

CREATIVE CHOREOGRAPHY

By Wayne & Barbara Blackford

What is your definition of "Choreography"?

What came first? "The Chicken or the Egg"?

Many people write (choreograph) their dances by putting the basics together before they ever listen to the music.

From Webster's definition of Choreography we must conclude that the MUSIC comes first. After selecting our music we then can arrange the basics to that particular piece of music. It is very important to become familiar with the musical phrasing of any particular record. It is this musical phrasing (or pattern) that determines the sequence of the dance.

When the choreography is phrased correctly to the musical pattern the dance or routine will follow a direct "flow" pattern and therefore become easier to learn and much more enjoyable to dance. Round Dance Choreographers frequently use figures in a variety of ways, some are good and some are bad. Our definition of a bad figure is, not that the figure has been used incorrectly or in an unorthodox manner but rather, that good body mechanics have not been considered and consequently we are forced into awkward positions.

If after completing a sequence it feels awkward or hard to remember to us as teacher/choreographers, then take another look at it. Remember, if it causes us a "small problem", the problem it can cause the dancers will be enormous. Gordon Moss once said, "Dance your new choreography/dance at least 100 times before you put it on paper." This will make sure that the figures you have written are written to the proper musical phrase and the natural flow of the figure has not been destroyed.

As Round Dance Choreographers we can take many liberties with figures, rhythm and timing, etc. But we should NEVER ignore the natural flow of any figure just to be different. Remember, our own knowledge and background in whatever rhythm or phase we are writing is very important. Never venture into writing a dance in a rhythm or phase that you are not confident with. We must be knowledgeable in whatever we present to the dancers.

We should be proud of every dance/routine that we write and never "MASS PRODUCE" cue sheets just to "keep up with the Jones".

Remembering NOT to change the normal flow of the figure, we can make many modifications to a standard basic (change timing, change starting position, change dance position, use same footwork, use opposite footwork, etc) to create a new and interesting feel to a basic most people are familiar with. Some of the most common basics that we find modified on cue sheets never fit the music.

Why not try the following few basics with the different modifications listed:

FISHTAIL: Circle, Foxtrot, Quickstep, Skaters Position. DIAMOND TURN: Waltz, Foxtrot, Cha Cha, One Step, Modified Syncopated. REVERSE PRETZEL WRAP: Jive. SPANISH ARMS: Jive. MODIFIED THROWAWAY: Jive.  
(From Roundlab Teachers Seminar 1987, Thanks to Wayne and Barbara.)