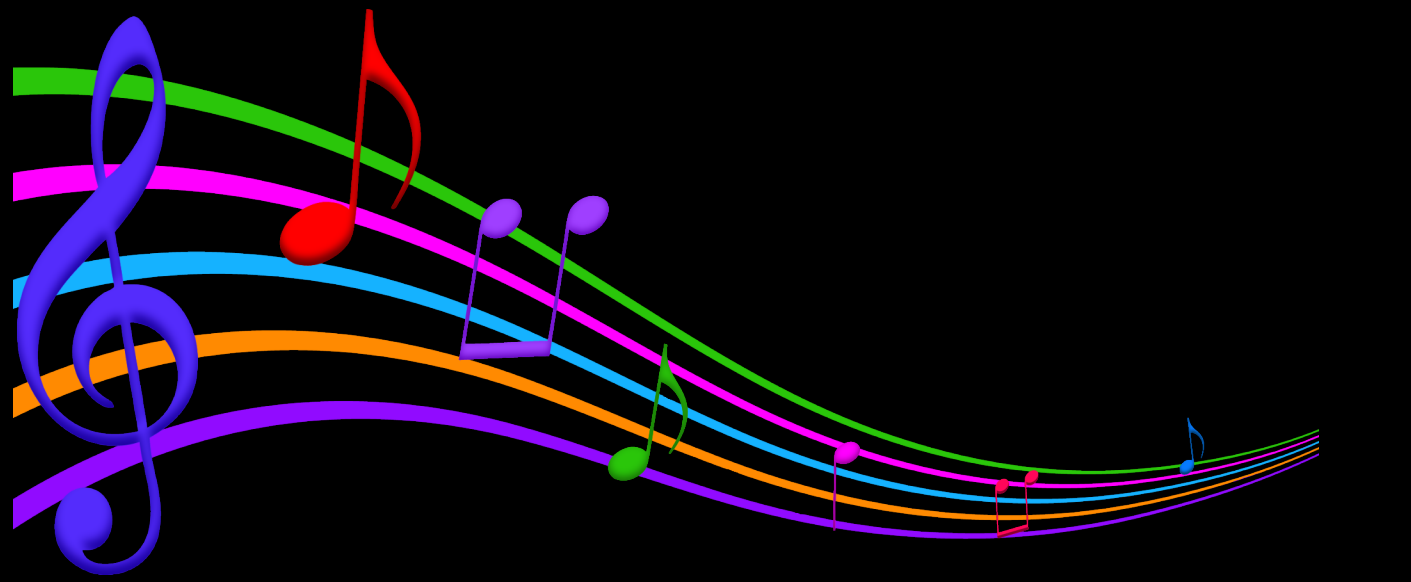
SINGING CALL TECHNIQUES

To be able to consistently create singing calls, you must have a basic knowledge of a couple of things (Ok – Maybe a little more than a couple)……

The Five Elements of Music



- Timbre
- Form
- Rhythm
- Melody
- Harmony

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

While #1 Timbre (the difference between the sound of musical instruments) and #2 Form (the actual structure of music composition)are important aspects of music structure, they do not play a huge role in our singing call adaptations. However…. The remaining three are very important!!!!!!!!

#3 RHYTHM – At its' simplest is nothing more than a measurement of time .
We call it……

THE BEAT

#4 Melody – Again, at it's simplest, its just the tune of the song – That is ……..

THE LEAD

#5 Harmony – It too, at its' simplest is everything that is not Rhythm or Melody – It is more aptly (for our purposes)……

THE STUFF THE DANCERS HEAR

They feel the RHYTHM. We sing on the MELODY. But the dancers dance to the HARMONICS..

The final thing(s) that we need to know And this we need to have a really good understanding is…….

Basic Singing Call Structure

Singing calls have 7 sections of 64 beats of music – Excluding the Intro and the Outro.

- Intro – Normally 8-16 beats that is used to “introduce “ the beginning of the song.
- Outro – Normally 8-16 beats that is used to “finalize” the song. In most instances it is a repeat of the last line

Generally a singing call is broken up into:

1. Opener
2. Figure
3. Figure
4. Middle Break
5. Figure
6. Figure
7. Closer



THE NUTS AND BOLTS

Learn how to select a song

- It must have a danceable rhythm track
- Pick a song that you either (a) know the melody or (b) has a melody line that you can easily learn
- Find a song that fits within your range – You should be able to hit the highest and lowest notes relatively comfortably. The key that the song is recorded in is irrelevant.

- Find a quiet place to listen to the song(s) - I like to listen and practice in my car
- Listen to the entire song and pay special attention to key changes or some real hot instrument that you may want to feature
- Let the music help dictate what opener or figure you use
- If you listen to the vocal – Make a special effort to try and not imitate the called side.
- You need to develop your own style and presentation

HOW TO PRACTICE

- Listen to the original song to get a feel for the melody and overall song
- Compare the original melody to the square dance version and memoriize the square dance version
- Develop choreography to fit the melody and structure of the song. Unless you are an accomplished sight caller, I do not recommend trying to sight call the figures
- Practice to the point that you do not need the cue sheet
- Practice singing the song without the music from memory
- Learn to sing and when to shut up

HOW TO DEVELOP YOUR OWN UNIQUE STYLE

- If it's a song that you are familiar with – Try and practice it without listening to the called side. Remember……You don't have to be a good singer to record a square dance song.
- Practice pre-cuing the figures and letting the music work for you
- Practice different ways to say the same thing – for example:
  - Allemande Left/Left Allemande
  - Square Thru 4/Square Thru 4 Hands/Square Thru
- Listen to the original song and get additional lyrics

RATING SINGING CALLS

The rationale or rating your singing calls is to help control the emotions of the dancers. Even though your patter and singing calls must work together, the emotions of the dancers will be dictated (for the most part) by the singing call.

RATING YOUR SINGING CALLS FROM 1-4

#1 – Gets the dancers the most charged up

- Help Is On The Way
- Couldn’t Get It Right
- Tulsa Time

RATING YOUR SINGING CALLS FROM 1-4

#2 – Up Tempo – Not quite as charged as #1

- I Hear Ya Knocking
- Little Things
- Lido Shuffle

RATING YOUR SINGING CALLS FROM 1-4

#3 – Happy & Bouncy – The bulk of your dance

- When You're In Love With a Beautiful Woman
- Don't it Make You Want to go Home
- Keep The Customer Satisfied

RATING YOUR SINGING CALLS FROM 1-4

#4 – Ballads & Love Songs

- You're My Home
- Going Around One More Time
- Reunited

“IMAGINE” – My thought process

- Jeanee Fleenor
- Nashville musicians – so I pre cue to feature the instruments
- Pre-Cue the Figures
- Grand Square allows me to sing all of the lyrics
- Rhythm is “cut time” ie. Rhythm is 4/4 with bass guitar playing on each beat
- Simple figure to allow the dancers to “flow” with the music