

2022 01 30 – ASH Caller Training Session - Degree of Difficulty

Mel Wilkerson

Slide 1 TITLE SLIDE

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY What does it mean?

When we consider difficulty as callers, we look at and analyse the definitions, and see what we can give the dancers for variety to make it interesting and unusual – giving them a challenge to overcome. Too often we perceive difficulty based on choreographic nuances but there is so much more.

Slide 2 – 8 groups = 8 outcomes.

This was presented in a caller School and is not my research but it outlines a very important consideration. 8 different groups were told that a sequence was going to be called and they wanted the dancers impression of the sequence. The sequence was as follows:

Heads Pass the Ocean, Heads Left Swing Thru, Extend, Spin Chain Thru, Recycle, Pass Thru, Outsides Trade, Centers Turn Thru, Allemande Left, Promenade Home

The outcomes were as follows:

- **Basic – 0/6 SUCCEED** - Couldn't do it at all – got to pass the ocean then the problems started
- **MS 1 – 2/9 SUCCEED**– way too hard don't like it
- **MS2 – 5/5 SUCCEED** - initial falter but did it and loved it – wanted more
- **Plus 1 – 4/4 SUCCEED** -Got through it no problem – very easy
- **PLUs 2 – 3/11 SUCCEED** That is hard – save it for advanced
- **A1 – 6/6 SUCCEED** - No problem – little hesitation on left swing thru
- **A2 – 7/7 SUCCEED** No problem – little hesitation on left swing thru
- **C1 – 1/6 SUCCEED** – said that was dirty and laughed about it – enjoyable want a re-do

We as callers can all see that there are some things in this sequence, which works and flows quite well, that will cause dancers problems. It is important to note that the response and ability had only limited reasons related to the actual movements with the exception of the basic group. So why is it difficult for some and not for the others. Surprisingly enough, it is not just the choreography that you have to look when making this assessment.

SLIDE 3 – WHAT WE KNOW

There are many factors which influence smooth dancing. One very important one falls solely into the realm of good Caller Judgement is the choice of Choreography that the caller will use. It is a judgement call but one primary consideration for success is of course the degree of difficulty of the material he/she uses.

For Dancers, much of the technical secrets of choreography workings is something locked in a vault. It's like a car – they don't care how it is built as long as it works and is comfortable to drive. That is why it is important to know that when assessing difficulty of a movement, what you are actually assessing is the dancer's perception of that movement which is influenced by a wide variety of factors and many things must be considered when determining whether a certain sequence will be "perceived" as difficult by the dancers.

We already know that, dancers generally respond instinctively and automatically to choreography which is familiar to them and adapt more readily when there are perceived recognisable "comforts" in the choreography with which they can identify.

When something is unfamiliar, the reaction time has a "pause" even for a millisecond. Most experienced callers, when using less familiar, extended applications, or conceptual choreography, provide additional preparation time with the lead time of the command increased and often helping words to assist the dancers.

Many inexperienced callers have not developed that sense and try to "repeat" or emulate such sequences only to find that the choreographic choice has severely impact the feeling of smoothness. This is because the dancers are not able to respond automatically, and thus their "perception of the choreography" becomes not only choppy, but unsmooth and by default more difficult to succeed at.

Being able to "pre-assess" the dancers perception is especially important in calling patter. Callers must be able to correctly assess the **skills** and **preference** of the dancers at a particular dance. It is important to accept that no two dancers perceptions of difficulty are alike and because of this skill complicated.

Because the same group of dancers will have a different mix of skill and preference on different occasions, the caller must provide dancers with a patter program which combines smooth flowing choreography with just the right amount of intellectual challenge. That means there is a lot of very sophisticated decision making going on with the callers. It is also why it is so important to be familiar with basic foundations skills of formation management, flow sequencing and the basics of FASR. Most callers that fail in delivering patter with interesting but danceable variety, fail because they lack these foundation skills and by default the capability of "feeling the dancers perception" as to the difficulty of the material they use. It is also one of the reasons why we lose so many new callers, but also why we lose so many dancers.

Slide 4 - Terminology

Terminology:

- "difficult choreography,"
- "degree of difficulty," and
- "choreographic difficulty."

These words are bantered about and many try to explain them. Despite the slight difference they all mean essentially

"Difficulty Of The Choreography As Perceived By The Dancers."

Slide 5 Caller Vs Dancer Perception

Most dancers will describe difficult to dance choreography as "hard." And easy to dance choreography as smooth. The difference between the two is generally due to the many interrelated factors necessary for success, not just the choreography itself. Any one factor, which if not applied correctly, can create the perception of choreographic difficulty.

We have already stated that foundation skills such as handedness, flow, etc directly affect the smoothness of choreography but what we are specifically looking at here is not difficult versus not difficult choreography.

As we have seen in other sessions, the ability to create smooth flowing pattern choreography with just the right amount of challenge depends on many things such as:

1. understanding the mechanics of body flow,
2. understanding the dynamics of comfortable timing,
3. the ability to closely match dance actions with musical phrasing, and
4. understanding exactly what makes one series of moves seem harder than another.

These things however are all caller perceptions of material.

Slide 6 – the dancer perception

To really assess difficulty it is necessary to put on your dancer hat. The dancers' perception of choreographic difficulty is directly related to both the nature of the body's physical reflexes and the nature (limits) of human memory. What it boils down to is:

- When dancers are able to respond to a caller's directions instantly and automatically they are relaxed and comfortable, they tend to think of the choreography as "easy" or "not difficult." or

- If, they are unable to respond instantly and automatically, they tend to feel uneasy and stressed; this is when they perceive the choreography to be "hard" or "difficult."

When they encounter difficult choreography, dancers either "make it" or they don't. In either event, one of three end results is usually present:

1. **The ideal outcome.** they complete the sequence successfully, and because it was "hard" it was also stimulating and fun to accomplish. These dancers enjoy a certain amount of stress when accompanied by a successful end result. Many of these dancers accept a higher amount of breakdown, but only if there are also challenging successes. It is important to note that 100% success is impossible. If you are getting that all the time, you are not trying and your dancers will get bored as will you.
2. **A second** possibility is that the dancers successfully complete the sequence but find it was too hard to be enjoyable. For these dancers the stress caused by the choreography far outweighs the pleasure of "making it." These dancers tend to stay away from extended, stress producing choreography.
3. **Finally**, there are dancers who do not complete the sequence successfully and the square breaks down. When this occurs, the dancers find the choreography not only hard, but impossible. This type of choreography is rarely, if ever, pleasant or enjoyable for the average dancer. Subjected them to it without compensating successes, and they will surely leave the activity.

It should be pointed out that during any particular dance each dancer can experience all of the above situations at different times during the dance. It is also possible to experience all three situations in the same tip. It is the caller's responsibility to ensure failures, **which do occur**, are compensated for, if practical, by sufficient successes. If dancers can't find an acceptable balance of challenge and success, they will leave the activity.

Most callers face the last two situations regularly, and too often do not recognise why it happens. The reason is that they do not fully understand the nature of choreographic difficulty nor why dancers perceive choreography to be difficult or "hard." They are thinking as callers – not as dancers.

We as callers often discuss our patter (even with ourselves and ask during our preparation, "How hard is OK?" or "How hard is too hard?" They are great questions and we answer them but rarely do we take the time to ponder the question **WHY?** is it hard

Slide 7 – The why

This is a skill every caller must develop, and it must start by learning:

- what dancers perceive as difficult,
- what they sense is easy,
- and why dancers perceive things this way..

When dancers respond to a caller smoothly, automatically, and with no errors they think of the choreography as "easy." At times this type of choreography can even seem boring.

On the other hand, choreography is thought of as difficult when it causes them to worry or to doubt their ability to successfully complete the sequence, thus causing stress or anxiety. This stress is significantly increased if they feel they are the one who will cause the square to breakdown.

Callers need to understand that for success, **both are necessary**, and that callers intentionally create these feelings. Successful callers learn how to provide a proper mixture of stress and success for maximum dancing pleasure.

Slide 8 Understanding CHOREOGRAPHIC DIFFICULTY

There are ten commonly encountered stress producing elements of modern square dance choreography. While the first two are fairly obvious; remaining 8 are not as obvious but equally important. They are

1. **Unknown moves** -..As an example, I want everyone to access the background settings and upload a background picture of a dog in a space suit and put it on your zoom profile – **Don't do it**. But now think of the stress that just caused you when you know what zoom is, and you know what a background is but I am now telling you to do something that is unknown to most of you. The same would be like me calling heads square thru on the third night of basics without any instruction and never having taught the movement. – say goodbye to your dancers even if did take the time to walk them through it in the next tip.
2. **Known moves infrequently used (unfamiliar moves)** this is a thought adjustment process. It is me asking you to do something that you have not prepared for which causes you to stop and think and you are unable to react immediately. Everybody when you are ready – say the seventh letter in your name. You have spelled your name many times and you know it. It should be easy but asking it in an unknown format caused you to pause and think for a second causing stress and hesitation. The same happens with infrequent or unfamiliar movements
3. **Known move from an unfamiliar formation** - you all know the alphabet and how it goes. Now recite it backwards beginning with the letter K. It is known and the order is not changing but still unfamiliar because you have never used it that way even though I have not changed the sequence or the arrangement of the letters. It is very much like calling allemande left, turn partner right to a wrong way thar – shoot that star. The movements are know but for many it is very unfamiliar.
4. **Known move from an unfamiliar arrangement.** Using the alphabet (known) sequence without changing the order, start with the letter J and repeat every third letter until you have used all the letters at least once. – for a square dancer this like saying Heads Pass the Ocean, Heads Left Swing Thru,

Extend, Spin Chain Thru, Recycle, Pass Thru, swing partner and promenade 4 steps home. You have done all those movements before but not likely from those arrangements. We as callers know that there are really only 6 arrangements but for dancers, it is rare to find a dancer that is able to dance even the simplest movements from all 6 formations without hesitation. Dancers perceive choreography to be difficult whenever the caller uses moves from an arrangement in which they have received little or no practice

5. **Dancers must remember too much** Like the alphabet question above, it is important to recognise the limits of human memory and how it affects choreographic difficulty. There are limits to both how much we can remember and how many things we can 'track' simultaneously. We as callers are "thinking choreography" and we have been trained to analyse all the other things. When we are dancing however, certain parts of our body work as a team; ears hear the moves as the caller calls them, brain decides what to do, and feet and arms do the moving. There are limits to what each part can do. The dancers are not trained in the technicality, nor have they practiced it so they must remember and memory limits are different for different people, and even for the same person under different circumstances.
6. **Dancers must keep track of too much** - Add to that, music is too fast or slow, or call stacking and the brain can become 'overloaded' and unable to process the incoming information fast enough to provide instructions to the feet and arms. Add to that the changes of Heads, Sides, Centres, Ends, Boys, Girls, changing identities based on the formation, arrangement relationship and the movement definition; and add on things like; fractional perceptions, Those who can, and on the third hand etc; well what happens is without a good balance, the dancers can perceive the choreography to be very difficult (or even impossible). It then becomes impossible to dance, and the square breaks down. Even the simplest things can cause this effect. Consider the following: **Heads square thru, touch $\frac{1}{4}$, Scoot back, Swing Thru.**

Swing thru and scoot back are standard common boys going in, girls flipping and well known. However, if I change it to Heads Square Thru, Touch $\frac{1}{4}$, Scoot Back three times but Swing Thru Twice after each Scoot Back; then the sequence even though it contains only Standard positions and moves which are very familiar, required the dancers to keep track of too many things at the same time. This will no doubt cause serious problems and will be viewed as difficult.
7. **Anticipation** - We condition our dancers knowingly or unknowingly to anticipate the next movement. It is unavoidable. However, most dancers have been conditioned to anticipate that certain moves will follow certain other moves. For example, If I call "Double Pass Thru, Centers In..." the dancers will expect "Cast Off Three Quarters" because that is what has been called most frequently. Similarly the series "Half Tag, Trade, And ... Scoot Back" will be a surprise and cause a minor balk because they will generally be expecting something like "Half Tag, Trade, And Roll." Or Half Tag, Trade And Somebody Run - These changes from what is anticipated have been labelled as

"GOTCHAS." Too often there are too many of these when callers are trying to prove a point, and it leaves many dancers feeling betrayed, tricked, frustrated or confused as to why they are unable to execute the series smoothly and automatically. The problem is, they recognise their gotcha as their error which leads to wondering why they cannot dance smoothly

- 8. Smoothness or lack of it** - Smooth flowing choreography tends to be forward moving combinations which blend smoothly from one move to the next. The thing about Smooth choreography is that it can make difficult sequences easier to dance. By contrast, easy movements become "difficult" because they are not smooth and the dancer perception is the perception of difficulty. Unsmooth combinations can frustrate dancers and even more so when they body flow is clumsy or awkward. It applies even when the dancers execute the calls without hesitation and understand what is asked for. They react automatically and are successful; but are unaware why they are annoyed because even though they have done it right, it did not feel smooth.

Unsmooth choreography does not have to be difficult in order to seem so to the dancers. Consider this sequence: Heads Square Thru, Dosado To A Wave, Boys Run, Bend The Line. It is not difficult, and most dancers will undoubtedly execute the sequence accurately. The combination is unsmooth, however, and many dancers might therefore think of it as difficult as well but they are in the middle of the next moves already still thinking about why that felt rough..

- 9. Dancer's sense of "What is right?"** Most dancers have a perception of what is "right" when they are dancing and that is generally recognisable formations like Lines Boxes, etc with normal boy/girl arrangements. If they end in other positions, there is a desire to fix it because it is uncomfortable. Often even when they are right, it doesn't feel right so there is stress involved and stress in the movement gives the perception of difficulty. This is exacerbated if they are left in the "wrong position" for a long period of time. We have all been there and corrected that perceived mistake in our dancing careers at least once. This is why it is necessary to normalise frequently – if gives that feeling of having done something difficult successfully and gets rid of that stress.
- 10. Compounding difficulty by combining difficulty elements** Dancers are very capable and can handle 3 or four difficulty factors however when we at a fifth or sixth to the mix, the perception of difficulty increases exponentially and becomes even harder to dance. Consider it this way - If they consider a sequence of moves to be difficult because it contains a move they do not dance often, the series will seem even harder if it also contains unfamiliar formations and arrangements. It becomes even more difficult by modifying the definition of the movement – for example at plus we hear things like Load the Boat **but** centres stop in a wave, or spin chain and exchange the gears but when the trailers meet turn thru and step to the end of the new wave. We are asking the dancers not only to remember the definition but adding on a variation which is unfamiliar; and then making them assess- "am I a leader

trailer, centre and what am I? at each part of this movement and how far is that fraction from this offset position and so much more.

This type of choreography will be perceived as difficult by dancers and therefore requires extra clear and properly timed delivery. Most callers recognize this type calling as more difficult, but few know exactly why. Recognizing that dancers are having to make multiple and nearly simultaneous decisions will help callers realize the importance of proper delivery to help improve dancer success.

There are many other elements of difficulty but those 10 elements are the most common encountered by today's dancers. They are also all elements over which the caller can maintain considerable control. They have also been a major influence in determining the kinds of choreography dancers have been conditioned to accept.

Remember - Difficult choreography remains difficult only as long as dancers think that it is.

As has been demonstrated, even the most complex, multi-decision choreography becomes easy if it is danced often enough. New moves or unfamiliar formations and arrangements are also perceived as difficult when first introduced, but, become "easy," if danced enough. Even multi-component moves appear less complex with repetition. In addition, dance sequences with unusual fractions, unfamiliar concepts, or special modifications are accomplished routinely by dancers who have had an opportunity to dance them frequently.

Slide 9 Achieving success

Now that we understand the basic elements, it is important to consider how to achieve success with difficult choreography

First off, it is important to note that I have not said technically difficult or bizarre or outlandish freaky choreography. All choreography can be difficult from a Dancer perspective if it hits one of those 10 elements. Recognizing and dealing effectively with difficult (hard) choreography is a challenging task for most callers. As noted, the One factor which makes this task troublesome is the problem of determining exactly what "difficult choreography" actually is.

We already know that "Difficulty is subjective" and , different for each dancer, and very hard to define. We already know the basic 10 factors which contribute to difficulty. What we have to recognise now is that during any particular sequence dancers can be placed in one of three general groups based on how they will dance the sequence.

These groups are:

- Those who will make it without any help
- Those who will make it only with help
- Those who will not make it, no matter how much help they get

It is also important to remember that dancers can easily move from one group to another during a dance or even within a single tip. This movement is based on their ability to cope with each of the factors influencing the difficulty of the choreography. It is up to the caller to determine how much (or how little) help is appropriate.

Slide 10 CREATING DIFFICULT CHOREOGRAPHY

Although we have identified the 10 common elements, the four most common by the callers that make square dance choreography difficult is through:

- the use of unfamiliar moves,
- unfamiliar formations/arrangements,
- unusual use of the rules,
- or a combination of these elements.

Some callers do not even recognise that they add difficulty by using any or all these elements and it happens more often than it should. Recognition is important. **It is important that if the caller intends to add difficulty then that caller will be in control of that difficulty.**

Creating difficulty in the choreographic recipe is not a bad thing as long as it is for the dancers to meet, succeed and feel good about. It is like adding ingredients and flavours to a cake. A little goes a long way. Too much spoils the enjoyment, no matter how good the cake may look – you just do not want to eat any more.

In much the same way a lemon is difficult to eat, a little lemon juice can greatly enhance the flavour or a cake making it surprisingly delicious and leave you asking for more. The same applies to Choreography. We already know that adding difficulty to our choreography will add additional stress for the dancers. However, if they are successful, the pleasure of "making it" can be quite exhilarating for them.

Just remember that you do it for purpose and with intentional stress – Less is more as you are in control of all the ingredients for success.

SLIDE 11 – WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The Lemon is not good or bad but has a specific purpose and when used with a purpose that sour taste can enhance pleasure dramatically. The same applies to Choreography. The movement is not good or bad, but there are certain things to be aware of when using any choreography as we have already noted

What that means is the callers focus in all aspects should be on the dancer's enjoyment. By default this means that the purpose behind deliberately using difficult or extended choreography should be to **increase the pleasure of the dancers not the caller.**

The goal of each caller should be to provide smooth flowing, interesting dance material with just the right amount of difficulty. Any caller who is able to consistently provide this perfect, or even near perfect, mix is a true artist. It can be done, but it is not easy.

Success with this programming technique requires a sophistication, understanding, appreciation, and knowledge of the the fundamentals of formation management and flow sequencing but also all the other calling skills and that is only gained through experience.

It should be noted that deliberately adding “difficulty” is a technique. It is a technique that is not for the new or novice caller. Understanding the principles however will benefit all callers regardless of their ability.

The sequences used to implement this programming technique can include complex choreography, unusual or unfamiliar starting formations, unusual or unfamiliar arrangements, surprise get-outs, modifications of the definition of moves, unusual use of the rules, and other factors which will increase the difficulty of the choreography.

Stretching the dancers to the limits of their ability is not hard. **Keeping them from going beyond their ability and on to disaster is what this technique is all about.**

Remember, like the lemon, with choreography LESS IS MORE and finding just how much is needed is a technique gained with experience. - It is not a good idea to leave the dancers at their limit for more than four or five moves at the most before bringing them back to familiar positions.

Depending on the group, it is usually better to leave them at their limits no more than two or three moves. Doing otherwise increases the stress the dancers feel which in turn geometrically increases the chances of failure. The success of this technique lies in the ability to avoid failure.

SLIDE 12 FIVE SIMPLE GUIDELINES TO SUCCESS.

There are 5 simple guidelines for success to achieve this technique.

There is a higher potential for success when the following guidelines are followed:

1. QUICK RESOLUTION

There are two primary advantages to providing a correct resolution immediately following difficult choreography. First, the dancers' stress is released immediately thus heightening the pleasure of 'making it'. Second, and perhaps more important, the chances for success are increased.

The dancer's pleasure is increased because of the sudden and unexpected release of stress immediately following the high level of concentration required to execute the choreography. The chances of success are greater because there is a tendency on the part of some dancers to relax a little when they realize the 'hard part' is over. This can lead to a drop in concentration which can, in turn, lead to

mistakes. Callers need to be aware of this potential for mistakes and adjust delivery of all moves in a way that will retain the attention of the dancers.

2. QUICKLY RETURN TO FAMILIAR FORMATION & ARRANGEMENT

The essence of difficulty is putting the dancers into unusual situations. In most cases this will entail the use of unusual or unfamiliar formations and arrangements. Most experienced dancers have developed a sense of what feels right. Therefore, when they are put in a situation which does not feel right they tend to try to 'fix it', even if it is not broken.

The longer they are in the unusual situation, the stronger their desire to 'make it feel right' will be. This tendency to fix it will increase geometrically if they are also inactive. Their inclination to 'fix it' is even greater if the formation AND the arrangement are both unfamiliar.

The goal of the caller is to overcome this desire to "fix it" and to bring them to a successful conclusion. The best way to increase the chances of success is to quickly re-establish familiar formation and arrangement. Another way to help increase success is to assure the dancers that they are indeed supposed to be in the unusual situation in the form of clues that caution them not to fix it. This assurance can be in the form of 'clues' such as "in your BOY/BOY GIRL/GIRL line", " or BOYS ARE IN THE CENTER," and others.

However: it is important that you do not leave the dancers in the unusual position more than a few moves. This will allow them to experience the stress of the difficult choreography then to experience the relief of getting back to familiar territory.

3. BUILDING FROM THE KNOWN TO THE UNKNOWN

If our goal is to introduce or use a new application of a known move it is best to provide at least some practice from familiar SET-UPS. This will help reenforce the rules and feel of the move.

When expanding applications to the unknown it is best to first use the move from a formation and arrangement which has at least some of the dancers in a familiar starting position. This will allow those dancers in the familiar position to 'help' the others.

The best example for this is with the movement Recycle.

It is a good idea to call it from the 'standard formation and arrangement'. This gets them in the traffic pattern of the move.

A logical next step would be to set up (BBGG) or (GGBB) wave. This SET-UPS provide the Standard feel of the RECYCLE to the end boys and the center girls. A caution that one of them will 'feel comfortable' and the other will not will alert them to the fact that they are getting into the unknown. When they are doing the RECYCLE the dancer in the familiar position can then help the other dancer.

The clue "boys (girls) are on the inside looking out toward the girls (boys)" should also help raise the success. They should also be provided practice from all positions.

The next logical progression would be to set up a GBBG wave where they are all in an unfamiliar position.

When introducing RECYCLE from left hand ocean waves it is best to set up the wave with the girls on the ends. This will allow the ending arrangement of the eight chain thru formation to be 'normal' and end in a #0B.

4. CALLER PROVIDES HELP

Help is divided into two general categories including providing helping words and providing extra time. The helping words alert the dancers to the correct action or to expect something different. Extra time allows them more time to react to unfamiliar situations.

Use Of Helping Words – Helping words can include directions or hints to assist the dancers identify the formation, arrangement, their position, who they are working with, facing directions, how far to turn, and other factors. Helping words can also include part or all of the definition of the moves. These two methods are identified as "clueing" or "cueing."

CLUEING - "Clueing" is providing clues or hints to the dancers. Clues help the dancers find the correct formation, arrangement, facing direction, hands to be used, where dancers should be, Position, and other considerations. Clues normally DO NOT include part of the definition.

Typical clues include:

- "In your left hand wave"
- "Look at your facing diamond"
- "Boys come to the center with a left hand"
- "Girls end facing in"
- "Check your lines, boys center, girls on the ends"

CUEING - "Cueing" is when the caller provides directions which include part or all of the definition of the move.

Typical cues include:

- "DIXIE GRAND, go right, left, right"
- "DO PA SO, partner left, corner by the right..."
- "RIGHT AND LEFT THRU, turn the girl"
- "SCOOT BACK, boys (girls) turn thru"
- "FAN THE TOP, girls turn left 3/4, boys move up"
- "REMAKE THE THAR, turn 1/4, 1/2, 3/4"

Most successful callers provide a combination of both clueing and cueing. Primary concerns of the overuse of cueing are:

- Some dancers may never learn the moves; they simply listen for the cues and depend on the caller to tell them what to do.
- Dancers who do know the moves may interpret the cue as new directions rather than part of the previous move; they may then start an additional move.

Typically callers provide cues to help dancers through unfamiliar moves. This is usually valid only while the dancers are initially learning the move then the dancers should get “weaned off” as they become more familiar with the moves. That way the dancers build their own memory and understanding and familiarity and success becomes theirs as opposed to a dependency on the caller.

Cues are often used when callers use unfamiliar (extended) choreography. Some callers use cueing as a timing tool. A problem with this is that the use of cues may become automatic and thus a caller habit or timing crutch; the caller will say the cue even if it is neither required nor intended.

Timing of delivery of cues is absolutely critical because of most dancers' tendency to listen for direction and then react to those directions. If the timing of the cue is delayed there will be at least some dancers who will misinterpret the cue as new directions.

Because of the problems associated with cueing many callers feel it is better to provide clues rather than cues. Clues help the dancers identify where they are, where they should be, which hand to use, which dancers are together, etc. without including potentially confusing directions.

Use of both cues and clues can help dancers succeed with difficult choreography. It must be remembered that it is easy to provide too much help, especially when it comes to cueing. Neither cueing nor clueing should become so automatic that the dancers develop a Conditioned Anticipation and rely totally on the helping words. Dancers should be encouraged to apply their knowledge of the moves to unfamiliar situations.

5. USE OF EXTRA TIME

The caller can provide additional lead time by delaying the delivery of the moves. This will provide more time for the dancers to react to the moves. The problem with this is however, that this delayed timing can disrupt the normal delivery of the moves and very easily result in a certain amount of stop and go dancing. The extra reaction time will provide time to act on the helping words or to apply what they know to the new situation created by the difficult choreography.

Depending on the complexity of the helping words and the difficulty of the material, the timing can be such that little, if any, compromise of smoothness is required. The goal should be to retain as much smoothness as is practical for the situation and bring the timing back into line so it does not result in stop and go. That way the dancers can also feel the perception of overcoming a hurdle successfully.

The following are examples of how to help the dancers succeed with difficult or unusual choreography: Quickly return to familiar formation:

- From a static square (SS) - "HEADS STAR THRU, AND, PASS THE OCEAN, SIDES WORKING DOWN THE WAVE WITH EACH OTHER, DO A RIGHT AND LEFT THRU" **

Comment - In this example the move RIGHT AND LEFT THRU is very familiar, however, by placing the square in this odd formation a certain amount of stress will be felt by the sides. The objective in this example is to leave them in this unfamiliar formation a very short time and quickly return to a familiar one. Usually no more than two or three moves should be used before getting to a familiar formation. For instance, continuing from the ** in the above example:

- ** "SIDES DO ANOTHER RIGHT AND LEFT THRU, CENTERS SINGLE HINGE, CENTER BOYS RUN (This produces a CB)

Some sequences can provide a quick resolution. Consider the following example: From static square (SS) –

- "HEADS LEAD RIGHT, RIGHT AND LEFT THRU, VEER LEFT, GIRLS CAST RIGHT 3/4, IN YOUR OWN LITTLE GROUP OF 4 – CIRCULATE FORWARD TO THE PERSON IN FRONT OF YOU. – NOW EVERYONE BACK UP TWO STEPS, GO RIGHT & LEFT GRAND"

Comment - After the command to "DIAMOND CIRCULATE" each man's original partner is directly behind him in the diamond. In this sequence the caller is giving extra time with the command to back up. The dancers begin to feel stress on the command "EVERYONE BACK UP TWO STEPS." Most dancers are seldom, if ever, asked to "back up"; this creates confusion as they try to figure out exactly what the caller has in mind. They will, however, usually begin to cautiously back up. As they do so, the stress they feel will grow more intense. When the stress is at the high point, the caller says "GO RIGHT & LEFT GRAND." As they back up they will find their partner and flow quickly and smoothly into the RIGHT & LEFT GRAND.

Consider the following to quickly return to normal arrangement:

- "HEADS PASS THE OCEAN, SWING THRU, EXTEND, SWING THRU, CENTERS RUN, COUPLES CIRCULATE, FERRIS WHEEL **

At this point the centres are in normal couples and the outside couples are half sashayed. If the outside couples are left standing too long (more than 4 - 5 moves), some will tend to resashay to 'fix it'. One way to quickly return to a familiar arrangement is:

- ** "CENTERS RIGHT AND LEFT THRU, ZOOM, NEW CENTERS U-TURN BACK, LEFT ALLEMANDE

This is only one of many possibilities. It does, however, not only quickly return to a familiar arrangement, but also provides an immediate correct resolution.

These are all things that the caller has direct control of.

Slide 13 - Conclusions

CONCLUSIONS

Callers must realize when their choreography is becoming too difficult for the group they are calling for.

This requires a certain amount of experience and a sensitivity to the feelings of the group.

If choreography contains too much 'puzzle solving' without a sufficient amount of success, the quality of the dance experience can suffer. When this happens, everyone loses.

To help increase success, the caller can and should provide as much (or as little) help as is required by the group he/she is calling for at any particular time.

The help the caller provides while calling can be in the form of extra time and/or extra helping words.

Providing either may impact timing and therefore the smoothness of the dance.

Because of the negative impact on timing, the caller needs to make a conscious decision that the programming value of the difficult choreography outweighs the negative consequences of the loss of smoothness

If you are aware of the basic 10 elements that add difficulty and the 5 things that help mitigate those elements you are well on your way. Remember however, it is all about the dancers. If there is difficulty in your choreography it should be because you put it there for the sole reason to **increase the pleasure of the dancers not the caller.**

Slide 14 - Questions