Calling the Basic Programs

The first thing that a caller here in the US needs, to be able to call using the Basic Programs, is probably a change of attitude. In my opinion many callers and dancers here in the US have used the program designations as status symbols - "I'm a <u>Plus</u> caller!" It is harder to call a good dance using fewer calls, but we have not given the same status to being a Basic caller as we give to Plus, Advanced and Challenge callers. Since it is hard work to call a good dance at Basic and there is less prestige attached to calling Basic, the program has been a neglected step-child of Mainstream. Luckily you are attending this panel and showing interest in the Basic Programs.

I have decided to challenge myself for this presentation and use the Basic Program - Part 1 for my focus. This is a challenge to me because I normally call using both Basic 1 & 2. For those callers used to calling Mainstream and Plus, there will be even more of a challenge. The problem is that there are calls that we are used to having in our vocabulary that are not found in Basic 1 & 2. The solution is to focus on how to move dancers with what calls we have, instead of mourning the calls we do not have. The process takes work and research.

First let's focus on how much of what we normally use is available. In the list of transition modules below, let's see how many are available at Basic - Part 1.

> **Star Thru, Pass Thru, Bend the Line, Star Thru - Yes**
> **Star Thru, Right & Left Thru, Pass Thru, Bend the Line, Star Thru, Right & Left Thru -Yes**
> Touch 1/4, Centers Circulate, Ends Circulate, Boys Run, Square Thru 2, Trade By - No
> **Split the Outsides, Separate Around 1 to a Line, Star Thru, California Twirl - Yes**
> Split the Outsides, Separate Around 1 to a Line, Box the Gnat, Slide Thru - No
> **Split the Outsides, Separate Around 1 to a Line, Pass Thru, U-Turn Back, Star Thru - Yes**

Therefore, we see that out of 5 original modules, we can use 3 immediately and 1 more with 2 minor changes. We use the Basic Program all the time when we call.

Around 2009 the calls Circulate Family and VeerLeft/Veer Right were moved from the second part of Basic to the First to help callers call Basic 1 dances which could feel like Mainstream. This allows callers to use patterns such as "Heads Lead Right, Veer Left, Couples Circulate". After this combination, the caller at Basic 1 needs to look at the program list to see what to add, instead of what they are used to calling. For example, we could call "Chain Down the Line" instead of "Girls Trade, Bend the Line". This gets the caller started with familiar ideas.

Next we can look at which calls are available that are less used. I am basing these on what callers in my area of the US commonly use. I find that callers often neglect to use Arm Turns, Bactrack, Half Sashay, Split Two, Separate Around 1 or 2 & Come Into the Middle, Separate Around 2 to a Line, Left Square Thru, and Dive Thru. Once a caller has looked at these calls, he or she needs to start to work them into their calling. Pick a call, push checkers through a pattern and see what you have created. For example, from a Static Square, Heads Square Thru 3, Separate Around 2 to a Line creates a 1/2 sashayed line of 4. Pass Thru and U-Turn Back will give you a "normal" line of 4. Once you have pushed the checkers, you will see that you can resolve by calling Star Thru, Dive Thru, Centers Pass Thru, Right & Left Thru, Left Allemande. That combination will feel like dancing to the dancers as long as you are comfortable and deliver the calls with good timing.

Now I want to talk about how to use calls that seem to be blocked by the fact that calls we normally use to get into the needed formation are not on the list we are using. Focus on Single File Circulate. The Circulate Family was moved to Basic - Part 1, but how can we get into a Column without Touch 1/4? After some thought, My solution was to call from standard facing lines, "Star Thru, Pass Thru, Girls U-Turn Back," to create a right-handed column. In this column, the boys are in the lead. This combination may be somewhat cumbersome but it allows me to create a column and use "Single File Circulate. We can create a wave from lines by having either Boys or Girls U-Turn Back and then call "Split Circulate".

In my opinion, callers need to be able to call at Basic in order to give good <u>dancing</u> practice to people in lessons and at student dances. Too often, the callers at a student dance either use calls that are not on the Basic list or they are not able to move the dancers easily. We also need to have figures for singing calls that feel good and are comfortable. All of this choreography takes work to create, but the more a caller works with a limited vocabulary, the more comfortable they will become calling at the Basic Program.

Betsy Gotta
02/13