

# Callerlab 2012 – Asymmetric Choreography

## What is asymmetric choreography?

- Normal choreography is symmetric in many ways.
  - o Arrangement symmetry – Diagonal opposite is same sex so each half of square has two men and two women.
  - o Formation symmetry – Diagonal opposite dancers are always same distance from center point of the square and face opposite walls so two lines/waves are parallel or end to end.
  - o Sequence symmetry – two head men always have a side man between them. Two head ladies always have a side lady between them. Each half of the square always has two head dancers and two side dancers.
- Asymmetric choreography violates at least one of these symmetries. For example, we could see
  - o All the men in one line, all women in another or 3 men and 1 lady in a line
  - o Two waves at right angles to each other or half the square in a wave and half in a two-faced line or one right handed wave and one left handed wave.
  - o Two head couples in the same half of the square.

## Value and Limitations of asymmetric choreography

- Provides variety in our programming. Gives dancers a look at setups they have not seen before. Makes the dancing more interesting.
- Historically the use by callers was limited to pre-designed figures, but this session is about extemporaneous calling of asymmetric choreography.
- The techniques presented here are also useful for developing asymmetric figures that flow as naturally as normally calling.

## Where is asymmetric choreography best used? (Applicability)

- Most asymmetric choreography is inherently DBD dancing which drives the usability.
- Some limited use at mainstream. A little more at Plus. More extensive use at Plus DBD and above.
- Asymmetric choreography should be considered as seasoning: a little adds great flavor but over use leaves a bad taste.

## Session Objectives

- Extemporaneously call material incorporating asymmetric choreography with minimal additional effort by the caller.
- Treat asymmetric choreography as an extension of regular calling including good timing and smooth flow rather than being considered a “gimmick” with stop-and-go action.

## Source Material

The material for this session all comes from a paper by Hal Barnes which can be downloaded from his web site: [http://halbarnes.com/?page\\_id=34](http://halbarnes.com/?page_id=34) Download the paper Asymmetric Mechanics 2.

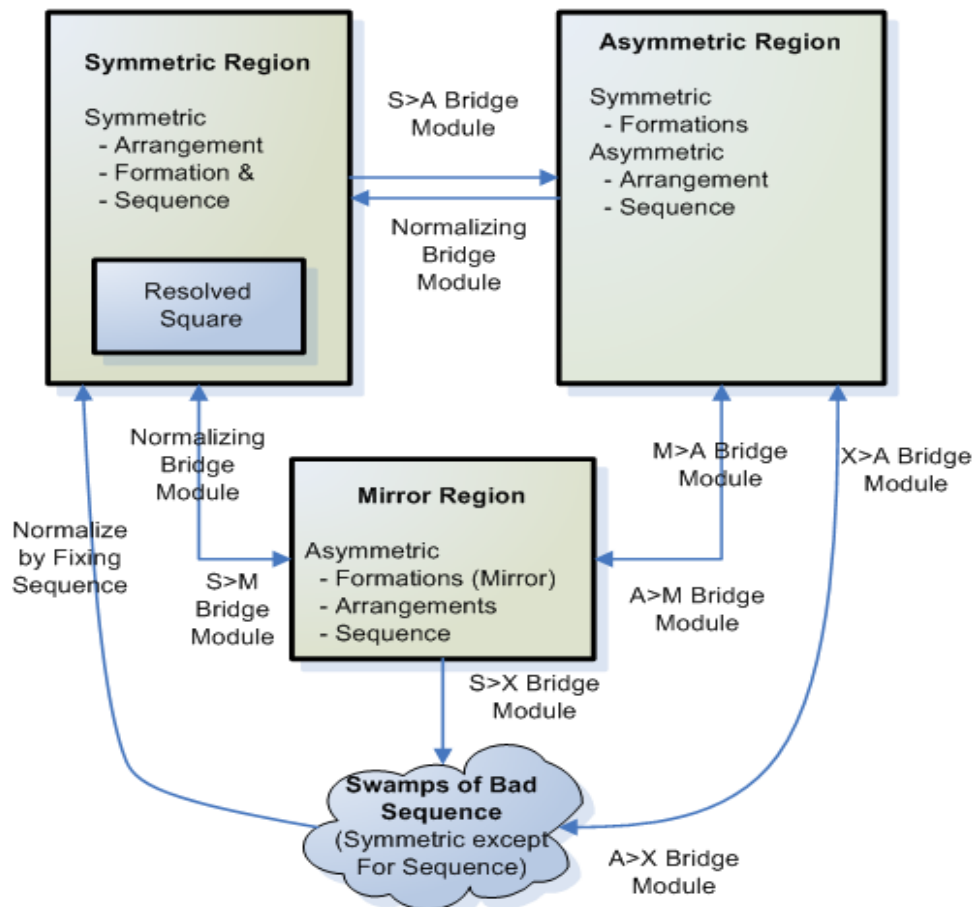
## The General Strategy of Extemporaneous Asymmetric Calling

The square can be viewed as being in one of the regions shown in the diagram below based on the symmetric characteristics of the square.

- Normal dancing takes place in the symmetric region.
- Asymmetric region focuses on arrangement asymmetry although we may have sequence and formation asymmetry as a by-product. The test of being in the asymmetric region is that the diagonally opposite dancers are different genders.
- The mirror region is a very specific type of formation asymmetry: half of the square is right handed and the other half is left handed. (i.e. one right handed wave and one left handed wave)
- The Swamps of Bad Sequence is where the arrangement and formations are symmetric but the sequence is asymmetric (ordered 1-3-2-4). This region should be avoided because it looks normal to the dancers, but cannot be resolved by the caller using normal methods.

*The strategy is to move to the asymmetric or mirror region for formation management, then return to the symmetric region for resolution.* This minimizes the need for sight calling outside the symmetric region. Bridge modules move out of the symmetric region and normalizing modules return.

### Choreography Regions Summary

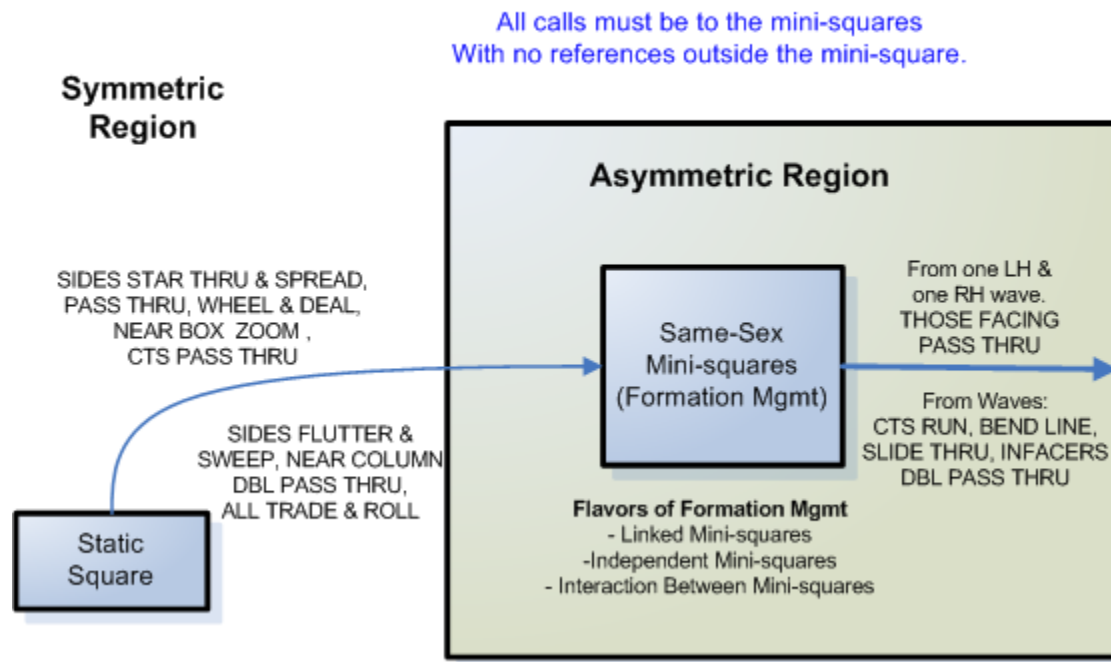


## Same Sex Mini-Squares

The diagram below shows how to get in and out of same sex mini-squares. No sight calling is required while in the asymmetric region. Note the constraints:

- The caller must assume that each mini-square is stand-alone without reference to the square.
- No point outside the mini-square may be referenced (i.e. "Those facing the caller do X.")

## Neighborhood Map – Same Sex Mini-Squares



Linked mini-squares – give the same calls to both mini-squares.

Independent min-squares – at least some of the calls are directed to just the men or women. This can lead to formation asymmetry which is no problem.

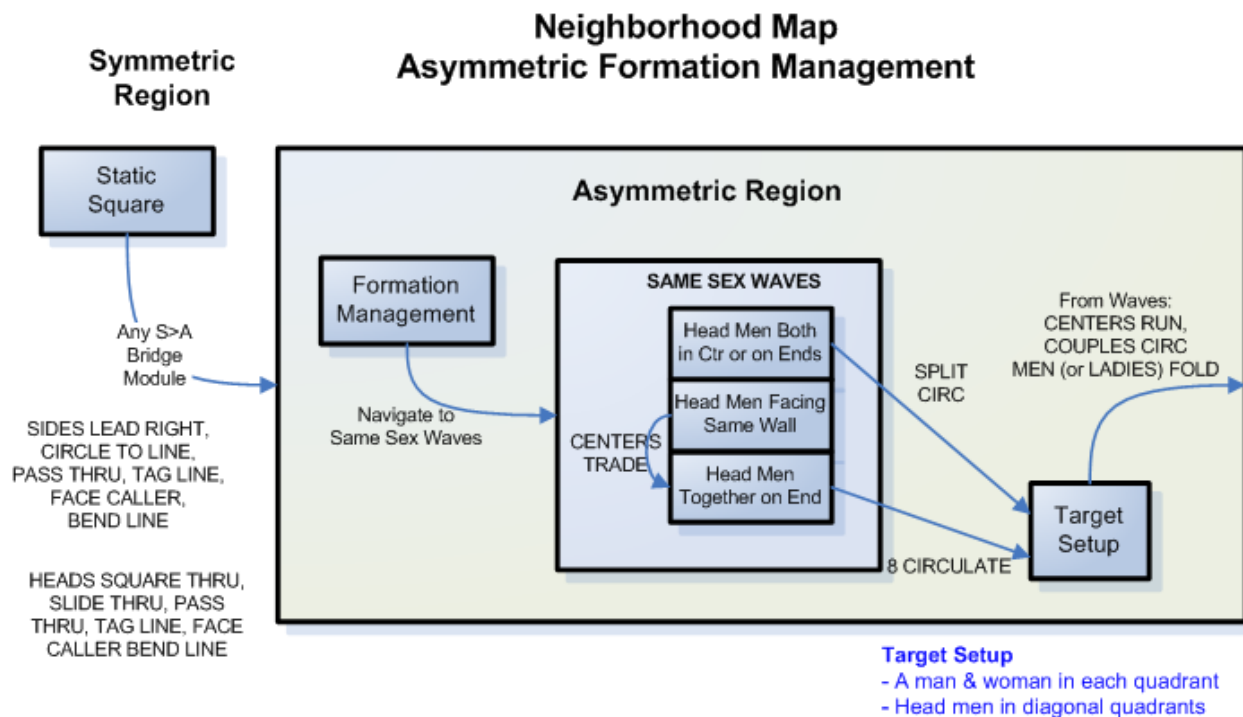
Interaction between mini-squares – interaction between mini-squares is allowed provided it results in a return to same-sex mini-squares without violating the spirit of the constraints. For example, from same-sex parallel waves call SCOOT BACK.

## Head/Side Mini-Squares

The exact same strategy that works for men/women mini-squares can work for head/side mini-squares. This is the one application of asymmetric choreography which is suitable at the mainstream level.

## General Asymmetric Choreography

This section removes the constraints of same-sex mini-squares and allows normal, full square calling in the asymmetric region. However, the price for the increased flexibility is having to sight call in the asymmetric region by remembering the head men in order to normalize the square. The diagram below shows how to get in and out.



### General Asymmetric Region Procedure

1. Move to the Asymmetric Region using one of the bridge modules shown on the map. Call extemporaneous symmetric choreography as desired. This is just regular formation management like we call in the Symmetric Region with some minor constraints which are described below.
2. When we are ready to normalize the square, move the square to a special setup, called the *Target Setup*, which has the following properties: each quadrant has one man and one woman and the head men are in diagonally opposite quadrants. We can get to the target setup easily using the following method.

#### *Target Setup Method*

Move the square to same-sex parallel waves. Then check on the relationship between the head men in that wave.

- If the head men are facing the same wall, call CENTERS TRADE and continue to the next option.
- If the head men are together on one end of the wave, call ALL 8 CIRCULATE.

- Otherwise call SPLIT CIRCULATE. (The head men must both be in the center or both on the ends.)

The square is now in the target setup with one man and one woman in each quadrant, the head men are in diagonally opposite quadrants. This step prepares for normalization by fixing the sequence to symmetric and stages the fix for the arrangement which follows.

3. From the Target Setup lock the arrangement to symmetric with the following calls: CENTERS RUN, COUPLES CIRCULATE, MEN (OR LADIES) FOLD. The square is back in the Symmetric Region. You may prefer a STAR THRU here to work from lines.
4. Resolve the square in the regular way using sight calling.

### Formation Management Constraints

During formation management, we must honor the following constraints:

- Don't refer to any point outside the square. For example, "near couples do X." This call references the dancers nearest the caller who is outside the square.
- Don't direct any call to men or ladies. However, we can direct calls to ends, centers, in-facers and out-facers which covers those situations where we normally use men or ladies.
- Don't use calls which have gender built into the definition such as: *star thru*, *slide thru*, *ladies chain*.

### The Asymmetric Partner

The bridge module which we use to enter the asymmetric region determines the partner pairings in the target setup. Formation management has no effect on this pairing provided the constraints are followed. For example, the first bridge module in the diagram above results in partner pairing. The second bridge module results in corner pairing. This great property allows for easy resolution after normalization or concurrent with normalization. See the reference paper for a more complete discussion of this topic.

### Integrating Same-Sex Mini-Squares with General Asymmetric Methods

The obvious connection between the first section on same-sex mini-square normalization and the general asymmetric method is the point where we establish same-sex waves in the general method. One option at this point is to normalize using the method from same-sex mini-squares, *but that method works only if the head men are both on the ends or both in the center of the waves*.

### **Mirror Region Choreography – A Demonstration**

This session lacks the time to do anything more than an introduction to the mirror formation concept and a demonstration. Details can be found in the reference paper in chapter 4.

Mirror formations have half the square right handed and half left handed. Many formations are "handed" such as waves, two-faced lines, columns, inverted lines, and diamonds. However, as soon as the square is not in a "handed" formation, it has automatically dropped out of the mirror region. It may land in any region shown on the diagram on page 2 so care must be taken to land in the symmetric region where we can easily resolve. Calling extemporaneously to mirror formations is challenging because we are not used to maintaining handed formations as a constraint.

The choreography of this region becomes particularly interesting when we begin moving dancers across the center to the other half of the square. Half sashays work well for this movement.