

Staying Safe Away from the Mirror

Electronic Tips for Callers

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Most caller-related articles and books are dealing exclusively with symmetrical choreography. The reason is obvious: it is much easier to follow the FASR state this way, and it is also safer when going free-wheeling. On the other hand, using non-symmetrical choreography can be an ingredient that spices up your presentation and gives the dancers a feel of something new and different (shall I reiterate that it should not be overdone if we want to keep it interesting for the dancers?).

The traditional way of using the non-symmetrical choreography was to learn the whole sequences by heart (after making sure they worked well with checkers). However, this approach (although rather safe—unless your memory betrayed you) also resulted in less variety after repeating the few memorized sequences with the same dancers.

The goal of long-term variability can be approached by using modules, although the possibility of connecting them to longer pieces of choreography are rather limited: if one module brings dancers to a unique non-symmetrical FASR state, there must be another that gets them out of the very same setup—and as it is not likely to have more than one Get-In and Get-Out module ready for every possible non-symmetrical setup, we are in fact returning to regular memory calling in many cases (having only one possibility of combining the calls means that we always end up with the same combination).

I would like to offer another way of dealing with unsymmetrical choreography: what if the deviations from full symmetry were just minor (but noticeable)? We do not have to break the whole square into tiny parts, mix them up, spread them all over the floor, and then put them together again—instead of that, we can just swap two dancers and go on with more or less standard choreography (the obvious rule for survival and success is “remember what you did and be sure to undo it”). However, I do not recommend going into non-symmetrical choreography to anybody who has not mastered the formation management yet—it is important to be able to concentrate on dealing with the symmetry issues, and not on “mechanical” aspects like body flow or timing.

We can think about playing with individual components of FASR but we should be aware of the fact that by changing one of them, a change of another usually occurs, too. However, we still can distinguish among several possible ways of leaving the area of symmetry according to the respective FASR component:

Sequence

Non-symmetrical changes of sequence are usually used as a stepping stone to non-symmetrical formations. Quite often, the sequence is changed for whole couples instead of individual dancers

because it is easier to keep track that way. The aim usually is to have the couples ordered as 1-2-3-4 standing in a file through the middle of the square. Some of the well-known ways of canceling the “mirror image effect” for sequence are the following ones:

- Static Square: *Couples #1 and #2: Right And Left Thru*
- Static Square: *Heads Lead Left—Everybody Eight Chain Your Couple Number*
- Static Square: *Heads Lead Right—Everybody Square Thru Your Couple Number*

It is quite easy to divide the square into two distinct groups of four, one consisting of men, the other of women. We can let both groups perform different calls, or switch to non-symmetrical formations of eight dancers and use calls like *Triple Centers In*, *Grand Cast Off 3/4*, *Grand Double Pass Thru* (or *Quadruple (Double Double) Pass Thru*), *Grand Cloverleaf*, to set up a line of eight dancers facing the same way and so on.

If you are thinking about resolving from setups with non-symmetrical sequence, do not forget that although there are just two symmetrical sequence states (1-2-3-4 and 1-4-3-2), you have to count with as many as four of them if the sequence is not symmetrical (1-2-4-3, 1-3-2-4, 1-3-4-2 and 1-4-2-3). However, each of the non-symmetrical states allows easy transition into a formation of four normal couples in a file according to their numbers (1-2-3-4).

Relationship

Changes of relationship are related to a change of sequence or arrangement, too. Anyway, it does not make much sense to focus on changing the relationship because it offers nothing special—in fact nothing the dancers would notice. It can be used maybe as a gimmick, or as a progressive pattern: Static Square: *Lady #1 Chain to the Right (work with Lady #2)*.

Arrangement

Change of arrangement is probably the easiest way of using non-symmetrical choreography: you can swap two dancers and, keeping that in mind, guide the dancers through formations and arrangements that are obviously not symmetrical and bring them back home, achieving the symmetry again. The simplest method is to swap original Partners, or original Corners. You can even let the dancers decide whether they want to swap within their particular formation of two.

Several simple rules to be followed:

- You can repeat the same swapping action any number of times you wish but not combine them.
- Choose the dancers to be swapped according to your planned Get-Out, or vice versa.

- After swapping some people, avoid using gender-related calls and identification (*Star Thru*, *Boys Run* and so on): most of them are likely to be impossible to perform, or (which is even worse) they might result in further deviations from symmetry. However, there is no need to keep the swapped dancers together (as required by the well-known rubber band or burned image methods): if you guide them away from each other, and then resolve and bring everybody back home properly, the dancers are likely to appreciate it.
- Do not forget that after crossing the border of symmetry, the success depends heavily on the dancers—as soon as a square breaks down, it is lost because you cannot use even *Normal Lines Go Forward And Back* to synchronize all squares in the hall.

Possible ways of swapping some dancers:

- Zero Lines/Corner Lines: *Right And Left Thru—If You Want*, *Half Sashay*
- Zero Box: *If You Want*, *Box the Gnat*
- Parallel General Lines: *Tag the Line—If You Want*, *Zoom*

And how to get out of this mess? Bring the dancers into general lines, having both possibly swapped dancers in the same quadrant, and call one of the following combinations:

- *Tag the Line—Leaders U Turn Back—All Star Thru—Out-Facing Dancers California Twirl* (or *Couples Trade—Bend the Line* after a little time for getting rid of the flow)
- “Zero Lines”: *Pass the Ocean—Swing Thru—Swing Thru—Right Arm Turn to Your Corner—Allemande Left*
- “Corner Lines”: *Pass the Ocean—Centers Trade—Ends Cross Run—Left Arm Turn to Your Original Partner—Right And Left Grand*

Formation

There are basically two approaches of using non-symmetrical formations. The easy one is based on slight divergences from symmetry and allows the caller to re-establish the symmetry in fact any time: for example, we can establish Parallel Ocean Waves where one is right-handed and the other one left-handed. After bringing both sides into particular pre-planned setups, we can call *Centers Run* to get Parallel Two-Faced Lines of different handedness and *Bend the Line* to achieve the symmetrical setup again.

Similar effect can be achieved using *Face In/Out*, *Half Tag* or *Tag the Line*. The common denominator of these calls is that they, unlike most other calls, employ axial symmetry as well, which results in “losing the unnecessary information” (in this case, the different facing

directions before performing the call). By closer look at these calls, we find that they are not undoable unambiguously—if we have facing couples, we are not able to identify the formation before *Bend the Line* (in other words, the information about different starting formations was lost by using this call). Other calls of this kind include *Cast Off 3/4*, *Wheel And Deal* and *Recycle* (*Ferris Wheel* cannot be used without a hint because the in-facing couples need some trick to pass each other).

The other approach is to forget any rules for the moment and move the people deliberately and without any explicit limitations. But how do we bring the dancers back home? Of course, we can try to normalize the formation and arrangement, and then to worry about sequence—in that case, we have to address the dancers like *In the Box Closer to Me*, *Right And Left Thru* or *In the Wave Closer to the Door*, *Boys Trade* which, in my opinion, sort of spoils the feeling of speciality the dancers might have established. However, we can overcome it by “repairing” the sequence first, using the following method (the credit goes to Dave Wilson—I have heard the method of normalizing explained in a slightly modified way from him several years ago; this is in fact an expansion):

- Be sure you remember not only four dancers (two couples) and their relationship like with symmetrical sight calling, but also two other dancers (one couple) in order to be able to re-establish the sequence properly.
- Bring the dancers into Parallel Right-Hand Ocean Waves, one consisting of men, the other of ladies.
- Identify the arrangement of head and side dancers in each wave. There are three possibilities:
 - A. they are both in the same quadrant (holding right hands);
 - B. they are both facing in (or out);
 - C. they are both Centers (or Ends).
- The most important point is to bring both waves into the same head/side arrangement (but it does not matter whether the corresponding spots are occupied by heads in both waves, or by heads in one wave and by sides in the other one). We are going to distribute both of head men/head ladies/side men/side ladies into opposite quadrants (which means the symmetry will be achieved again) using the same sequence of calls for men and ladies, so they have to be arranged in the same way. Obviously, the transition between cases A and B is as simple as one *Swing Thru*—but what if we have, for example, cases A and C? In that situation, we basically have to move exactly one end dancer in one wave to the center. This means we need to find a way of addressing this dancer. We can either call something like *Out-Facing End Boy Run Right—The Same Boy Run Left—The Same Boy Run Right—The Other Three Boys U Turn Back*, or to use the combination like *Spin the Top—Single Hinge* to bring the dancers into Parallel Columns, where this particular dancer can be identified either as a Center, or as an Outside (*Center Boys Trade—All Boys Face In—Pass the Ocean*).

- The next step is to bring heads/sides away from each other (retaining the Right-Hand Ocean Waves):
 - A. *All Eight Circulate*;
 - B. *Swing Thru—All Eight Circulate*;
 - C. *Split Circulate*.
- Using *Boys Run*, we establish Parallel Normal One-Faced Lines facing the same direction; both men and ladies are either in sequence (1-2-3-4), or out of sequence (1-3-2-4). We can then call *All Forward And Back—California Twirl—Forward And Back* to let the dancers enjoy the non-symmetrical setup for the last time and to get rid of the flow. One *Bend the Line* (or *Cast Off 3/4*) results in a symmetric FASR (Normal Facing Lines); resolve as usual.

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