

Two Couple Functionality

By: Jack O'Leary

Callerlab Convention, Springfield, MO March 30 - April 1, 2015

Dancing two couples can be a fun experience for dancers as well as a valuable tool for callers - especially with teaching new dancers. It also provides variety with established programs.

Two-Couple Mixer (Sicilian Circle)

Here's a two-couple mixer that is easy to teach and dance. You can use any music (traditional or non-traditional) as long as it has a defined 8 count beat:

Formation: Large clockwise / counter clockwise circle around the floor with two-couples facing:

- A. Circle Left (8)
Circle Right (8)
- B. Right & Left Thru, Right & Left back (16)
- C. Ladies Chain over (8)
Ladies Chain back (8)
- D. Couples go forward and back (8)
Forward again and Pass Thru (8)
"New Neighbors"
(Repeat dance sequence around the circle)

Dancers retain partners throughout the dance, and visit other couples around the circle. Depending on the number of couples in the circle, repeat sequence until dancers return to original starting pair.

Teaching MWSD With Two-Couples

How many times have we taught facing couple calls (i.e. Heads Right and Left Thru) from a squared set while the Side couples stand in their position and do nothing. You could argue that the inactive couples are "watching". But watching is not the same as doing. If we set up the floor with two couples facing each other we have everyone dancing and learning the call together. With a few exceptions, calls that start from facing couples can be taught and danced from two-couple sets.

Make it Fun

A little gimmick that usually gets a reaction from experienced dancers (as well as new dancers with a few weeks of lessons) is to ask everyone to form two-couple sets at the head positions. Work several facing couple calls, emphasizing "head" Ladies Chain, or "heads" Square Thru, etc. At some point resolve to original head positions with

Two Couple Functionality

By: Jack O'Leary

Callerlab Convention, Springfield, MO March 30 - April 1, 2015

original partners. Have the "head" Ladies Chain across then, "heads" Star Thru. Now, call "Side" couples Forward and back and watch the dancer's reaction. Call a few movements using "side" couples, then return dancers to original "heads" position for the finish. There are other ways to rotate couples from heads to sides and vice-versa. You can probably come up with several on your own. As with all gimmick type routines, don't overdo them.

Helpful for Sight Calling

Whether you are a proponent of sight calling or not, one of the benefits of two-couple calling is that it allows callers to experiment with dancer positions, get-outs and resolutions.

For example:

From facing two-couples call a Square Thru and see what position the dancers are in. What can you call to have dancers facing back in? How about U-turn Back. Now couples are half sashayed. What can you call to return them to normal couples. Maybe a Star Thru - hmmm, facing out again, but now they have original partners. How will you resolve to facing couples? Yes, Partner Trade will work. Of course, there are a number of other calls you could have used - but that's the exercise. With practice you can become proficient using several different combinations of calls. And you're focused on just two couples. This type of exercise reinforces us to think more about the calls we have at our disposal, and adds variety to the dancer's experience.

Music

Some callers prefer to use more traditional music for circles or other types of two-couple dancing. As stated earlier, any square dance music with a defined beat (usually 8 counts) that dancers can hear (and feel) is appropriate. Select music carefully - we're looking for our dancers to experience that smooth, well timed "wind in the face" type of dancing.