Modular Calling   by Tim Marriner

This method of choreographic management requires the caller to memorize a series of calls known as **modules** that move dancers from one known place (FASR) within a square to another. These places I refer to as **stations**. They provide the caller a point of reference to evaluate the needs of the dancers. If dancers are having difficulty for example, the caller might choose to string together a module to resolve the set. Otherwise, the caller can continue to add modules together to move the dancers to other stations. Keeping track of the dancers within the module is not necessary as long as the calls fit together properly, almost like stringing together words to create a logical sentence. Similarly, choreographic modules comprise calls that lead the dancers to a known place in the square. The caller knows the end result before delivering the module. They continue the process adding modules as necessary to eventually resolve the square. Some modules can be interchanged as **equivalents** (a series of calls that equals another call or series of calls) to provide more variety. Dancers have the ability to remember modules if danced repeatedly over a period of time so it is important to have many different types of modules that can be interchanged to avoid anticipation.

The places or stations callers use as reference points within a square are important to manage and control the dance action. Here are a few stations modular callers use on a regular basis.

1. Home: The place where the dancers started from in a squared set.

2. Zero Box: The place that results when either heads or sides Square Thru or any equivalent.

3. Across the Street Box: The place that results when either heads or sides Square Thru 2 Hands or any equivalent.

4. Zero Lines: The place that results when heads Lead Right and Circle to a Line or any equivalent. The men all have their original partners and are in normal lines.

5. Corner Lines: The place that results when either heads or sides Square Thru and Slide Thru or any equivalent. The men all have their original corners and are in normal lines.

6. Opposite Lady Lines: The place that results when from Zero Lines - 4 Ladies Chain or any equivalent. The men all have their original opposite lady and are in normal lines.

7. Right Hand Lady Lines: The place that results when from Corner Lines - 4 Ladies Chain or any equivalent. The men all have their original right hand lady and are in normal lines.

Some callers recognize more stations but are mostly modified from the core ones listed above taking account sequence states and other partner pairings. It is best to understand the fundamentals first before exploring other reference stations.

Modular calling relies heavily upon ones own ability to remember many different modules. To help keep track of all theses modules callers often categorize their memorized material that do specific functions. Here are some different types of modules callers use that assist moving the dancers from station to station.

Opener Module - a call or series of calls that starts the dance such as Bow to the Partner, Corner too, Circle Left.

Closer Module - a call or series of calls that concludes the dance such as All Eight to the middle with a great big yell!

Get In Module – a call or series of calls designed to move the dancers from their home position to a predetermined known place in the square such as from a squared set Heads Flutter Wheel, Sweep ¼, Pass Thru.

Get Out Module – a call or series of calls designed to move the dancers from a known place in the square to a resolved state with an Allemande Left, Right and Left Grand, Promenade, or Home.

Rotate Module - is a series of calls or call that changes the geographic location of the square by 90 degrees. From a completed double pass thru formation, the call Cloverleaf rotates the axis of the set 90 degrees. From facing lines, Pass Thru, and Bend the Line rotates the set again by 90 degrees.

Invert Module - changes the active and inactive dancers. From a squared set if the Heads Square Thru they become the "actives." From this Zero Box - Slide Thru, Pass the Ocean, Girls Trade the dancers are a Recycle away to an Allemande Left. The Heads are still the "actives" but insert the call All 8 Circulate (an invert module in this situation) and the Sides become the "actives" still a Recycle away to an Allemande Left.

Invert & Rotate Module - does both actions as described above at the same time. From a Zero Box - Star Thru, Pass Thru, Bend the Line, Slide Thru changes the active couples and rotates the square. FASR is unchanged in this example.

Equivalent Module – a call or series of calls with the ending result the same as that of another call or series of calls.

Zero Module – a call or series of calls designed to move the dancers from one position back to the same relative position creating a big "Nothing". Zero modules are a special form of equivalent modules classified as True Zero, Geographical Zero, Fractional Zero, and Technical Zero.

True Zero – any call or series of calls that restores the dancers to the exact same set up formation, arrangement, sequence, and relationship (FASR) that existed before. The same footprints do not have to be reoccupied. The call Eight Chain Four is an example of a True Zero.

Geographical Zero – a true zero with the dancer returning to the same footprints. The call Eight Chain Thru is an example of a Geographical Zero.

Fractional Zero – a call or series of calls that constitute a true zero if repeated a given number of times. A 1/2 zero must be done two times, 1/3 zero three times, ¼ zero four times. An example of a ½ zero would be Partner Trade, followed by another Partner Trade.

Technical Zero – a call or series of calls that returns the dancers to the same FASR but which also interchanges the ending position of the Heads and Sides. An example of this is from a Zero Line – Bend the Line. The centers are now ends and the ends are now centers.

All Geographic Zeros are True Zeros however not all True Zeros are Geographic Zeros. An Eight Chain 4 is a True Zero but not a Geographic Zero. Zeros can be a bit overwhelming; for example, from a Zero Line: Pass Thru, Tag the Line, Peel Off is a Technical Zero, and if called twice becomes a Fractional Zero which then becomes a True Zero and a Geographic Zero. Confused yet? Best not to over analyze Zeros, just trust they work.

One key to memorizing modules is keeping them short. They shouldn't contain more than 7 to 10 calls and should have a purpose. Singing call figures are another source for modules you might already have memorized and with a little modification can resolve to an Allemande Left or Right and Left Grand. Also, as a dancer you might have memorized a few pattern used repeatedly by other callers. These modules might seem over used but can be a good basis to start off from and can be slightly disguised with zeros and equivalents to make them seem new.

There are other possible sources that offer modular material; choreographic books, articles and web sites dedicated to written modules. Wherever you get the material be sure to work them out with choreographic checkers. Writing the modules down call by call to verify correctness will assist in memorizing the routine and provide confidence to trust the delivered material.

A good modular is in full control of the material being delivered and can manage the floor keeping the dancers moving in smooth patterns. They can skillfully maneuver the dancers from station to station with interchangeable modules that will provide an endless amount of variety and fun.