to build the concept. The following idea is, I suppose, as good a place as any for a start point:

***"Smooth Dancing allows the dancers to move comfortably to the beat of the music without abrupt and awkward changes of direction."***

One of the highest goals of a caller is to create a choreographic sequence that flows well, times out correctly and is smooth to dance to.

### Slide Why is smooth dancing important?

- \* Dancers feel better while dancing.
- \* The dancing is less exhausting.
- \* Dancing gets easier.... and hence even complex choreography can be done with greater success.

Through smooth dancing, the dancers will get a great dance experience. Visitors (and even us callers) have a visual impression of something that works and is fun, and they may just want to be part of it.

### Slide - How can we achieve smooth dancing?

By now you have a lot of tools in your calling toolbox. Movement mechanics, formation recognition, formation management, definitions, modules zeroes, equivalents and maybe even some early sight calling, and a resolution technique.

You can build a lot of things with just a few little tools, but now it is time to add into your tool box, some of those tools to help make what you build, look like a finished product. For any achievement, you always need a tool or tools. There are two basic tools for smooth dancing. They are named timing and body flow.

In square dancing there is a communication between dancers and the caller. This process of communication is accompanied by music. If the caller can establish a communication that is, free of disturbance, and in harmony with the music, then the caller reaches the goal of smooth dancing.

**Note that 100% smooth dancing - 100% of the time is impossible.**

It is possible however to get close. To get pretty close to that ideal, there are a several things to look after. First of all, we begin with timing.

## **Slide** FIRST LETS LOOK AT TOOL NUMBER 1 - TIMING

TIMING is the relation between the announcing of the calls and the execution of the call by the dancers. Its measure is beats of music. To understand it best you have to understand that, relative to square dancing, there are three different and distinct elements.

### **There are 3 Elements Of Timing**

- \* **Command Time:** The number of beats that are needed to say the call. (Almost all calls can be announced in two beats) – some are different but most are a maximum of 2 beats. Do not take more if it is not needed.
- \* **Lead Time:** The number of beats between announcing the call and the reaction of the dancers. The timing of when the call is delivered is important. The delivery must meet the action – too soon and they rush...to late and they stop and go.
- \* **Execution Time:** The number of beats needed to execute the call. (see Callerlab's Timing List) if it takes 20 beats to teach a square thru then take 20 beats to teach it. But remember it takes 10 beats to dance it so get the dancers moving to the beat and “actually dancing”. Let them know it takes 10 beats and give them 10 to succeed. If they learn early to move to the beat, they will succeed 99 percent of the time in doing the calls correctly, and remembering them effectively.

**Just a note on Command Time.** It is different to the other two terms, because it is (or should be) always the same. Lead Time and Execution Time have to adjust to the certain circumstances you have - more below.

Timing explains how to best communicate with the dancers, in harmony with the music, aiming to get the dancers receiving the right dance feeling.

## **Slide** Tempo

We can play the music in different tempos. The speed of music or tempo is measured in beats per minute (bpm). The average tempo for smooth square dancing is between 120 and - 130 bpm, with an optimum of about 124 beats per minute.

**Tempo is not timing!** The vital thing is to know and understand how the two elements work together. By choosing certain timing, you can give the dancers the feeling that the dance is "fast" at a slow tempo or converse. A very simplistic version of the difference is - **tempo** is how fast or slow a piece of music is performed, while rhythm (timing) is the placement of sounds in time, in a regular and repeated pattern.

- \* **Tempo** generally is measured as the number of beats per minute, where the beat is the basic measure of time in music.
- \* **Rhythm/Timing** can be thought of as the pattern of music, rhythm and voice in that measure of time.

## **Slide** ADJUSTING THE TEMPO

Tempo should be adjusted to the various circumstances that we find. For instance, consider the age of the dancers. When doing a workshop or if you have inexperienced dancers it is sometimes better choose a slower tempo. Other advantages of a slower tempo are:

- \* Dancers have more time to react
- \* Callers have more time to place key words
- \* Callers have more time to keep floor control (e. g. to help broken squares with a quick helping word)

Tempo should however be slowed or sped to the point that it is no longer dancing. 120 bpm is slow, and 130 is about as high as you should ever go and that is rare.

## **Slide** using the beat for smoothness

Once we have the right tempo, the next thing is to think about when to announce a call. Usually we are dealing with musical phrases that look like:

**1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8**

**Give the dancers the first beat.** The dancer's desire to start the action is the biggest on beat #1 and beat #5. Even if dancers are not aware of it consciously, they feel best and dance better, when they start on beat #1.

Of course this is not always possible, because many call's execution time is different than 4 beats; HOWEVER, callers should try to allow it to happen as often as possible. Hopefully, try to achieve it at the beginning of each patten sequence, and in singing calls, at the start of every sequence (opener, figure, break and closer). For singing calls, it even more important to start the dancers on the first beat. If we do not, we are stealing the dancer's precious beats of music of a sequence measure for 64 beats. This is done wrong on many called records so consider it when listening to the called side if you learn the records that way.

To better hear the beat #1 you can increase the bass of the music. You will then notice that the beat is much better to recognize. Practice giving the first beat in patten and singing calls. If you feel it, and use it right, they will. **PRACTICE**

And since the dancers can better "feel the beat" they will dance more comfortably, with better timing and execution because now they really "dance to the beat of the music".

## **Slide** Extra Beats Lead-Time

There are several parameters that influence the quantity of lead-time.

- \* How good is the acoustic?
- \* How used are the dancers to the choreography?
- \* How much dance experience do the dancers have?

Very often callers use complex or exceptional combinations of calls to provide variety. In those cases, it is important to give about 2-3 beats more lead-time. That is to say, the key or helper words should come 2-3 beats ahead of the actual movement. Since the combinations are unexpected, the dancers need those extra beats to react and yet dance through the sequence fluently and successfully. Inexperienced dancers may need more lead-time as well.

It is a special challenge to find the correct time for mixed floors (experienced and inexperienced dancers together). Expect the dancers to have different reaction times (lead time) and the execution times for the figures will vary.

There could be 187,423 totally random things that the caller may have to adapt to on any given night. The best thing to do is not panic. Start slow and work up.

Callers must try to hit that golden section of Timing and delivery if they want to keep all the puppets moving together on the choreographic strings. Finding that golden section is what which allows smooth dancing for the whole floor.

## **Slide** Sources Of Timing Mistakes

Now after we learned how to use timing correctly, we want to look at the other side of the coin so to speak. That side is What can be done wrong? And, What will be the consequences? There are three essential sources of mistakes:

1. **Saying calls too late:** The result is the well-known stop-and-go-dancing. In addition, execution time will grow if dancers must stop in between of the figures. The Callerlab Timing-List is only valid for fluent and flowing dancing.
2. **Saying calls too early:** Dancers are rushed if the next call is announced when there are still too many steps left for the actual call they are currently performing. The dancers will try to short cut the figure. This leaves a feeling of uncertainty because the dancers get the feeling of not being able to follow the calls. They are rushing instead of dancing and then usually stop and wait for the caller to catch up. This often happens as a result of stacked calls.
3. **Clipped Timing:** The caller does not give the dancers enough time to execute the calls, but takes away 1-2 beats of every call. This is not the same as saying calls too early. Clipped Timing reduces the dance impression since the figures cannot be danced comfortably. The dancing gets more straining.

Admittedly Clipped Timing (stacking) is too often used as a programming tool in a poor attempt to generate excitement. It is not necessary.

By changing the presentation timing (not command or execution timing) you can create a feeling of fast dancing and produce enthusiasm.

By doing things like clipping or stacking or having late delivery of the command, or even worse increase the tempo by about 2-4 BPM and create what is now becoming known as “hot - hash-calling”, you cause unnecessary strain and work for the dancers. Sometimes it gets used for “effect only”. For a full evening dance, no dancer can bear it, nor would they want to..

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### **External Influences (other points to consider each and every dance)**

External influences are those over which a Caller has little or no control. Such things would include problems such as having an extremely slippery, or extremely dull floor, or a dance hall with too little space. For these and many other factors you will need to adjust to add a little more execution time.

Other factors such as Acoustic problems will have an influence on lead-time. The further away from the loudspeakers the dancers are, the harder it may be for them to hear properly. With acoustic problems the effect increases, and execution time gets worse. Therefore, we need to give the dancers more lead-time, and likely more selectively use helper words at the right time.

Of course, a change of weather, or a full moon, or a bad pancake for breakfast can also have an influence on the reaction time of the dancers, and hence, to our calling. It does not matter if it is with same dancers and same combination of calls you have done before. Be ready to adapt to the given circumstances of each performance.

**Remember, a caller cannot achieve 100% smooth, 100% of the time.** With the complex choreography that is in use nowadays, many dancers are willing to cut back time, especially at advanced and higher programs, for the sake of surprising sequences and choreographic effects. However; **it is important that a caller always judges whether a certain effect is worth it, to draw back timing.**

No caller ever should disregard this thought and he or she should be aware of the fact that we are dealing with people and compromise every time we pick up the microphone.

## **Slide BODY FLOW – THE SECOND TOOL TO SMOOTH DANCING**

Body Flow is only one aspect of smooth dancing, and it is just as important, as other tools in the caller tool box, such as variety, resolution, timing etc. etc.

NEVER use poor flowing choreography for the sake of variety, nor for gaining the dancers attention with a gimmick or a “gotcha”.

These goals can be achieved in other ways. You should also try to think not only of one dancer when considering a combination. Think of all the dancers, especially form Male callers think of the ladies and for the lady callers, think of the men.

## **Slide** – Four aspects of Body Flow

**Body Flow has at least the following four aspects:**

**Aspect One:** The dancers should not be forced to sharply change their direction of motion. An obvious example:

\* *From Right Hand Waves --Ends Run; Bend the Line; Reverse the Flutter*

Other examples often occur when managing your formations or resolving the square:

\* From Lines facing out: -- Wheel & Deal; Zoom

\* From facing Couples -- Star Thru; Veer Left

\* From Right Hand Box Circulate -- Out facers Run; Veer Left

## **Slide**

**Aspect Two:** The dancers should not be forced to “awkwardly” use the same hand twice in a row. There are times when a right hand to right hand is normal, such as scoot back, swing thru etc but those generally use and release with a distance between. This is expected and anticipated. However, there are many right to right or left to left which are terrible breakers of body flow. An obvious example:

\* From Double Pass Thru: Centres Square Thru 3; Touch  $\frac{1}{4}$

Other examples:

\* From Static Square -- Heads Square Thru 4; Star Thru

\* From Standard Lines -- Star Thru; Right & Left Thru

\* From Standard Lines -- Star Thru; Allemande Left

Acceptable use of same hand

\* From 8 Chain 4 -- Touch  $\frac{1}{4}$ , Scoot back, Box The Gnat, Square Thru

\* From  $\frac{1}{2}$  Sashayed Facing lines – Box the Gnat, Right & Left Thru

## **Slide**

**Aspect Three: Avoid overflow.** From time to time the turning direction should be changed.

\* Example: From Static Square -- Heads Touch  $\frac{1}{4}$ ; Head Boys Run; Star Thru; Slide Thru; Touch  $\frac{1}{4}$ ; Scoot Back Twice, Boys Run; Partner Trade; Touch  $\frac{1}{4}$ ; Girls Run; Star Thru; California Twirl, slide thru, allemande left (Taminations)

Heads Touch a Quarter  
Head Boys Run  
Star Thru  
Slide Thru  
Touch a Quarter  
Scoot Back  
Scoot Back  
Boys Run  
Partner Trade  
Touch a Quarter  
Girls Run  
Star Thru  
California Twirl  
Slide Thru

Other examples:

- \* From static square, Heads Left Touch a Quarter, Head Girls Run, Spin the Top, Spin the Top, Girls Scoot Back, Boys Circulate, Girls Trade, Girls Cross Run, Recycle, Slide Thru, Pass Thru, Partner Trade, Left touch  $\frac{1}{4}$  circulate, girls run(taminations)

Heads Left Touch a Quarter  
Head Girls Run  
Spin the Top  
Spin the Top  
Girls Scoot Back  
Boys Circulate  
Girls Trade  
Girls Cross Run  
Recycle  
Slide Thru  
Pass Thru  
Partner Trade  
Left touch  $\frac{1}{4}$   
Circulate  
Girls Run

## **Slide**

**Apect Four:** Watch for Offsets, particularly at Basic and Mainstream. Some calls end a little bit offset, so that the dancers might not be in the right position for the next call. In most cases dancers will adjust to the next call – but some to not. Watch for it.

- \* Examples: from Standard Lines -- Square Thru 2; Trade By (**passing adjustment offset**)



- \* From Standard Lines: -- Pass the ocean, boys cross fold, slide thru (lines fwd and back) – *at basic and mainstream dancers will normally adjust to lines to make up for the offset. At advanced and higher they may not as there are formations that work with the offsets.*
- \* From Lines -- Tag the Line, Face Left; Centres Trade (*the two face line is offset and is not really conducive to a centers trade, but dancers will adjust, uncomfortably*)

On the other hand, the next combination is OK, because the dancers are expecting the next call and therefore, they adjust to do it smoothly. This is another interesting aspect of Body Flow. We will talk about that in a bit

- \* From Double Pass Thru -- Centres Square Thru 3; Allemande Left

## Slide

### Body flow – in general terms

Good Body flow comes from good communication between the Caller, the dancer and the music, and you need a well build language with a fluent syntax. The square dance language is the calls, and the caller has to create a sequence that allows the dancers smooth dancing.

**Dancer Position.** The task is to achieve having the dancers at the end of call, placed in a position that allows them to execute the next call without abrupt changes of momentum. The ideal is, of course, when the ending position of the preceding call and start position of the following call are exactly the same.

**We know that this is not always so.** E. g. the well known get out : ...*centres square thru 3...allemande left corner....* After the square thru 3 the centres are a little bit offset since the last action was a pull by. Habit and anticipation; however, allow this sequence to be smooth. Callers be warned. Do not take dancer acceptance and habit as justification for un-smooth choreography. Dancers are forgiving, but not forever. The dancers may do it and get where you want them, but poor choreography will dull the sharpest dancers desire to continue. You may be used to them doing it, but they do not want to get used to it – they are forced to.

**Dancer Hands.** It is not only the dancer's position is important to make the next call smoothly executable. It is also not always right-hand left-hand combination that is required. What is required however, is that whatever hand that is going to be used to start the execution of the next call has to be free or available in contact. To use hands alternating is not obligatory. Combinations such as *box the gnat, square thru* are perfectly acceptable because the right hand is perfectly placed to start the *square thru*. This is in sharp contrast with the combination *square thru ¾, touch ¼*.



The right hands have to be pulled from back to front before they are in the right place to dance the call.

Basically we have to watch that the dancers are in the right position to get a smooth, almost fluid transition to the next call and that the hand needed for the call is free.

**Momentum.** A body in motion stays in motion. To avoid major injuries such as broken arms or backs we need to watch the dancer's momentum. After a figure, the body is in motion and it has a tendency to keep moving in the same direction. For a change of direction there has to be enough time and space.

It is part of caller's preparation to know which figures match well after a certain call. For example, from an 8 chain thru, **Pass Thru, Trade By, Swing Thru** works very well as the motion is forward and keeps tracking forward even with the trades and adjustments. In contrast from a double pass thru formation, a combination such as **Pass Thru, all U-Turn Back, Trade By, Flutterwheel**, although technically meeting the definitions, would likely get you thrown out of the hall. The motion is stop, turn, forward, check step and crowd in awkwardly.

Here we are again seeing the need for overlapping abilities and skills that a caller should acquire. We learned earlier on about the basics of, and the need for movement mechanics and formation management, and for good body flow, a sincere formation management is indispensable.

## **Slide** – Body flow in general continued

**Counter Dancing** - In order to dance turns and turning movements in a smooth way, dancers may help themselves by dancing with a certain tension in their bodies and put a little resistance in handholds. Therefore, a handhold not only means touch, contact, and awareness of other dancers, it is also a means to help work against centrifugal force. (for example, half sashay, or guiding the right hand dancer in on a Flutterwheel. Another part of dancer's responsibilities for smooth dancing is that the inactive dancers help, think and adjust their positions. Example boys run, the girl is "inactive" but she will still move into the empty position. Of course, this is a matter of experience. Experienced dancers usually dance smoother than beginners. Good callers teach counter dancing and proper use of handhold tension in order to achieve smooth dancing but also to prevent abuse or over-exuberance by many dancers which also can make dancing uncomfortable.

**Overflow** - An important point for dancers' well being is to avoid overflow. Avoid turns of more than 360° (example swing thru, centres trade) but try to shoot for turns of not more than 360° (3/4). Once you hit that 450° (5/4) point, you are running the risk that dancers will lose their orientation.

This does not only apply to small tight turns but also to larger flowing turns and combinations. Several turns in the same direction can make some dancers dizzy. When you check your routines for overflow, follow each of the eight dancers. Sometimes only two or four of the eight dancers are affected. Watch out to avoid

the so-called sequential overflow. I. e. over a longer period of time the momentum (mostly to the right) does not change.

Overflow is usually a problem for the ladies with male callers and with the men for lady callers. This is primarily because most callers, when they write choreography and move their checkers or they through the flow they tend to do it only from the relative position that they are most familiar with.

Consider the following sequence. From an CB ocean wave –

- \* Step to a wave, Recycle, Veer Left, Ladies Trade, Wheel And Deal, Touch  $\frac{1}{4}$ , Scoot Back, Scoot Back Again, Girl Run, Touch  $\frac{1}{4}$ , Boys Run, you should get the idea by now. (**taminations**)

Heads Pair Off  
Step to a Wave  
Recycle  
Veer Left  
Girls Trade  
Wheel and Deal  
Touch a Quarter  
Scoot Back  
Scoot Back  
Girls Run  
Touch a Quarter  
Boys Run

**Space.** Observe the available space. It is less smooth to dance a *Heads Swing Thru* from a static square than a *swing thru* from a  $\frac{1}{4}$  tag - formation. It is best adjusting the orientation of tidal ocean waves to the given circumstances unless you take into account to produce less smooth dancing. Also observe the “square breathing”. This is the natural expansion and contraction of the square and the floorspace in use while they are dancing. Some movements expand a square (Cloverleaf or Ferris Wheel) and others contract a square so much that it becomes uncomfortable to dance (e.g. Half Tag, Face Partner, Slide Thru, Flutterwheel)

## **Slide** - Anticipation

**Dancers' Anticipation** is another influence on smooth dancing. This can be divided into three different categories:

1. **Favored anticipation** - Using certain filler words so the dancers will guess the next call. ....**Star Thru ... “you have a line”**....(now, of course they anticipate forward and back).. Or at a get out .....**Square Thru Three....here comes corner ...Allemande Left.**.. Using rhymes can also make the dancers anticipate the next call (**Forward And Back You Reel...Pass Thru, Wheel And Deal**). There lies a danger in that as well, the dancers often see next point and the callers tend to “crutch” on the sequence and phrases.

2. **Conditional anticipation** - When dancers get used to rhyming, they react to it reflexive. The same will happen with filler words. After *you have a line (formation)*, it is likely that in many places conditioning and habit has created the situation where at least 80% of the dancers will dance Forward and Back, whether it is called or not. The problem here is that if you use another call, that and the timing is not perfect, that conditioned anticipation creates a cut in the flow and the smooth feeling is gone.

Consider the following, from a line... ***forward and back you reel...pass thru and bend the line*** ..... **oops ?!**) The sad part about this statement is that many callers do just that type of phrasing in an effort to try and break habits that they themselves created by giving the dancers a “slap on the wrist” - Gotcha, rather than actually change their own calling practices to create smooth dancing.

3. **Instinctive anticipation** – This falls hand in hand with what was said earlier about momentum. Dancers have a certain momentum and a tendency to maintain it. In addition to that, when dancers are facing each other, and in motion, they are expecting to dance the next movement with the person facing them. The more experienced a dancer gets, the bigger his/her spectrum of different anticipations gets.

Beginners do not know all the possibilities and they expect to dance what they are used to. (**Note**: there is also a trend of more advanced or experienced dancers not being able to dance simple basic and mainstream level dances when the choreography ventures away from the old standards. This, however, is not the dancer's fault; it is the fault of the caller who has not maintained an active and complete level of calling equal to the level of the dancers).

Remember, the first call of the Mainstream Program, Plus Program, Advanced and Challenge Programs, is, and remains, **CIRCLE LEFT**. If you do not use it and everything between it and the level you are calling to its fullest, you are cheating the dancers from what they are paying for.

## **Slide - WORDS**

Another thing that can help or hamper smooth dancing is proper or improper use of filler words or key words. Use filler words very rarely, because **filler words become killer words** very fast.

This happens when you are not able to say the next call in time, because of all the filler words. More important: Giving the right key words (**helper words**) is much more important, but only give as much as needed and at the right time (see lead time). Let the dancers think it out and succeed.

It also pays to think about how to say a call. E. g. you can say *...make a Right Hand Star.....* or *....Star Right....* The latter can be mixed up with *Star Thru*. Again, it is important how you say it and when (lead time). By saying key words on time, you can avoid a false anticipation at the dancers and deliver smooth dancing.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion square dance contains many aspects and in the last 20 or so sessions we have only just scratched the surface. Some of these include, but are not limited to, choreographic variety, intellectual challenge, and, of course, smooth dancing. It is an unfortunate reality that many callers often set smoothness aside for the sake of reaching one of the other goals like technical hyper extended choreography, or seeing how fast they can graduate dancers, or even sight calling as a first port of call.

It has been said that, an experienced caller would only do this if it the goal were worth it. **Personally**, I cannot think of any square dance goals that are worth sacrificing smooth dancing for.

That said, if you as a caller ever do find it necessary to sacrifice smoothness, do so only to achieve an short term aim, (such as resolving an asymmetric square) and do not over do it. The **highest goal should be smooth comfortable successful dancing**, because then your dancers feel good over a long time.

**Give the dancers the first beat** and let them flow though your choreography, then you are part of the winning team!

Finally, you cannot reach good timing and body flow in calling while sitting at your desktop, reading caller notes or moving dolls and checkers. You must learn theoretic fundamentals at home first, and then practice, practice, practice. Smooth dancing from smooth calling, is an ability you as a caller will not get over night. The good news is that, dancers are forgiving and patient, and, as long as you continue to get better and better, they are happier and happier and will support you.

**Remember: It is not about you. It is always about them.**

Additional notes on Timing – not part of the presentation

## **TIMING - UNDERSTANDING THE MUSIC**

Predominately, the greatest area of music that gives most callers, both new and experienced, is TIMING. Much of the parallels between understanding and using music contribute in the same manner as that of smooth dancing. In order to understand timing, it is necessary to fully understand the basics of music, and in particular the structure of musical phrases that you will be using. While this is obviously mostly true for singing calls, it is equally important for patter calling. It requires a great deal of discipline by the caller and in many instances will require a total rework of their currently used skills.

There are three parts to Timing as discussed in the presentation. They are; Command Time, Lead-time, and Execution Time.

**Command Time** is defined as the amount of time it takes to give the command to be executed. Generally speaking, this should be done in no more than 2 beats. There are some exceptions to this 2-beat call such as Spin Chain Thru or in the Plus Program, Spin Chain and Exchange the Gears etc. A good exercise to help with this would be to practice just the commands themselves with different music so that the commands are automatic and never (seldom) take more than 2 beats to deliver. When doing this, however, do not consider the choreography; just concentrate on giving the calls in not more than 2 beats.

**Lead Time** is defined as the amount of time you give the command prior to the dancers beginning the execution of that command. Generally, this should be limited to somewhere between 2 and 4 beats with 2 beats being the norm. The reason you sometimes have to give more Lead Time is for formations and arrangements that are other than standard or for some calls, which require more than 2 beats to give the Command. Sides Face, Grand Square should normally be given on beats 5, 6, 7, & 8 so that the dancers can start out the grand square on beat 1 of the musical phrase.

**Execution Time** is the most precise of the three timing elements and is defined as the amount of time, measured in beats (steps to the music), that are required to dance the command comfortably. This work was pioneered by Dick Leger and his committee and carried on by Bob Wilson and is now complete for all dance programs from Basic thru A-2. It was completed by dancing the patterns over and over until a consensus on how many steps were needed was reached for each of the calls on the various lists. Assuming that we are using a standard 8 beat phrase piece of music (probably in 2/4 or boom- chuck music), then the anchor beats are 1 and 5 primary and 3 and 7 secondary. If we are talking about the delivery of most calls ( 2 beat Command Time and 2 beat Lead Time) then we should strive to deliver the command on beats 7 and 8 so that the dancers get to dance on the first beat of the musical phrase.

- \* This is not commonly done. Most callers take the first and fifth beats for themselves and let the dancers fend for themselves. In singing calls, many callers will start the opener using the phrase calling technique but then revert to using the anchor beats for themselves.
- \* This is one of the main reasons why dancers have to wait for the caller on a grand Square, which should start on beat 3 of a 4, beat opener. Listen to many singing calls and you will hear the artists call using the anchor beats for themselves and not for the dancer.

The entire concept of Timing should be considered as a part of the overall use of music as well as the careful consideration of such other items such as Smooth Dancing and Body Flow. Of course, these cannot be used without regard to the Degree of difficulty, which is covered elsewhere. (see Betsy Gotta's ASH Series Zoom Presentation from 23 August 2020).

The proper **T I M I N G** involves the three elements of **T I M I N G** (above) so that the dancer has the correct hand availability and proper body flow at exactly the time it is needed without having to stop to hear the next command or to rush in order to keep up. If you consider that most dancing today is done at a tempo between 124 and 128, (some are faster and a few are slower), you are taking one step for each beat of music and that step takes about 1/2 of a second. If you are off by just 1/2 a second, you are off by one beat and the dancers will start to stagger or not dance smoothly.

There is a school of thought that all choreography should be pre-planned. When this is done, and if it is done with proper phrasing in mind, then it is possible to give the dancer the first beat of the musical phrase throughout the entire routine except where split phrasing must be taken into consideration. In today's choreography, however, there are many calls, which are less than 8 beats and, in some instances, use less than an even number of beats to complete. If you use these calls, then some adjustments will have to be made in **T I M I N G** to make the dance routine smooth.

If we look at a normal square and call Heads Square Thru, it should take the dancers 10 beats to arrive at the corner with their right hands available. If we follow this with a Swing Thru, it adds 6 beats to make 16 beats, or 2 musical phrases. If the caller gives the commands to Swing Thru on beats 7 & 8, the dancer has been given the call too early and tends to rush the call. This can also be called clipped timing on the part of the caller. To call it correctly, the command should be given on beats 1 & 2 of the next phrase. Then the following call should be given on beats 7 & 8 and both you and the dancers are back on phrase.

Think of the times when you were dancing to various callers.

- If their **TIMING** was good, you were unaware of the time during the dance. It seemed to fly by, and you were not physically tired, but surprised when the caller announced last tip.
- On some other occasions, you may have tapped your watch to see if it had stopped because the evening dragged on and on. In these cases, the caller was probably using bad **TIMING**. By this what is meant is such things as being too late with the calls (stop and go dancing), or being too early with the calls (stacking) and forced you to run in order to keep up.

### WHICH CALLER ARE YOU?

There are some callers who are not able to discipline themselves to pre-cue a command and give the first beat to the dancer. This is not uncommon. Many callers are just not aware of the proper method of calling and take the simple way out. This is not to say that you won't have a good time with them. Many of them are the superstars of today and dancers love them. They would love them even more if these same callers could improve their technical calling skills to call using the preferred method of Proper Timing.

Can it be done? - You bet.

Is it easy? - **No.**

It takes an understanding of Music, Phrasing, Smooth Body Flow and Caller Discipline. Work on it. Your dancers will love you for it.