

# Non-Traditional Choreography from Traditional Setups

Electronic Tips for Callers

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I believe that the choreography used in Square Dance today is partly traditional in most geographical areas. We all probably feel it is proper to use it. This “heritage” usually consists of combinations danced in the circle of eight dancers or in derived formations and it is used mainly as a tool for giving the dancers a break between streams of rectangular choreography (which often requires strong formation awareness) today, as the circle-like choreography is usually quite simple and feels quite different because all dancers often work together in one formation and both head and side couples do the same actions.

I think we can offer something new to our dancers if we try to fill the gap between these two approaches with our choreography. One of possible ways to go is to use variations of choreography in traditional formations of eight dancers (where two groups of four dancers work in two identical formations that are crossed in the middle) with non-standard arrangement (other than normal couples). Even with simple calls and combinations, the unusual arrangement gives the dancers a totally new feel.

Let us focus on choreography in the most popular formations derived from traditional dancing: Circle (of 8 dancers), Alamo Ring, and Allemande Thar together with Wrong Way Thar; we can include Stars and the (Wrong Way) Star Promenade formation as well. I am convinced that even with symmetrical choreography, much variety can be offered to the dancers in these formations.

Most of the modules are used just as a simple illustration—there are numerous ways to create the formation and arrangement you wish to achieve. I kept the combinations strictly Mainstream (although some of them are extended applications) on purpose—I want to show that this program can be made interesting even for experienced dancers. I also included several examples of rather extended applications in order to demonstrate that we can go wild in formations everyone feels so familiar with.

## Circle of 8 dancers

There are two possible arrangements (BGBGBGBG and BBGGBBGG) which can occur in circles of 8 dancers. When using this formation with the less common arrangement, it is wise to keep the men as well as ladies in sequence—if something unexpected happens, it is easy to resolve.

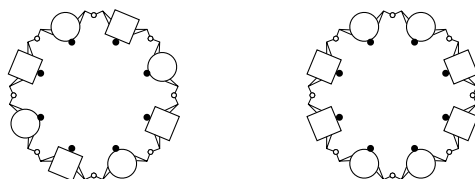


Figure 1: Two possible setups of the circle of 8 dancers

Several examples of getting in:

- Static Square: *Four Ladies Chain—Only Heads/Sides Half Sashay—All Circle Left*
- Static Square: *Heads/Sides Pass Thru—Separate Around One to a Line—Pass Thru—Bend the Line (Once and Half)—Circle Left* (generally, any Facing Lines with the BGGB, GBBG, BBGG or GGBB arrangement can be used in a similar way)
- Parallel Two-Faced Lines (BBGG, GGBB, BGGB or GBBG): *Ferris Wheel—Centers Sweep 1/4—All Circle Left/Right*

Several examples of getting out:

- *Boys/Girls Forward And Back—Dosado (Across the Center)—Circle Left 3/4/Square Thru/Pass the Ocean/...*
- *Those Who Can California Twirl—All Trade By 1 1/2*
- *Swing the Nearest One—Promenade Home*
- *Those Who Can Right And Left Thru—Others...*
- *Girls/Boys in Your Couple Face Each Other—All Dosado the Same Sex—Check Your Facing Lines*

Transition into an Allemande Thar/Wrong Way Thar:

- *Face the Same Sex—Right/Left Arm Turn to a Wrong Way Thar/Allemande Thar*
- *Same Sex Rollaway 1 1/2—Left Touch One Quarter to an Allemande Thar*
- *In Your Same-Sex Couples (Reverse) Wheel Around 1 1/2—Ends Run*

Transition into the Alamo Ring:

- *Face the Same Sex—(Left) Touch One Quarter—Check Your Alamo Ring*
- *Boys/Girls Pass the Ocean and Single Hinge—The Others Pass the Ocean and Single Hinge—Check Your Alamo Ring*
- *In Your Same-Sex Couples, Those on the Left/Right Run to the Right/Left—Check Your Alamo Ring*

## Alamo Ring

There are two possible arrangements (BGBGBGBG and BBGGBBGG) of an Alamo Ring. It does not make much sense to talk about handedness, even though in case of the BBGGBBGG arrangement, the dancers of the same sex can be holding either left, or right hands. In case of the BBGGBBGG arrangement, we can change the sequence of both men and ladies at the same time by using *(Left) Swing Thru*; if we wanted to change the sequence of either men, or ladies, we can call *Trade* for them (as they should work within their Mini-Wave, it might be helpful to say which hand to use).

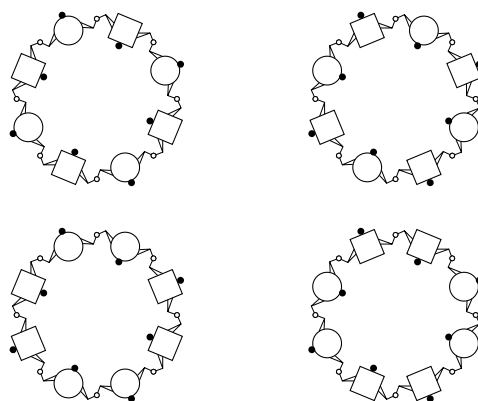


Figure 2: Four possible setups of the Alamo Ring

Alamo Ring offers the possibility of using calls like *Circulate*, *Scout Back* or *Walk And Dodge*. You can distinguish either between Heads and Sides, or between men and ladies. You can also consider the Alamo Ring to be consisting of two bent Ocean Waves that are connected on their ends, and call *Boys Run—Chain Down the Line* (if same-sex dancers are holding left hands) or *Girls Run—Chain Down the Line* (if they are holding right hands). This call should result in Normal Facing Lines. Technically, it would be more descriptive to call *Chain Down the Alamo* but many dancers do not understand what to do when they hear it.

Several examples of getting in:

- Parallel BGGB or GBBG Ocean Waves: *Ends Zoom 1 1/2 and Single Hinge—All Connect to an Alamo Ring*
- BGGB, GBBG, BGBG or GBGB Facing Lines: *Centers Pass the Ocean and Single Hinge—The Others Touch One Quarter—All Connect to an Alamo Ring*

Several examples of getting out:

- *Boys/Girls Single Hinge—Very Centers Connect*
- *Boys Walk And Dodge—Girls Walk And Dodge—Boys/Girls Cloverleaf/Separate . . .*

Transition into a Circle:

- *Out-Facing Dancers Run Around the Same Sex*
- *Boys Walk And Dodge—Girls Walk And Dodge—All U Turn Back*

Transition into an Allemande Thar/Wrong Way Thar:

- *Same-Sex/Left-Hand/Right-Hand Cast Off 3/4*
- *Boys Zoom 1 1/2 in the Middle—Girls Zoom 1 1/2*

### **Allemande Thar and Wrong Way Thar**

There are four possible arrangements of each of these formation: BGGB-BGGB, GBBG-GBBG, BBBB-GGGG and BGGB-GBBG. They can be logically grouped into four pairs based on transitions using *Shoot the Star—Go Forward N to an Allemande Thar/Wrong Way Thar*. If we want to establish a setup belonging to a different pair, we can use *Shoot the Star Full Around—Go Forward N to an Allemande Thar/Wrong Way Thar*, or one of the Ocean Waves has to perform a different action than the other one. If both Ocean Waves do the same calls, the sequence does not change at all (in case of the standard BGGB-BGGB and GBBG-GBBG arrangement), or it changes for both men and ladies (in case of the less usual BBBB-GGGG and BGGB-GBBG arrangement).

In Allemande Thar and Wrong Way Thar, we can work with *(Left) Swing Thru, Spin the Top, Run, Cross Run* and similar calls. If you are brave, you can also try *Circulate*, as there are several tracks available: outside, inside, and Diamond-like. The best way is probably to address the dancers as Boys and Girls here, because everything else (Heads and Sides) is rather confusing. By the way, *Circulate 1 1/2* works fine, too.

Another speciality should be probably considered a gimmick and used very carefully and ponderously (if used at all): if you accept the idea that from a certain point of view, Allemande Thar (as well as Wrong Way Thar) is equivalent to standard Columns that were rolled up to a circle to make their end Mini-Waves meet, you might try *Scoot Back* from there; in such case, everyone is considered to be facing in so all dancers do the turning part and all use the same hand.

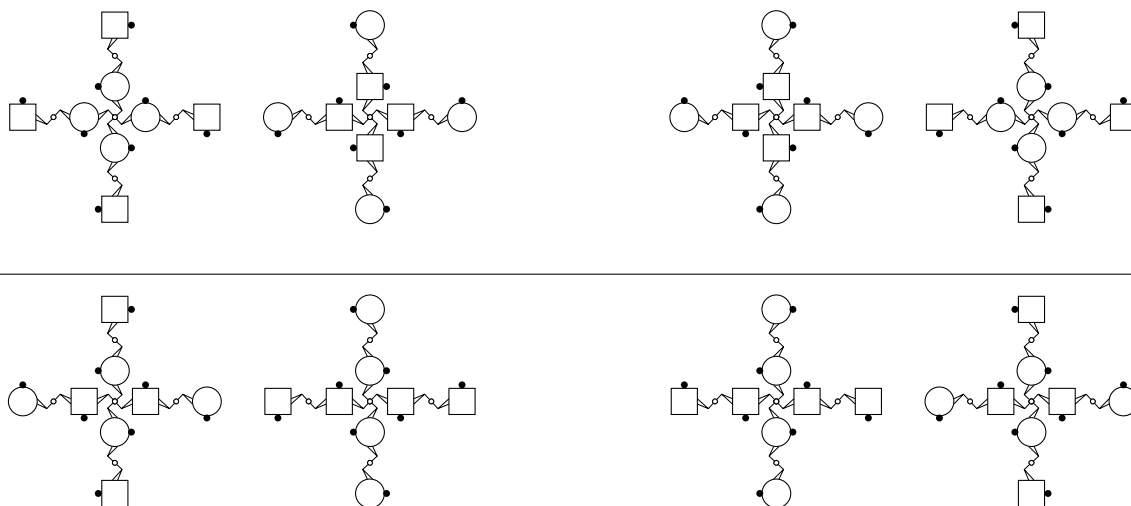


Figure 3: Pairs of Allemande Thar/Wrong Way Thar formations related through *Shoot the Star—Go Forward N to an Allemande Thar/Wrong Way Thar*; by calling *Shoot the Star Full Around—Go Forward N to an Allemande Thar/Wrong Way Thar*, we achieve a setup from the other pair in the same row; if we wanted to achieve a setup from the other row, we would have to call different actions for each Ocean Wave

Several examples of getting in:

- Parallel Ocean Waves: *All Eight Circulate 1 1/2—Right/Left Arm Turn 1/2 to a Wrong Way Thar/Allemande Thar*
- Static Square: *Heads/Sides Rollaway and Pass the Ocean—Very Centers Make an Arch with Your Left Hands Raised—The Others Pass the Ocean Through the Arch*

Several examples of getting out:

- BBBB-GGGG Allemande Thar or Wrong Way Thar: *Boys/Girls Single Hinge and the Out-Facing One Run—Extend*
- BGGB-GBBG Wrong Way Thar: *All Single Hinge—Boys/Girls Run—All Trade By 1 1/2*

- BGGB-GBBG Allemande Thar: *All Ends Run—Those Who Can Chain Down the Line—The Others Cast Off 3/4*
- BGGB-GBBG Wrong Way Thar: *All Centers Run—Those Who Can Chain Down the Line—The Others Bend the Line*

Transition into a Circle:

- *All Centers Run—Bend the Line—Circle Left/Right*
- *All Recycle—Circle Left/Right*
- *All Centers Fold—All Face In—Circle Left/Right*

Transition into the Alamo Ring:

- *All Single Hinge/Cast Off 3/4—Connect to an Alamo Ring*
- *All Work As In-Facing Dancers—Scoot Back 1 1/2—Check Your Alamo Ring*

### **All Eight: Ready, Steady, Go!**

Another idea that comes handy when looking for variety is to have all dancers work together at the same time in two crossed formations—at Advanced 2, this concept is called *All 8*. I do not advocate using the *All 4 Couples* concept because it requires a special rule for passing but the *All 8* approach is quite understandable even for average Mainstream dancers. The trick is not to overdo this and not to get too deep if the dancers have difficulties.

If we start from Static Square by calling *Four Ladies Chain* and *Four Ladies Chain 3/4*, dancers get the idea and we can follow with *Flutterwheel*, *Reverse Flutterwheel* and possibly *Dixie Style to an Ocean Wave* (or *Dixie Style to an Allemande Thar*), possibly with different arrangements. Other options for having all people work together are shown above for Alamo Ring, Allemande Thar and Wrong Way Thar.

If you want to develop this approach further, I do not recommend working in the circle of eight dancers, as it is more complicated to address people there and the orientation of the dancers can also be difficult because the formation is moving; however, all other related formations usually work well.

### **Grand Square**

As a conclusion, I would like to mention *Grand Square*—although it is not a formation, it is a special eight-dancer call. It is danced almost exclusively in the same way all the time. So why

not to change the arrangement a little? Apart from traditional BG-BG-BG-BG, we can use BG-GB-BG-GB or BB-GG-BB-GG. We can also set up the starting formation in an unusual way (from Facing Lines: *Ends Go Forward—Centers Go Back—Everybody Grand Square*) or modify it (T-Bone-like setup from Normal Static Square: *Boys/Girls Face Your Partner—All Grand Square*). I have also heard about *Syncopated Grand Square* in which individual pairs of dancers start at different times (for example, the couple #1 can start, after four beats man #2 and lady #4 start, after four beats man #4 and lady #2 start, and after another four beats the couple #3 starts).

There are also numerous variation that do not start on Static Square spots—explore them and use them if you feel the dancers will understand what to do (the idea is to put dancers into different vertices of their small-square-path—they start by walking forward, if they can, or backing up, if they cannot walk forward). Of course, timing the call so that dancers can start with the musical phrase is crucial in all cases.

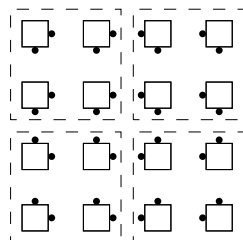


Figure 4: Possible positions and facing directions for *Grand Square* variations; it is necessary to make sure that both dancers in each small square walk either clockwise, or counterclockwise (which means, for example, not to have them starting in a tandem)

And what about the following closer for a singing-call?

*Four Ladies Chain—Four Ladies Chain Back—Just the Heads/Sides Half Sashay—All Circle Left—Forward And Back—Boys/Girls Face Each Other—Everybody Grand Square—Swing the Nearest One—Promenade Home*

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