

Showmanship

by Tim Marriner

A showman is a person having flair for the dramatic or visual effectiveness; a style in which something is said or done as distinguished from its substance. In our activity, showmanship is more than just visual effectiveness on stage. It also involves verbal and nonverbal communication and interaction between you and the dancers that occurs both on and off stage. A public image or persona can be created with the help of showmanship. For our discussion, let's break the activity into three main time frames where showmanship can be utilized for Square Dancing; prior to the dance, at the dance, and after the dance.

Showmanship Techniques

1. Prior to the dance
 - a. Preparation and programming are key elements.
 - b. Personal appearance/Demeanor/Presence/Confidence - Smile!
2. At the dance - One Nighters/Classes/Festivals/Shared programs
 - a. Off Stage
 - > Entering a hall - Establish rapport with dancers
 - > Between tips - Being visible
 - b. On Stage
 - > Know the stage and equipment
 - > Choreography - Gimmicks/Experimentals/Get outs - set the tone early
 - > Singing Calls - adaptation - emphasis words, lyrics, and vocal dynamics
3. After The Dance - Leave them wanting more!
 - a. Departing - Salutations to the dancers
 - b. After Party Activities - Use proper judgment

Developing Style/Showmanship

1. Evaluate one's potential and know your abilities.
2. Evaluate others; research ideas.
3. Be genuine and unique but remember there is a difference between a showman and a showoff.

Conclusion

One who can make the easy look difficult is a showman.
One who can make the difficult look easy is an artist.