

Extended Applications

By Ted Lizotte

I don't think that there are many callers left today that will call only what is considered standard applications all night long very often – our egos won't allow it. Most of us are itching to show the dancers what we know, what we can do. Usually the problems occur with what we decide to show off and how we present it. I thought I would focus my portion of the discussion on a one call and how I would prepare and present it to a new audience. To me, the most important points that I try to keep at the forefront of my mind are these:

- Use the Extended call as close to a “standard” setup as possible
- How fast can I normalize after the first usage of the extended call
 - o Normal Couples or Allemande Left or RLG
- Rate and understand the level of difficulty – be prepared to debate it
- Know when enough is enough

The call I've chosen today is Wheel Around. Here's a quick example of how this call will progress during my evening dance.

1. (Lines Facing Out) Wheel and Deal - Centers Wheel Around to an Allemande Left
 - This is the first way I'll present it to a group of dancers I'm unfamiliar with. Helping words like “Keep turning to the ones behind you” or “Boy back up – girl forward.” If the success rate seems low – I'll repeat the getout again to see how many more I pick up.
2. (Lines Facing Out) Wheel and Deal - Centers Wheel Around to a call other than Allemande Left
 - Once the dancer can do the move, we can move onto something else
3. (Normal Lines) - Dixie Style – Boy Trade – Left Swing Thru – Girls Run – Wheel Around – Girls Trade
 - When calling the above, I normally present it is by saying, “Girls Run, Everyone WHEEL AROUND and the girls will connect”. The last part is the most important, not the call itself. Even if some dancers missed it and did a Wheel and Deal most will look around and then Veer Left to be where they are supposed to be. I then trade the ladies for flow and circulate them – usually with the comment “Let's go try that with someone else”. Do a Chain Down The Line and go right back at it, and again I will trade the girls to give those who missed it a second chance to fix everything. Get out and reset if necessary or continue one more time.
4. (Normal Lines) - Dixie Style – Boy Trade – Left Swing Thru – Girls Run – Wheel Around – Chain DTL
 - I call this figure next so that there is a change to routine and feeling of success. (I think a Chain down the Line feels like you did more work than a Girls Trade.) Also, if you start the figure with a Right and Left Thru, it's a zero.

I think this is a good point to pause and decide what is happening next. At a normal dance with average dancers, this may be the limit of how far I take Wheel Around that evening. I've gotten them to a point where later I can introduce it into a singing call with good flow and they'll have a sense of accomplishment about the call. Besides that I want to leave the dancers thinking I know more than one call. ☺

Over the course of the night, I like to pick a few calls that I think work well together in an extended variety. I don't think people utilize “left” enough, so I'll move into something like “Heads Lead Left” and “Left Touch 1/4” with similar, if not smaller buildups. This also helps with moving farther into my Wheel Around list should the crowd allow.

So the question is, where to from here? Some other choices in what I consider an ascending rank of difficulty on the Ted scale would be as follows. Remember, this is a Ted scale and I'm prepared to debate it – though you may have differing opinions.

5. (Normal Lines) - Dixie Style – Boys Trade – Left Swing Thru – Girls Run 1/2 Wheel Around
 - People are scared by fractions. An immediate “up to the middle and back” gets a laugh.
6. (Normal Lines) - Dixie Style – Boys Trade – Left Swing Thru – Girls Run – Ferris – Centers Wheel Around
 - An “uphill” Ferris Wheel is unusual and uncommon for some people. Interjecting a wheel around just adds to the complexity. Ideally, this should go to an Allemande Left.
7. (Static Square) – Heads Lead Left – Veer Right – Wheel Around – Chain Down The Line
 - Note that the Lead Left should have been worked first. It flows like a Bend the Line
8. (Normal Box) – Left Touch 1/4 - Walk and Dodge – Wheel Around
 - I'll work the Left Touch 1/4 and do a U-Turn after the Walk and Dodge first. Saying something like “the girl going forward continues to go forward” tends to help.
9. (Normal Box) – Left Touch 1/4 - Walk and Dodge – Wheel Around Once and a Half - Chain DTL
 - The fractions make it harder, but it's the really the first two calls that makes it fall this far down the list
10. (Normal Box) Touch 1/4 - Split Circ – Boy Run – Reverse Flutter – Sweep 1/4 - Centers Wheel Around
 - Be sure to warn them to be careful backing up in the middle. A Pass Thru to an Allemande Left is preferable.
11. (BBGG lines facing out) – Wheel and Deal – Girls Wheel Around – Star Thru – Boy Trade – BTL
 - Half of the girls know what's happening and telling them to not let go and to face the boys usually solves the issue. The Star Thru forces them to touch and couple up, Star Thru and Bend the line normalizes them. Doing the same call but having the boys Wheel Around instead would be equal in my eyes here. And actually doing them close together it's easy to use the boys vs. girls mentality.
12. (Normal Lines) - Dixie Style – B Trade – B Run – Wheel Around – Boy Cross Run – Couples Circulate
 - Now everyone is not in a “standard” location, making it tougher for all parties. The Cross Run immediately normalizes it, and the Couples Circulate confirms to the dancers that they are okay.
13. (Normal Right-Handed Two Faced Line) Ferris Wheel – Centers Reverse Wheel Around – Allemande Left
 - This is the first introduction to Reverse Wheel Around. Normal couples – “wrong” way and almost never used. Switch to “Boy forward, Girl back up” also helps.
14. (Normal Box) Touch 1/4 - Walk and Dodge – Reverse Wheel Around – Reverse Flutter
 - Once the get the concept of the person walking forward keeps going forward and around, this works. I like the Reverse Flutter because it allows the person backing up a small break which makes it flow better – in my opinion.

Again, this is by no means a definitive list. This is an example of how I start with one call and how I progress through the difficulty while trying to maintain flow. Theoretically, it is proper to call things like “Tag the Line – Face Out – Wheel Around” and a facing lines “Pass Thru – Wheel Around”. I try and stay away from things that don't, in my opinion, flow.

To recap, my main points:

- Know when Enough is Enough
 - o Have multiple back up plans and strategies for your dance. Maybe Wheel Around isn't going to work – how about Circle of Four and Veer Left instead? How about Swing Thru once and a quarter? Have a different direction for your dance just incase, and know that one just as well.
- Know The Call
 - o Not just the definition, though that's a start. Know its pitfalls; why is this call hard? How can I overcome that by making it easier? What makes this location/interpretation of the call harder/easier than the last?
- Give Them A Chance To Succeed
 - o Give them the extended call in a way that gives them the best chance to succeed. Consider the formation it's called from, the arrangement you're using, the preceding call and the call coming directly afterward. All of these things will help the dancers make the most of your creativity.
- Repeat, Repeat, Revisit
 - o Repeat the pattern. Pair up different dancers and put them in different quadrants of the square. Sprinkle the call(s) throughout the evening. Not everyone stays to the end of the dance so be sure to revisit it before the final tip. Now that you've coached them to the point of success – let them bask in it.

Finally, a quick sidebar. I play video games in my spare time – I have since 1977 when they first came out. A lot of games nowadays have you make moral decisions for your characters along the way. A choice between good and evil if you will. I find my kids, who naturally play games like their father, tend to choose the evil path more often than not. With an opportunity to rule an entire kingdom, they choose to do anything they want, whenever they want, regardless of the consequences. I, however, do not. When they ask me why, my answer is always the same – “it's harder to be good.” To me, it enriches the gaming experience and adds a degree of difficulty by trying to do the “right” thing when possible.

I think the same goes for calling. Any caller can break down a floor. That's **A-N-Y** caller - whether they've been calling for 50 minutes or 50 years. Keeping a floor entertained and dancing by utilizing good timing, good flow, interesting and different choreography and a high success rate is what separates the good callers from the bad. By all means I encourage you to utilize extended applications in your dance. You have the power to change the way people see the calls and the activity – please use it. But I implore you – please use your powers for good.

Thank you.