

Dugan's Calling 101 Class Outline

Last updated January 10, 2017

- 1) The caller's role in the magic that is contra dancing.
 - a) How do you feel when you contra dance?
 - b) What happened to make you feel this way?
 - c) What is the caller's role in this?
- 2) What are the jobs of a caller?
 - a) Choose the dances
 - b) Help the band pick tunes
 - c) Get people arranged optimally for the dance (usually contra lines of equal length and spacing)
 - d) Teach the dances (walk through)
 - e) Prompt dancers with music (calling)
 - f) Cue the band to start and finish
 - g) Announce the beginning, the end, the break, the band, the sound technician, the organizers, merchandise, other announceable things
 - h) Welcome & train new dancers (beginner's lesson - mostly in most places)
 - i) Lots more big-picture stuff
- 3) Review of caller's jobs
 - a) Will Mentor says the caller's job is: 70% teaching, 20% prompting, and 10% everything else

b) Before a caller can complete any of these jobs, she must know how tune structure and choreography sync up

4) Structure of tunes suitable for contra dance

a) Listening to a contra tune differentiate A section and B section

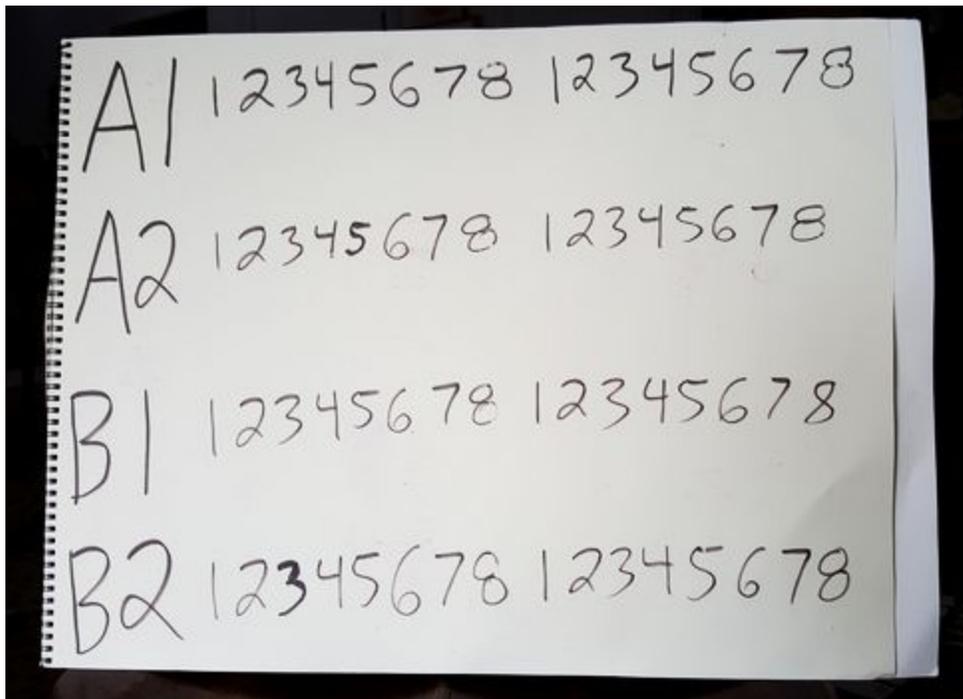
b) Listening to a contra tune highlight repeat of A phrase and B phrase (A1 vs. A2 and B1 vs. B2)

c) Big tune chart: Listening to a contra tune, count all beats on big tune chart

i) Timing on beat level: one step per beat

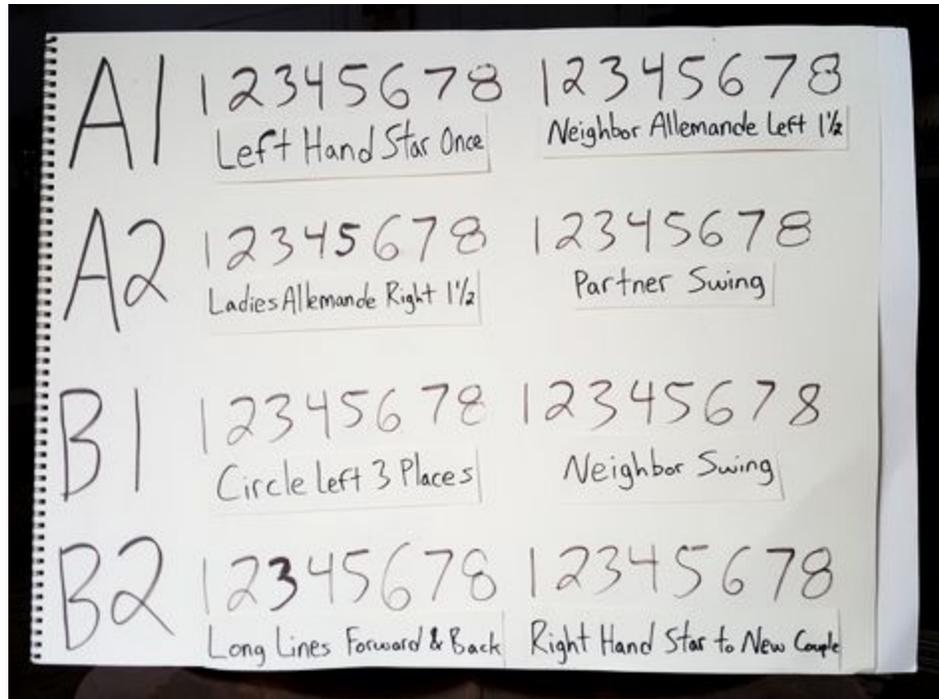
ii) Timing on 8-beat phrase level

iii) Timing on 16-beat phrase level



5) Structure of contra dance choreography, as it syncs with tunes

- a) Big tune chart: Attach figures as danced with music to make it into a big dance card for
 “Al’s Safeway Produce” by Robert Cromartie



- 6) Prompting (20% of the caller’s job)
- a) Everyone dancing in long lines with music, prompt “long lines forward and back,” “long lines,” and “lines” a few times
- b) Big dance card: Attach “Al’s Safeway Produce” prompts in advance of the figures



- c) Everyone together prompt “A1’s Safeway Produce” with music
- d) Importance of the last syllable of a call syncing up with the last beat of the preceding figure
- i) You are prompting what you already taught them **and** showing how it syncs up with music
 - ii) Exception: extending distance reminders into next phrase (“go once and a half”)
 - iii) Exception: extending destination even later (“to your partner”) may merge with prompt for next figure
- e) We don’t use four-beat calls all the time.
- i) Start with longer calls
 - ii) Shorten as dancers learn the dance,
 - iii) Drop prompts for more intuitive figures & transitions

iv) Totally drop out eventually

7) Teaching (70% of the job)

a) Order of words

i) Steve Bennett's 3 Ws (students arrange phrases and discuss the order)

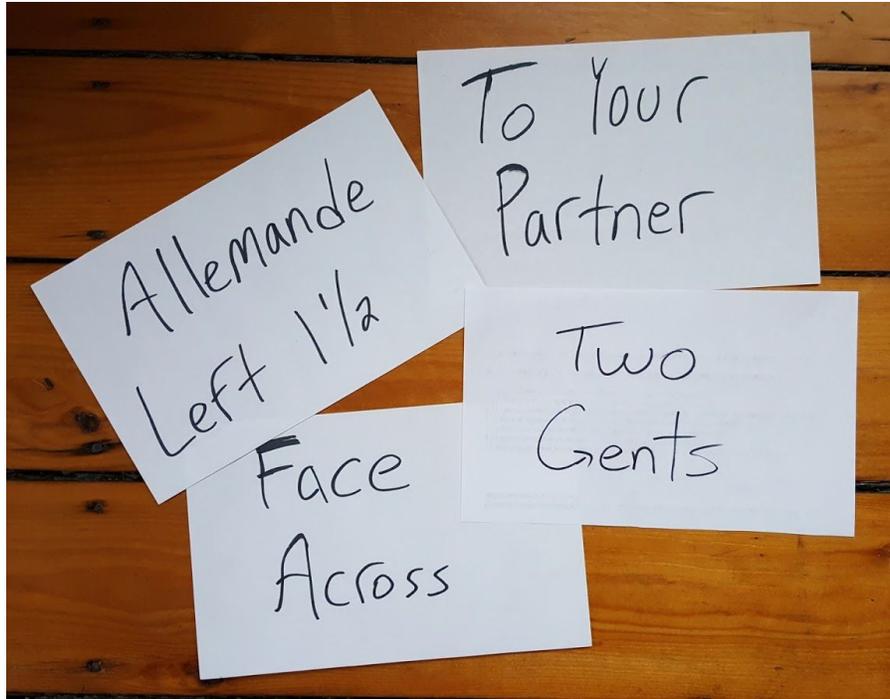


(1) Where "On the side of the set"

(2) Who "With your neighbor"

(3) What "Balance and swing"

ii) Face them - end them model (students arrange phrases and discuss the order)

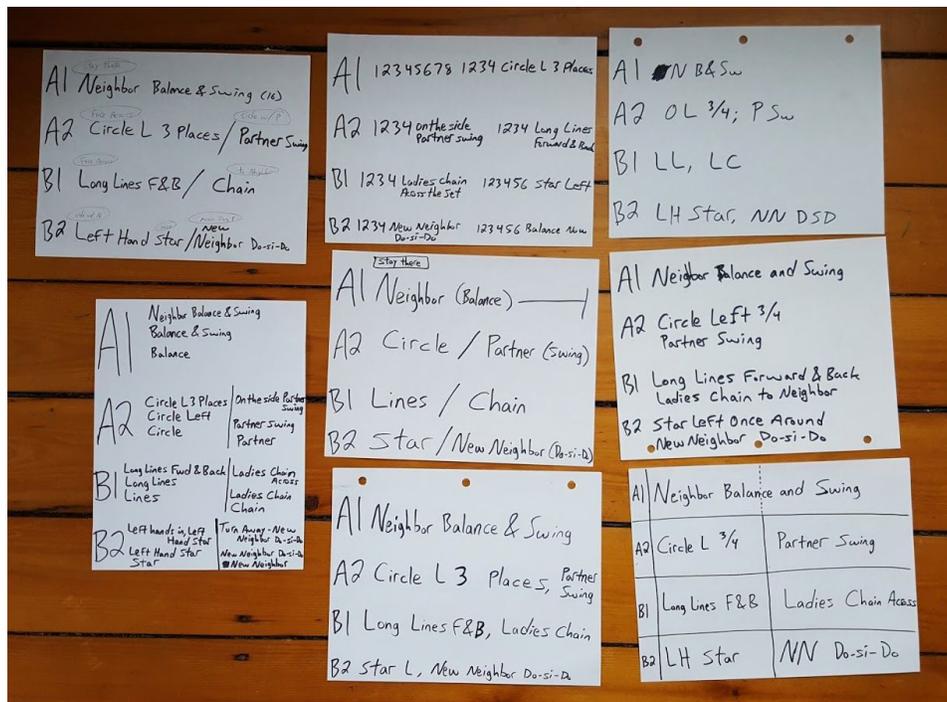


- | | |
|---------------|--------------------|
| (1) Face them | Face across |
| (2) With whom | Two gents |
| (3) Figure | Allemande left 1.5 |
| (4) End them | To your partner |
- b) Big dance card: Paste on teaching points (wheres, whos, face them, and end them for teaching “Al’s Safeway Produce”



8) Making dance cards (before we practice teaching)

a) Example dance cards



- i) Callers have many different styles. Use my suggestion or something else if it works.
 - b) Know a dance well before you make card (points of confusion, progression, anchor points)
- 9) Everyone assigned one dance to think about and make a card

10) Eat Lunch

- 11) Before everyone teaches and prompts their dance to the rest of us
- a) Sending dancers back to starting position or not (depending on one or two walk throughs)
 - b) Use as few words as possible to keep people moving and unconfused
 - c) Watching the room to make sure dancers are in position and with you before teaching the next figure
 - d) Shorten your calls and eventually drop out
 - e) Run each dance pretty short (real life: ~8-10 minutes)
 - f) Remember feedback you want to give after self-critique
 - g) Speak as if every word you say is important

- 12) Everyone teaches and prompts their dance to the rest of us
- a) Each caller to self-critique before hearing others' feedback

- 13) Post-practice discussion: teaching
- a) What was easy about teaching and prompting?
 - b) What was difficult?
 - c) What lessons learned through practice?
 - d) Anticipate problem areas and plan to explain
 - i) Where experienced dancers will predict the wrong thing

- ii) Where newer dancers will have more difficulty
- iii) When to foreshadow dancers' future position and orientation *before* teaching a figure
- iv) How to explain a new or unusual figure or transition
- e) Get everyone to do every figure right the first time or they will need to unlearn
- f) Get everyone to execute figures one after the other without too many pauses so they feel and understand the transitions between figures
- g) As soon as the dancers begin executing the first figure, the mental walk-through timer starts and does not stop until the music begins (at least until dancers complete the last figure) - longer you take the more likely dancers will lose patience or fail to understand the transitions

14) Post-practice discussion: dance cards

- a) What worked well or didn't work about how you designed your card?
- b) What changes might you make to your card before you call again?
- c) Use cards as a glancing reference, not script
- d) Two sides or one?
- e) Long hand, abbreviations, additional notes, end effects, timing
- f) 3X5, 4X6, 8.5X11 notebook, Word doc on laptop, Caller Companion software

15) Things we didn't discuss today that are part of future training

- a) Communicating with the band
- b) Teaching the beginner's lesson
- c) Managing the room
- d) Programming ahead vs. choosing dances on the fly

- e) Sussing out the dancers to decide which dances to call and how to teach them
- f) Talking into a microphone
- g) Being the MC
- h) Stage presence

16) Wrap up