

Entertaining On A Shoe String/Entertaining with Less

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My approach to this concept is based on New Dancer dances, and the introduction to Square Dancing dances that I do. First, I love to do beginner dances! I can see the fear in the new dancers expressions as they look around the dance hall thinking, "what have I got myself into?" I always try to meet them and chat for a moment and reassure them that they will do well. They, the new dancers, do not know that I have already been in contact with their instructor to see where they are at on learning calls. Obviously, I am going to call to the lowest denominator on the list.

The first tip, very basic. Let the new dancers get used to my voice, feel comfortable, win, and know that they really can dance somewhere other than lessons. Second tip, start to ratchet it up a little introducing a call or two that they may have just learned within the last week to see how they do. New dancers have told me many times that dancing at a "real dance" is much different than dancing at class. They say it is actually easier because it is a little faster and they don't have time to think about what they are doing.

I have a lot of tricks up my sleeve, but my wife won't let me use them all at one dance. I hate to admit it, but she is right. Don't use too many gimmicks or special things during one dance. Some of the things I do are Air Raid, Exploding Squares, Progressive Squares, and routines that the new dancers will do perfect, but the experienced dancers will struggle with. For example, the goal posting figure of Heads pass thru, separate around one, come into the middle as a couple. The side pair, if experienced dancers will most likely wind up in a line of 4, not back at home as a couple. Centers pass thru, split the outside two and go around one to the head position. (again, another place where the experienced dancers will make lines of 4 until you call "Heads up and back"). Anyway, work them until they get back to their corner for an Allemande Left. It not only shows the new dancers that they can dance, but it makes the experienced dancers listen to the caller and not just assume what is coming next.

I have had new dancers show up at a dance that have only had 4 lessons. Many times the club will ask me if I could do a tip for the new dancer. Of course my answer is yes! When the new dancer squares up, I do a tip, then explain to all the dancers that we had a new dancer(s) on the floor during that tip. Most of the experienced dancers do not realize that a lot of calls had been left out, and they did not miss them.

At my first callers school we had a female caller from Canada who introduced herself as we went around the room the first day that stated she only called Basic. Everyone in the room was like, only basic? What can you do with just basic. Our instructors knew so they had her come up, got a square of dancers up, and she called basic that would rival any of the best choreography at most any level out there. Message received. It is not how many calls you know, but what you can do with them.

As I stated earlier, you can use gimmicks, specialty items, or unique things at dances. The main thing that all the dancers will remember is smooth body flow, hand usage, music, and were they able to dance and win! To me, that is what keeps the dancers coming back.