

EVENT PLANNING

CALLERLAB Interest Session in Springfield, Missouri, March 2015
Description: How to plan an event larger than a regular club dance.
This handout compiled by Dottie Welch.

Moderator: Dottie Welch, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

Panelists: Lee and Barbi Ashwill, Salem, Oregon, United States

Walt Burr, near Munich in Bavaria which is the southeastern part of Germany

Events larger than a regular club dance:

Club Special Dance (celebrating a holiday or anniversary or as a fund raiser)

Area Special which draws dancers from several clubs

Regional / State / Provincial Festival

National or International Festival or Convention

Lee and Barbi Ashwill will discuss Planning, Organizing, Selecting Volunteers, Leadership, Promotion, Registration and BMI-ASCAP Fees.

Walt Burr will discuss Sound, Staff Selection, and Non-English Speaking Dancers.

This handout discusses Date, Location, Halls, several aspects of Programming, and Music Copyright Fees.

Date: If the event is not an annual or bi-annual event with an already determined or pre-assigned date, then there are several factors to consider in selecting the date.

- a) What **nearby dance events** are already scheduled and how much will they conflict?
- b) Is there a **holiday** that should be avoided or perhaps used?
- c) Are there **weather** patterns to consider?
- d) Is there another **major event outside** square dancing that will be occurring at the same time? If so, will that enhance or detract from the planned event?

Location: Repeat events often find a satisfactory venue and build up a good relationship with the event coordinator at the venue. Such arrangements are valuable and should be maintained if possible. For events in search of a new venue, here are some factors to consider:

- a) What is the **general area** that should be searched for an appropriate venue?
- b) Where might dancers be coming from and how will they **travel**?
- c) Are there **nearby hotels**? Where and how expensive is the **parking**? Are there city **buses** or other transportation that will be helpful?
- d) What **size and number of rooms** will be needed to stage the planned event?
- e) What is the **flooring** and can it be used as is? If not, can it be covered?
- f) How difficult will it be to provide good **sound** in the halls?
- g) Are there spaces for **worker staging areas**?
- h) What will it **cost** and does that fit into the **budget**?

Halls: Major events with multiple halls must carefully consider how to allocate their available space. Without previous experience in the same location with approximately the same dancers, it is helpful to gather whatever data is available regarding the likely number of dancers in each hall, and do some mathematical calculations regarding the amount of space required. Acquire information about the area of each room in the venue. Also note obstructions such as pillars and potential sound problems between adjacent halls.

- a) If there was a **previous similar event**, how many or what percentage of dancers utilized each hall?
- b) What have the dancers indicated on their **registration forms** regarding their anticipated dance hall attendance?
- c) For dancers who plan to dance in several halls, assume they spend an equal time in each hall and **fractionalize them** when doing the addition.
- d) Take into consideration that a **popular caller** will pull in dancers from programs with larger vocabularies and perhaps overfill the hall. This is particularly important at Basic and Mainstream where some dancers have no other hall where they can dance.
- e) **Each square** requires about 144 square feet (13.4 square meters).
Wheelchair square dancers require about 400 square feet (37 square meters).
- f) **One round dance couple** requires about 36 square feet (3.4 square meters).
- g) Occasionally it will become obvious after an event begins that **switching two rooms** will result in a better utilization of available space. Such a switch is best done at meal time or overnight and requires signage to clearly direct all dancers to the new locations.
- h) In order to aid the planning of future events, an attempt should be made to **gather and pass along statistics** about attendance in various halls on an hourly basis (or at least morning, afternoon, and evening).

PROGRAMMING:

Workshops:

- a) The amount of time for workshops and their type should be part of the **master plan** designed in accordance with the purpose and desires of the organizers.
- b) Here are some commonly used ideas for square dance workshops:
 - i) **Non-standard applications** of a call
 - ii) **Introduction to calls in the next program**
 - iii) **Something different** -- perhaps a traditional figure, or an experimental call
 - iv) Dancing in a **different starting formation** such as Hexagons
- c) Scheduling might have all workshops at the same time or it might **stagger the times** so that dancers can move from hall to hall to avoid them if they wish.
- d) Leaders assigned to do the workshops should have indicated **willingness** and ability on their profile, and should be **told well in advance** of the event.
- e) When an event is planning several square dance workshop sessions of either Non-Standard Applications or Introduction to Next Program, it is helpful if the programmer **assigns calls** rather than leaving it up to the callers and chancing duplication.

Assigning leaders to halls and views on a fair distribution of timeslots:

- a) When possible and realistic, **each leader who requests time in a given program should be given some time in that program.**
- b) Leaders who participate in **multiple programs** generally will be busier than those who participate in one or two programs.
- c) If a leader is only willing or able to be **present for part of the event**, then that leader should not expect an equal allotment of time slots.

Assigning "Prime Time":

- a) Programmers should use some means of **judging ability, experience and popularity** in determining those allocated the calling or cueing slots in the main halls during "high attendance" and "prime time" (usually 2-4 pm and 8-10 pm).
- b) Consider if the leader regularly calls or cues this program, if he/she has previous experience at large events, and try to obtain separate confirmation of ability.
- c) Some sessions might be scheduled to **showcase talent from various regions.**
- d) Ultimately the choice of who calls or cues during "prime time" is in the hands of the programmer. The challenge is to **find a good balance** between providing the best possible experience for the dancers and fairly distributing the timeslots among the leaders.

The Mechanics of Programming:

- a) Obtain a **profile** from each leader that includes the following information:
 - i) Name, partner's name, address, phone, cell phone, e-mail
 - ii) Days and times available to call or cue
 - iii) For squares: programs and types of tips he/she wants to call (singing calls, patter, intro to next, non-standard applications, fast track)
 - iv) For rounds: list of dances cued, phases and rhythms for clinics or teaching a dance
 - v) Willingness to MC or act as an Aide
 - vi) Priorities regarding programs, prime time, workshops, number of timeslots, etc.
 - vii) Other areas of participation that might cause conflicts in scheduling
 - viii) Information about past experience (years calling or cueing, clubs and programs, association memberships, participation in previous major events)
- b) Set a **deadline** for registration of leaders and the receipt of profiles.
- c) **Compile all the profiles** into a list of leaders, when each is available, the halls where they can call or cue, and what types of timeslots each can fill.
- d) Make an **empty program** showing all timeslots and having blank space for inserting names.

- e) When there are **lots of leaders** most of them will have only a few timeslots, so simply begin slotting leaders into appropriate slots in the program. It is usually easiest to deal first with the scarcest resources (such as a hall with only a few leaders) or with those who will have busy schedules. Barry Johnson has written a program that will help keep track of possible conflicts.
- f) When there are a **limited number of leaders** and most will have a busy schedule, it is useful to create a chart showing leaders down the left side and time slots across the top. Set up a code for each hall and type of tip. This allows you to see the schedule of each individual leader and helps ensure reasonable time for transferring from room to room and eating. It also makes it easy to total the time of each leader in each hall and thus judge the fairness of the allocations.
- g) When **transmitting the schedule** to each leader, be sure to include slot length. It is helpful if the beginning and ending dance times of the general schedule are also sent. Some leaders appreciate knowing whether they are first, last or in the middle of a session. Also remember to provide general instructions regarding the duties of leaders and MCs. All of this information should be sent far enough ahead of the event so that it is received well before the leader must depart from home.

Pocket Dance Program:

- a) For any major event involving multiple halls, it is standard practice to provide some kind of dance program that will **fit easily into a pocket**. This might be a sheet or two that can be folded, or it might be a booklet. Often each day is listed separately.
- b) If the venue is complex, a **map** (or maps) should be included showing all halls, their interconnection and the location of rest rooms and refreshment areas.
- c) For complex events like National Conventions, a **Table of Contents** helps minimize page flipping.

Music Copyright Fees:

In the United States and Canada large dance events should obtain a BMI-ASCAP license or a SOCAN license.

ASCAP is the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers. It licenses the public performances of its members' musical works.

BMI is Broadcast Music, Inc. It collects license fees on behalf of its songwriters, composers and music publishers and distributes them as royalties to those members whose works have been performed.

SOCAN is the Society of Composers, Authors and Music Publishers of Canada. It licenses the Canadian public performances of Canadian and international music creators and publishers and distributes royalties to its members and peer organizations around the world. For special events a Tariff 8 license is required and is often paid by the venue and billed to the organizers. The fee ranges from \$41 (less than 100 dancers) to \$175 (over 500 dancers) per room per day for events with dancing.