# CRaMS
# Controlled Resolution and Manipulation System

**A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHOREOGRAPHIC MANAGEMENT** - To fully understand the CRaMS method of choreographic management , it helps to have an appreciation of the history of choreographic controls in general. In the late 1950s, a new term was added to the square dance vocabulary. The term was "Hot Hash" and its impact on the activity was nothing short of spectacular. In the days before hash, a patter tip would typically concentrate on a single complete dance routine. Each had its own name and usually featured a specific choreographic theme or dance pattern. Most dancers had their favorites and , at most dances, these routines received the most mike time, a repetition that encouraged dancers to memorize, either intentionally or subliminally, the actions of the most popular dances. The result was that experienced dancers almost always knew what steps came next in whatever dance they were dancing and the only choreographic "control" a caller needed was a reasonably reliable memory.

Hash callers, on the other hand, played an entirely different game. They deliberately kept the calls unpredictable and repetition was scrupulously avoided. Each caller's choreography was improvised, seemingly on the spot, and the dancers had little opportunity to memorize the sequences. When a caller called hash, the dancers, to everyone's surprise, preferred to *not* know what was coming next. Instead of dancing the same dances over and over, hash dancers enjoyed testing their dancing skills and they took great pleasure in matching wits with the caller on a call-by-call basis. Hash calling introduced an exciting new element into the activity, a revolutionary new concept which changed, almost overnight, the face and character of square dancing forever. It also changed the job description of the average square dance caller!

Square dance historians have long debated whether hash calling created the dancers' appetite for choreographic variety, or whether it happened the other way around. There is no debating however that by the early 1960s, most dancers preferred their choreography to be purposely unpredictable and consistently non repetitive. Callers successfully satisfied this need by inventing hash, a monumental development, to be sure, but it came with a significant price tag since it meant that callers could no longer rely on memory alone to keep track of their calls. To control hash, new methods of choreographic management were needed and, in the early 1960s, a number of ground-breaking control methods were developed and introduced. Each new system approached the problem differently, but each of them were required to accomplished the three steps described below:

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| Step 1 | GET 'EM IN: | Maneuver the dancers into a particular FASR from which it is possible to call the programmed choreography; |
| Step 2 | GET 'EM GOING: | Call the programmed choreography, ending in a FASR for which the caller owns a memorized get-out; |
| Step 3 | GET 'EM OUT: | Call the Get-Out. |

The most popular control methods to emerge during this period are described below. It is interesting to observe that they are all still practiced today:

**MENTAL IMAGE** - The square is divided into four quadrants and the caller mentally follows the actions of the No. 1 man. A specified position for the No. 1 man within a given quadrant identifies a particular FASR for which there is an assigned get-out. The caller also needs to know - - and must

monitor while calling - - which calls in the routine produce a partner change. These are known as "X" calls and, before calling an indicated get-out, the effects of all "X" calls must be neutralized by calling another "X" call. Several variations of this method exist. Of these, the so-called **"Windmill System"** is the most well known.

**MODULE CALLING** - A module is defined as a series of one or more calls for which the caller knows the particular FASR that exists at both the beginning and the end of the series. There are five distinct modular categories: (1) **Get-Ins** start at home and bring the dancers to a known FASR; (2) **Get-Outs** start from a known FASR and return the dancers to home; (3) **Zeros** carry the dancers from a particular FASR to the same FASR; (4) **Conversions** carry thedancers from a known FASR to a different known FASR and, (5) Call **Equivalents** are modules that begin and end in the same FASRs produced by a given call. Complete dance routines are created in building block fashion, i.e., the caller piles one module on top of another (Get-In + Zero + conversion +Get-Out, etc.) and the caller's control comes from knowing beforehand the FASR that exists at the beginnng/end of each module. **Chicken Plucker** is the name of a set-piece routine that many module callers use as the framework for their modular constructions. Experienced module callers provide additional variety through the use of **Technical Zeros** (Modules which produce a zero effect while also interchanging the role of the original actives).

Module Calling became popular because the choreography was easy to control and because the modules themselves were easy to program. Module Calling's obvious downside is that it is a memory system and remains subject to the limitations of each caller's own memory skills.

**SIGHT CALLING** - When a caller has been free-wheeling and the dancers are in an unknown FASR, Sight Calling provides resolution formulas that allow a caller to return the dancers to their original home positions. Such formulas are possible because, with symmetric choreography, it is possible to control the actions of all eight dancers in a square by controlling the actions of only four side-by-side key dancers. When the early callers first confronted the dancers' newly found appetite for choreographic variety, the ability to sight call became their holy grail. For the first time, callers could present their patter programs in a truly extemporaneous fashion - - no limits, no restrictions, no caveats. Barring untenable or improper formation/arrangements, anything was possible and, secure in the knowledge that an accurate resolution was always available, a caller could now call randomly and strictly off the cuff.

Many resolution formulas have surfaced over the years and even today, new ones continue to appear. Kip Garvey's **"Odd/Even"** system is probably the most recent. When ready to resolve, Kip divides the square exactly in half and visually determines the distribution of the sight caller's four key dancers. Only three distributions are possible: (1) Four on one side and none on the other; (2) two on one side and two on the other; and ( 3), three on one side and one on the other. In the first two cases, the distribution is an even number and the caller uses simple two-couple Formation Management techniques to establish a Zero Line FASR that is either in or outof sequence. If the distribution is an odd number (as in No. 3), the caller manuevers the dancers into a Zero Box FASR which may also be in or out of sequence. Get outs from any of these FASR states are plentiful.

It was hoped that the development of infallible sight resolution techniques would motivate callers to optimize the variety in their programs and encourage them to experiment with choreographic diversity and contrast, but this has not yet happened. Sadly, the emphasis, in both callers' schools and in each caller's own self- study programs, has focused almost exclusively on the resolution process. Far too many callers have been conditioned to believe that their main job is to find the corner and that

their goal is to resolve the square accurately. Surprisingly, the importance of doing so in an interesting, surprising or unusual manner, continues to be inadequately stressed. While, to be sure, the calling skills that support sight resolution (Formation Management, Timing, Programming, Body Flow, etc.) are generally acknowledged , it rarely amounts to more than lip service and these subjects are seldom given the attention they deserve.

**COMBINATIONS:** Most popular callers today regularly combine techniques from at least two of the above-described methods in order to effectively manage and control their choreography. Typically, such callers are competent Sight Callers who understand the principles of Formation Management and the importance of smooth-flowing choreography . Most are also practicing Module Callers who have learned not only how to encapsulate each programmable high point in their choreographic arsenal into one or more modular "packages" but also how to carefully spot and place these packages throughout their programs for maximum effect.

**CRaMS** - Developed by Jerry Story, CRaMS stands for "Controlled Resolution and Manipulation System", By adding certain Mental Image-based techniques to both Sight and Modular methodology, . CRaMS is probably the most versatile "Combination" method currently available. While CRaMS controls are 100% modular, they have about as much to do with the time-honored Chicken Plucker approach to modular calling as a child's training wheels does with a Harley Davidson. Here's how the system works:

Imagine a moving square with a photographer taking pictures of the dancers as they execute the calls. Every photo freezes the action of the dancers in a different FASR state. A caller who has memorized both a get-in and a get-out for a given FASR controls that FASR and may then use it as a platform or "station" from which to launch whatever choreography a caller's program may require. To maximize the process, CRaMS callers are encouraged to "own" as many FASR stations as possible. Routines are built by bringng the dancers to a particular station, calling one or more program elements from there, and then calling a get out to return the dancers back home again. .

**CRaMS Get Ins and Get-Outs**: While many CRaMS callers are capable of using **sight resolution** techniques to bring the dancers into one or more selected operating stations, they are nevertheless also encouraged to memorize at least one modular get-in and one modular get-out for each of the stations they regularly activate. It is suggested that a student start by memorizing get-ins and get-outs for as many different facing line FASRs as possible. ( See the examples below). When the student has mastered facing lines, he or she may do the same with 8-chain thru set-ups, and so on.

The odds are that most one or two year callers will have already memorized a number of usable get-outs. These will work from their given FASRs no matter which control system a caller chooses to use, including CRaMS. As with all control systems, Get-Outs in which a tip's theme is supported or which achieve resolution in a unexpected or surprising way, are always effective.

**Between the Get-In and the Get-Out** This is the all-important core or heart of the CRaMS process. It is where CRaMS callers say what they want to say in any given routine. It is where they deliver the choreography that contains the essential elements of their programs and where a program's choreographic themes are most often exploited. It is also where callers may deliberately create choreographic variety. CRaMS callers do it by combining a series of theme-appropriate **Zeros** (to carry the "message") with various **Technical Zeros and Conversion Modules** (to carry the people).

Technical Zeros and Conversions are used most often as "people movers". **Mental Image**

callers use them - - as do CRaMS Callers - - whenever it is desirable to carry the dancers into each of the set's four quadrants. Sometimes also identified as **Inversion and Rotation** routines, these Modules are also used to move the dancers between the various FASR stations.

**LEARNING THE CRaMS SYSTEM** - A major advantage of CraMS is that it is easy to learn. All it takes to get started is for a caller to select a particular FASR station and memorize at least one supportive Get-In and Get-Out. Add a Zero or Two and the caller is ready to use the system. Another advantage is that callers may own as many stations as they can handle. Obviously, the more stations a caller owns, the greater the caller's ability to provide variety and choreographic interest. When using CRaMS, callers are limited only by the boundaries of memory and by the amount of time and effort they are willing to invest. It obviously requires a lot of hard work, study and practice and it is safe to say that complete mastery of the system won't happen overnight. The results, however, are well worth striving for.. Good Luck!

EXAMPLES:

RECOMMENDED LINE STATIONS
Cite the 16 line get-ins and get-outs from Jerry's original document
TECHNICAL ZEROS (achieve a zero effect while interchanging ends and centers)
From a ZL: RL Thru, Pass thru, Bend the line
From a Zero Box: Star thru/Pass Thru/Bend the Line/Star Thru
From a Lead to the Right Box (OW) All 8 circulate
CONVERSIONS
From ZB to ZL
Swing thru/Girls Circulate/Boys Trade/Boys Run/Bend the line
From ZL to ZB
Add a Star thru to the beginning and end of the above module
From ZL to OL (the four ladies chain effect)
Square thru/Trade By/Star Thru

This technical document and endorsement for CRaMS was written by Bill Peters. Bill was a seasoned veteran and highly skilled caller coach. We thank Bill for lending his time and talent to CRaMS before he passed away.