

Basics of Contra Calling

Seminar content:

This seminar should give leaders from other branches an overview –no training - about the basics of contra dance calling.

- Types of formations and directions in a set
- Basics dancer relationships
- Smooth dancing & transitions
- Prompting techniques
- What to teach dancers
- Showmanship
- Music

Examples of Formations

- Proper duple
- Improper duple
- Becket
- Mescolanza
- Triple; Proper, Improper
- Triplet
- Many other formations

Directions in a set

It is important to know directions in the set and be able to explain these to the dancers.

Directions in the set are often used as choreographic elements i.e. swing and face down vs. swing and face across

Across Diagonal Right Left

Up Top Head Music

Down the hall Bottom Foot

LoD = Line of Dance

Dancer relationships

Explanation: Partner is person you entered the set with and does not change

Interaction with other dancers may include: corner, neighbour, shadow, opposite, the one below

Many dances have different actions for couples dancing together. These different roles are generally called actives or 1's or inactives or 2's.

Some choreographies have diagonal relationships

Smooth Dancing & Transitions

A detailed analysis of the choreographic elements of a contra dance calls with emphasis on the smooth transition from figure to figure in the correct timing, body momentum, hand sequence and availability, and styling.

- Knowledge of definitions, starting and ending positions, timing
- Knowledge of body momentum
- Hand availability
- Dancers anticipation if new to contra they tend to get faster than the phrase when the sequence is known.

Prompting Techniques

Training in the mechanics and presentation of prompting include knowing the dance words and being able to interchange and improvise with fewer and fewer cues for the dancers, to the point of saying nothing.

Timing of the prompts is very important so as to let the dancers move to the phrase of the music.

What to teach Contra Dancers

- The importance of social interaction: eye contact, and common contra etiquette.
- The importance of timing
- Dances are “learned” for the duration of the dance a prompter should not expect dancers to know how to do a figure
- Actual teaching of figures is done in the walk thru

Showmanship

Difference of showmanship in prompting to other branches in ECTA

Musical Showmanship with music selection and use of voice in relationship to the music

Wearing costumes to fit the theme of the dance

Choreographic Gimmicks /Crowd Pleasers

- contra specific movements
- Mixers
- New England Squares
- Traditional Squares

Revisions

Nr.	Changes	Release	Contrib.	Date
1.	First listing		CDB	2014/02/21
2	Update for website	1.5	EH	2018/05/01