

Simple Asymmetric Choreography

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CALLERLAB 2011

I feel that the value in asymmetric choreography is its ability to create formations and positions which are impossible using normal choreography. Of course, you don't have to develop bizarre formations, but if you don't, what is the point? You can create an asymmetric situation as simply as having couples #1 and #2 exchange places with a Right And Left Thru. In that case, very few dancers would notice that the square was not symmetric, and normal symmetric choreography would work perfectly well as long as you did not explicitly reference heads or sides. So the dancers would not experience anything different, and you would still be faced with resolving an asymmetric situation.

Of course, bizarre formations equate to high levels of difficulty, which pretty much restricts the use of asymmetric choreography to Challenge floors - or so I used to think.

A few years ago at the BPDLS Cal Campbell demonstrated a simple little routine that changed my mind:

- #3 Couple Rollaway, the other three couples Promenade Half, #1 Couple stand behind #3 Couple.
- The box of Heads, move into the middle.
- Heads turn your back on your partner and face the outsides.
- AL

A number of things intrigued me about this little sequence.

1. Dancers needed to know very few calls to do it - in fact, it's mostly English language directions.
2. It was very simple, yet part way through it had an eccentric formation impossible to create with symmetric choreography.
3. Dancers with any experience would immediately recognize it was "strange".

So, how does it work? First, it puts the heads together in an asymmetric box "off by themselves". But the box is not horribly asymmetric - the asymmetry lies completely in the fact that all the heads are facing in the same direction. Then it moves this mildly asymmetric box in between the sides, which creates a 2x4 that would be symmetric except that all the centers are facing the same wall. Then, a single command (turn your back on your partner) fixes that mild asymmetry.

I adopted this model as a sort of asymmetric "chicken-plucker", and found that you could get a lot of mileage out of it. All of the sequences below use these principles or extensions of them. Lots of routines in Cal's Dancing For Busy People book have asymmetric elements in them. I recommend mining these and other traditional dance routines for asymmetric inspiration.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>#3 Couple Don't Move, Others Promenade Half, #1 Stand Behind #3</i> • <i>Heads Walk Between The Sides, First Couple Go Left, Next Go Right Around 1 to a Line</i> (Now have symmetric facing lines) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>#1 Couple Split #3 Couple, Go Around 1 Make a Line of Heads.</i> • <i>Line of Heads Move In Between the Sides.</i> • <i>Line of Heads Bend the Line (or Cast Off $\frac{3}{4}$)</i> (Now have symmetric zero tag)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>#1 Couple Don't Move, Others Promenade 1/2, #3 Stand Behind #1</i> • <i>#1 Couple Calif Twirl, while Sides RLT</i> • <i>Each Box Swing Thru, Boys Run</i> • <i>Original Sides (or those facing side walls) Promenade Half in the direction you're facing, and Face the End of the Line of Heads (t-bone to them)</i> • <i>Heads Chain Down the Line</i> • <i>Centers Square Thru 3, AL</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>#1 Couple Prom Half, #3 Couple Step into the Middle, Turn Your Back on Your Partner and Face the Sides.</i> • <i>#3 Split the Sides You're Facing and Go Around Same Sex to Make Facing Lines of 3.</i> • <i>Facing Lines of 3 Star Thru (now Symmetric)</i> • <i>Centers Pass Thru, AL</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>#1 Couple Prom Half, #3 Couple Step into the Middle, Turn Your Back on Your Partner and Face the Sides.</i> • <i>#3 Split the Sides You're Facing and Go Around Same Sex to Make Facing Lines of 3.</i> • <i>#1 Couple Step into the Middle, Turn Your Back on Your Partner and Face the Centers of the Lines of 3.</i> • <i>Outside 4 are working far apart, everyone Pass Thru with the one you face.</i> • <i>New Very Centers Star Thru, Others UTB</i> • <i>Very Centers Walk Forward in between the Lines of 3, Separate Around 3, Hook on Make Facing Lines.</i> • <i>Star Thru, Outsides Trade, Pass Thru, Trade By, AL</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>#1 Couple Walk Across the set and Split #3 Couple, Separate Around 1 to Make a Line of Heads.</i> • <i>Heads Walk Forward Into the Middle (between the Sides) and Face Right.</i> • <i>Heads Split #4 Couple, First Left Around 1, Next Right Around 1, Next Right Around 2, Next Left Around 2.</i> • <i>Line of 6 and Line of 2, Lines Up To the Middle and Outside Pairs Don't Come Back,</i> • <i>Center Box Slide Thru & Square Thru 3, Outsides Bend the Line, AL (at Home)</i>