

Caller Training “CRaMS” ,



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We know the technical side of choreo management is very important. It is the easiest side to learn and a must if callers are to be prepared for a serious leadership roll in this activity.

Another side, equally important, is implementation and presentation. This is, most definitely, the more difficult of the two sides of choreo management to learn and acquire.

Implementation implies a purpose for the things we call. Are we just free wheeling it, looking for a zero line or zero box so we can finally resolve, or are we using modules and calling with a clear and distinct mission or goal in mind? Do we understand Relationships? Do we realize the dancers can only be in one (1) of four (4) places in the square at any given time? These tools are the basis of CRaMS (Controlled Resolution and Manipulation System).

Next is presentation, probably THE most difficult aspect of choreo control. Presentation covers so many aspects it's scary!!! People usually think of theatrical things when discussing “presentation” and I believe those things fall more under showmanship and much less under “presentation”. Timing, rhythm, delivery, enunciation, communication, formation awareness, arrangement awareness, body flow awareness, relationship awareness and an unmistakable game plan (implementation) are all part of excellent presentation skills.

Good timing is crucial for controlling a floor of dancers. Getting dancers to dance with rhythm is acquired through good timing. Many callers lose control right here. The minute you hear a caller say “Up to the middle and back square thru 4” without giving the dancers time to execute the call “forward and back” you can rest assured this caller does not have control of the floor. When callers call stop and go choreo (sacrificing timing and rhythm for more complex material) be aware these callers do not have control of the floor either. They are simply robotic.

Excellent timing with great rhythm will help manage and control the flow of choreo and ultimately bring about more enjoyable dancing and better calling.

Formation and arrangement awareness is an absolute necessity for managing and controlling choreo, especially for those who primarily sight call. We must know what each call does concerning formation changes and arrangement changes. This is why a LITTLE bit of sight calling and more module calling will benefit both caller and dancer.

Body flow awareness must be factored in to this equation. There is no way a caller can have control of the floor if he/she has little consideration of body flow. Understanding reverse or counter clockwise dancing is a wonderful tool to have at your disposal. Knowing which hand is available and the mechanics of each call is a must. This is all part of body flow awareness.

It is suggested that EVERY caller work EVERY call on the Mainstream program through the “Call Analysis” document provided by CALLERLAB. This document, when used correctly, will provide the foundation needed to take your first step towards REAL choreographic control. Once familiar with the mechanics of each call you will be ready to dive into CRaMS, the most comprehensive and complete calling system available today.

CRaMS is all about Relationships and Pairings. With who are dancing? Who is in your box or your line? There is only 4 possible answers, Partner * Corner * Opposite * Right Hand Lady. The trick is knowing the techniques needed to decipher the situation to reveal these identities quickly. Let’s have a look!

Sight callers look for adjacent pairings while CRaMS callers look for facing pairings and diagonal pairings as well. To find a pairing the dancers do not have to be standing side by side with their partner. From a line of four (4) partner can be in front of you, transposed in the line (I have his girl he has mine), or diagonally across the set (opposite lady lines). From any box of four (4) here is what to look for and using the same two primary couples sight callers use for pairings will work just fine.

Learn to look at a line of four (4) which is also 2 adjacent boxes. This way we get 2 looks, the line and the box. While studying the next sections use this LINES technique then split the line in half to look at two (2) side by side boxes. We are not working out of 8 Chain Thru Boxes.

If the box is a Partner relationship then both partners must be present, either be beside you or in front of you. This is very easy to see, especially for sight callers. If the partner pairing is beside you then we have a PRIMARY partner relationship (zero line) because our partner is actually standing beside us which means EVERYONE would have their partner at this time. From the same box, where both partner pairings are in front of us instead of adjacent to us, i.e. (zero line ladies chain) we still have a partner relationship only it is a Secondary Partner Station because our partner is not directly beside us. Chain the ladies from here and we would go back to the Primary Partner station (zero lines). We now have created two (2) possible stations, both from a partner relationship and all from the same box or line. Add a right and left thru, for in and out of sequence, and we now we have created four (4) stations out of one (1) Primary Partner Relationship. Two (2) stations would be Secondary and in or out of sequence. Two (2) would be Primary and in or out of sequence. This is how CRaMS contains 16 total Stations. Four (4) per Relationship X four (4) different relationships = 16 CRaMS stations from where we can launch get outs. There are great outs from each of these 16 stations.

If the box is a Corner relationship then there must be one Partner pairing in the box and each corner must also be present, i.e. (Heads square thru 4 Slide thru). Again, the partner pairing does not have to be adjacent. Look in front of you, it just may be partner. i.e. (zero box slide thru). If this is the case (partner pairing in front of you) and all corners are present then we must have a Primary Corner Station (everyone would have corner beside them). Chain the ladies to create a secondary corner relationship within the box of 4.

If the box is a Primary Opposite lady relationship there will be NO pairings in the box or the line. If this is the case we look diagonally across the set. There you will find 2 partner pairings which would indicate a Primary opposite lady relationship or “station”. Chain the ladies and we create a secondary opposite lady relation. This secondary opposite lady station can be easily *recognized* while sight calling. “Have you figured out yet that CRaMS is all about *recognizing* relationships?” The way to recognize this secondary opposite lady station is to look at the line and you will see the girls are transposed, (I have his girl and he has mine). As we sight call this arrangement comes flying by quite often. **START LOOKING FOR IT!**

If the box is a Right Hand Lady relationship then there must be one pairing in the box and NO corners would be present. Again, the pairing may be right in front of you. i.e. (heads square thru two (2) slide thru). This would be a Primary Right Hand Lady station. Chain the ladies and we create a secondary Right Hand Lady station. Why is this secondary? Because all of the components for a Right hand Lady station are present in the box of 4 but NO one has their Right Hand Lady beside them. This station is “sight calling 101”. This is the station sight callers are always searching around for. This where sight callers would pass thru, wheel and deal and then look to see if the paired couple is in the middle. If so, we zoom and then we know it is either a square thru 3 or pass thru to the corner. CRaMS callers **RECOGNIZE** this station way before hand and can execute get outs along the way.

These are the **ONLY** four (4) places the dancers can be. By knowing, understanding, practicing and trusting these techniques we know where the dancers are at **ALL** times. How cool is this? Is it worth pursuing? Any serious caller would think so.

CRaMS consists of a little isolated sight, a little memory, some tried and true flow modules and a couple clever get outs. It requires learning to use conversion modules to manipulate the choreography, (moving from station to station engineering your **GAME PLAN**).

Here’s the deal! We can talk about this until we are all blue in the face. Until you have attended a CRaMS callers clinic/school it will be difficult for any one to just begin implementing these techniques. So, if you are a serious caller wishing to hone in on these skills, think about attending a CRaMS caller school. You will be glad you did.

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