

Callerlab 2017
Tuesday - April 11, 2017
9:00 a.m. Breakout Sessions - Shore Up Your Foundation
Bill Harrison and Gary Felton

Condensed Teach Method in a Multi-Cycle Program

The Boomerangs Teaching Council in Virginia has been using the Multi Cycle method of teaching using 3 separate halls. A couple of years ago, this hall was renovated and Boomerangs had to relocate, which ended this method of teaching. The council realized that teaching Basic through Plus in short sessions was really not doing a good job of retaining new dancers. This is when they secured a single hall in a different location and started using the Condensed Teach Method created by CALLERLAB. They agreed to create a club with the dancers that completed the CTM through Mainstream. It was decided to start the first 12 week course using the CTM then change the time of the dance to accommodate those who completed the first 12 week course in order to start a second 12 week course. Lessons started at 7:30 PM to 9:30 PM for the first 12 weeks then changed from 7:30 PM to 9 PM for the second 12 week lessons and 9 PM to 10 PM became dance time for those that had completed the first 12 week session.

When the second 12 week CTM was completed both classes danced together for 5 weeks at the 12 week CTM level. The two classes generated 15 students. After the 5 weeks of dancing was completed, the group had to move to a new location, which caused a loss of 5 new dancers. The next 12 week course started and it was designed to complete the mainstream calls that are not in the CTM. This allowed for the start of a Mainstream Club. When the 12 week course to complete Mainstream ended, the dancers were able to dance and a new 12 week CTM was started. This new CTM brought in 28 new dancers, and we have retained 16 new dancers at the end of the 12 week course. Once again, these dancers will have 4 weeks to dance the CTM before another 12 week CTM is started. We plan a 4 week dance at CTM following this second 12 week CTM session and then 12 weeks to complete Mainstream for the two new CTM sessions. The message is to stop at Mainstream and dance the folks before moving forward to another program.

Condensed Teach Method as a Component of a Zero-to-Plus Class

We teach a class for a plus club. This club has made a lot of changes that we have suggested, but they are adamant that they remain a plus club. An advantage we have is that time is not much of a constraint. No clubs exist less than an hour drive from our club, so there is no pressure to finish at the same time as other groups. The class that just finished is our third using this approach.

We teach the CTM, but it may take 15 weeks instead of 12. This club meets every week and the class runs for one and a half hours, followed by club for an hour. CTM allows us to get the dancers rapidly into the meat of Mainstream, with more weeks of practice time for the intricacies of trades, circulates, and runs. When we are finished with CTM and we need to move on to the remaining Mainstream and Plus, we have mixed the two so that most nights, we teach both mainstream and plus calls in the same night. This makes each night easier on the dancers, compared to teaching the mainstream and then being forced to teach nothing but the more complex plus calls at the end of class.

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Techniques

Teaching **Dixie style**, use *Half of a Half Sashay*, along with *Girls pass thru* then *touch ¼*. in choreography 1, 2, or even 3 nights before introducing Dixie style. Using these combinations will ease the learning process for Dixie Style to a wave.

Teaching **Zoom**, use Two Couple dancing. Have the couple farthest from the caller do a Partner Trade, so that all couples are facing away from the caller. Now teach Zoom. I describe a Chinese Fire Drill to explain the idea of Zoom. The dancers in the Lead are in the front seat of a car, they must move to the back seat while the Trailing dancers are in the back seat of the car and they move into the front seat. Teaching from a two couple set-up makes the dancers able to Zoom from a completed Double Pass Thru. However, when you get the dancers into squares you must warn them from a starting Double Pass Thru that the centers are the Lead dancers and not to pay attention to the other center dancers.

Teaching **Touch ¼**, use and teach *Touch* first and then teach *Single Hinge*. Once they are dancing these well, teach *Touch ¼* and note that it is one continuous motion.

Weak Dancers Together-There will be times when some dancers that have problems with calls will be on the same side of the square with other dancers having the same problems. No one can plan for this ahead of time, the use of sight calling or a mix of dancers is essential. With sight, you can move these dancers around in order to dance with a couple of dancers in the square that are not having problems and usually this will help in their learning. If you know this ahead of times you could swap couples out from one square to the other. If you recognize it ahead of time, have a specific couple (e.g. couple number 3) promenade to another square.

Turn thru – In the two or three classes before teaching turn thru, I dance a men star left sequence or two; a sequence with shoot the star; a sequence with HEADS half sashay, pass thru, separate around one to a line, a sequence with trade by; and a sequence with swing thru, turn partner by the right. I do these so the dancers are comfortable with these movements and they don't have to contend with a new call being combined with unfamiliar sequences of calls. So two to three weeks before teaching the call, I am preparing the dancers for the call.

I teach turn thru late in MS. I already have taught waves and swing thru and trade by. I demonstrate with three other people. I'll have a girl in front of me and a man directly in back of me and a man in back of the girl. These two men are just there for reference points.

I tell them that a turn thru is a right arm turn and the girl and I turn by the right. I stop with her arm still in mine and tell the dancers that the turn thru is not finished until you let go and step ahead, which I do as I'm talking. I then show them that I'm nose to nose with someone that was behind me and I'm back to back with the person I did a turn through with.

Dancing/practice: I start with applications that do not require exact positioning: men star left, meet partner, turn thru, left allemande; allemande thar, shoot the star, turn thru, left allemande. I up the position and understanding level with heads lead right, circle $\frac{3}{4}$, pass the ocean, ladies trade, swing thru, turn thru, left allemande. Finally, I again emphasize that turn thru requires letting go and ending back-to-back with right hand lady line in sequence: pass the ocean, ladies trade, swing thru, turn thru, trade by, allemande left.

Partner trade – teach centers of wave or two-faced line trade, teach ends & centers trade, and teach ends of wave or two-faced line trade in a week prior to partner trade. Teach ends of a line facing out that are same sex trade. Dancers seem to comprehend the trade from a long way off easier than partner trade. Set up same sex couples and have boys trade and girl's trade.

For some reason, when the dancers hear partner, they don't quite understand that they have already done the basic call with same sex together. I am frequently asked "Which way do I turn?"

I demonstrate the direction to turn with a girl and tell the dancers that if you use the hand between you and your partner, it will lead you in the right direction. Think of throwing your joined hands behind you. You have to turn the correct direction (toward your partner) to follow the hand you just tossed behind you.

Even though they have used the right shoulder rule minutes ago to do an ends trade from a line facing out, someone will ask who goes in front of who. Be prepared to explain the right shoulder passing again.

Using two couple dancing, I have everyone face the back wall and do a partner trade...you're now facing the front wall. I do several partner trades this way before returning to squares to dance. If the group is moving well and understands calls fairly easily, I use the back wall idea and have them do partner trade, u-turn back, partner trade, u-turn back, etc. so that they drill it from beaux and belle positions. (I don't use the words *beaux and belle*.)

During the dance/practice portion I directionally call trade by and pass to the center. I call partner trade from lines facing out and two faced lines.

Pass the ocean – the rule is simple: pass thru, face your partner, step to a wave. There are some things that make it more difficult. If you haven't impressed on your group that your partner is a very temporary thing; the person next to you, then *face your partner* can have some interesting results. If you don't use the words *step to a wave* enough, then your dancers will hesitate.

I tell the dancers that they are moving straight ahead when you step to a wave. I tell them that it is not all that important today, but in the future, it can be important. When we get to *roll*, I tell them that now *step to a wave straight ahead* is important (Usually, the week after the initial *roll* teach).

Finally, I do tell them that the dancers will hook the left hand as you go by (in the belle position). I tell them it is not part of the call, but you're about to see and dance it that way. I'm not going to try to fight the dancers on this one.