

CALLERLAB 2011

Different not difficult

By Robert Hurst

What does this mean

To me this is the difference between calling a left handed, half sashay Spin Chain Thru, or a Scoot Back from an unusual position, and calling it to dancers who have never seen it before..

I once read an article by Ed Foote, who said he always called a Heads Wheel Thru at the start of an Advanced dance. When dancers dance Wheel Thru, they normally give a single clap. Ed went on to state that if he heard a single clap he knew he had a good floor. If he heard a series of claps, then it was a weaker floor.

Thought:

You can start simple and build up!

When calling something different you need to ensure that it does work and it is legal. Otherwise you might get a dancer or caller tell you the contrary.

Example:

Heads Pass the Ocean,
Scoot Back

This is different. It is legal, I checked the definition. It is not really difficult, but many dancers may not have seen it before, and so to them it is difficult. It is also a boy doing the arm turn with a girl.

Would I call it cold? No! But I would build up to it.

Example:

Heads Pass the Ocean,
Swing Thru,
Scoot Back

This is more familiar as it is boy working with boy and girl working with girl.

Would I call it, maybe!

Example:

Heads Pass the Ocean,
Swing Thru,
Boy working with boy and girl working with girl, everybody

Everyone Scoot Back, Go

This tells the dancers what to expect, i.e. boy working with boy and girl working with girl. There is a clue "Everyone", i.e. everyone will work, not just those in the ocean wave. The command "Go" tells everyone to move together.

Would I call this? Yes

How do I know it is difficult?

The first step is to know who you are calling to!

1. Is it you club who know everything you do
2. Is it a one off guest tip at an unknown club
3. Do you know the dancers
4. Have you been told how good / bad the dancers are
5. What is the age of the dancers
6. Are the dancers there for tough choreography or a fun night

Bill Peters once suggested the following, and believe me it does work and help.

Imagine 10 squares on the floor. Start calling a sequence to the ten squares, and then ask yourself how many squares are still dancing. If you do not believe it is the full 10 squares, then someone will have found the sequence difficult, or impossible.

The dancers dance what they expect to hear

This is very true, believe me!

Many dancers who are taught "modules" will come to expect certain flowing sequences

Example:

Heads Square Thru Four
Do Sa Do
Swing Thru,
Spin the Top

And what comes next? Right & Left Thru

As a caller you have to use judgement on asking the dancers to dance what they are not expecting!

Example:

Four Ladies Chain
Roll a Half Sashay
Sides Face Grand Square

And what did the dancers expect? Circle Left and Roll away with a half sashay – of course

But we can help

Better Example:

Four Ladies Chain
Roll a Half Sashay
“Keep this girl, square your set with this girl on the left. Ready?”
Sides Face Grand Square

The extra words, and extra commands help the dancers know if they are doing what the caller expects and requires of them.

Here is a sequence which came to me one night driving to my Plus club.

See if you can work out what I wanted to achieve

Example:

Heads lead Right,
Circle to a line
Pass Thru
(Explain definition of Chase Right which everyone does automatically)
Chase Right
Girls Run
(Explain definition of Chase Right which everyone does automatically)
Chase Right (Chase the Boys)

Now for the tuff bit

Example Girls working:

Heads lead Right,
Circle to a line
Pass Thru
Boys stand still and DO NOTHING
Girls working to the next Girls spots
Girls Chase Right

Tough for the girls, but you are helping them.
Very tough for the girls

Example Boys working:

Heads lead Right,
Circle to a line
Pass Thru
Girls stand still and DO NOTHING

Boys working to the next Boys spots
Boys Chase Right

This is a change of roles with the Boys working and the girls standing still.

Now I would tell the dancers that the next sequence is hard, but YOU can do it. Take your time, understand where YOU are going.

Example Everyone working:

Heads lead Right,
Circle to a line
Pass Thru
Boys working to the next Boys spots
Girls working to the next Girls spots
Everyone Chase Right

Conclusion:

If a dancer hasn't seen it before it is hard.
Standing still is an unknown or impossible concept for a dancer
The caller can give hints and help the dancer success.

Recognition:

Bill Peters