

Review of the Mainstream Program
Proposed Teaching Order
(November 19, 2008)
By Tim Marriner

A brief reflection of the past should provide better insight to the proposed CALLERLAB Teaching Order of the future. In 1974 CALLERLAB adopted the Sets in Order Basic 50 program of calls as well as the Extended 75. In 1977 Basic 1-38 was approved on a one year trial basis. In 1980 Basic 1-34, Extended Basic 35-47, and Mainstream 48-68 were approved. In 1981 Basic and Extended Basic were merged. As the activity evolved so did the program list. Some calls were dropped while others were added. Definitions became more explicit. Some restrictions were put in place. Even the naming of the calls themselves became more standardized. This standardization helped the activity become more accepted around the world. Dancers and callers could travel from dance to dance with the same expectations of fun and fellowship. Creativity never stops however and more and more calls were being introduced, hence other programs emerged; Plus, Advanced, and Challenge.

The CALLERLAB Basic Mainstream program is still the cornerstone for the activity. It is however more than a listing of calls; it's also a recommended teaching order. Unfortunately little consideration of the teaching order was given as calls were added to the program. Often calls were placed at the end of an existing program in the order they were accepted. Explicitly following the teach order became difficult. As a result, many callers developed their own method of introducing calls to new dancers that varied from the CALLERLAB recommendation. In 1991 a proposed new order was offered by the Mainstream committee only to be defeated. Recently however several leaders raised concern over the way new dancers were being taught. In an effort to expedite the process some pushed for a total revision of the Basic Mainstream Program but little compromise was found.

In 2004 the Mainstream Committee agreed to address the obvious teaching order problems. A focus group under the leadership of Bruce Simpers was formed with the hopes of obtaining a more concise teaching order. Several ideas were submitted but the task of reaching a consensus became daunting. An agreement was made to compile a document describing the principals of designing a new teaching order to rationalize changes. With help from the ad hoc committee, Clark Baker and Dottie Welch, a Teaching Order Design Principals document was approved. An experimental teaching order was designed with these principals in mind and in 2007 was approved on a one year trial basis. It was hoped research could be gathered to support the changes. To date very little feedback has been acquired.

The issue is to be voted on in 2009 but very few have taken even a first glance at the proposal. The Proposed Teaching Order after all is still only a recommendation. Most callers teaching new dancers will continue to do so with their own proven methods. Interestingly enough many of the self changes callers have made over the years are being addressed. On the other hand someone teaching for the first time might adopt these seamless changes with no problems. Still, the order might not meet everyone's expectations. The improvements however should not go unnoticed.

First of all the call Split Two, a remnant of Split the Ring, was moved from call #11 on the existing list to call #14 on the proposed list. When Split the Ring was dropped Split Two was never relocated within the existing order. On the proposed list the action appears after the Separate family to optimize usage.

Next, Veer Left/Veer Right was moved from call #47 on the existing list to call # 19 on the proposed list. It was agreed the call would have more usage to assist with Lead Right, Bend the Line, Trades and Circulates if introduced earlier. Bend the Line was also moved from call #23 of the existing list to call #20 of the proposed list. This was done to assist the calls described above as well as reinforce lines before being required to Circle to a Line. On the existing list Circle to a Line was taught before Bend the Line.

Next, Circulates were moved from call #50 on the existing list to call #21 on the proposed list. This change provides more floor time for Circulates to reinforce formation identification of two faced lines and waves. Often the Circulate family is taught in parts, working As Couples, Named Dancers, and All 8 first then later introducing Single File and Split/Box.

One clerical change needs to be made. Call # 26 on the proposed order should read Walk Around the Corner to reflect the Mainstream vote taken last year and will be amended accordingly.

Next, the Trade Family was moved from call #40 on the existing list to call #36 on the proposed list. The reasoning was to start the action from Two Faced Lines then later reinforce them from Waves. It was also felt it was a better tool to teach the action Swing Thru which is listed before Trade on the existing list but later on the proposed list. In that regard, Swing Thru call #38 on the existing list was moved to call #39 on the proposed list. This may appear to be later but actually it was moved up right after the Ocean Wave family to support an action done from waves along with Trades and Runs. In the same vein, Pass the Ocean was moved from call #36 on the existing list to call #41 on the proposed list mostly to make room for Run to be placed after Swing Thru allowing an easy resolution from Waves.

Spin the Top was moved from call #56 on the existing list to call #59 on the proposed list to better utilize Cast Off $\frac{3}{4}$ beforehand. On the existing list Spin the Top is listed before Cast Off $\frac{3}{4}$ making it much more difficult to describe the centers action. On the proposed list this problem is corrected making it possible to teach the centers action with the $\frac{3}{4}$ cast description.

Lastly, Single Hinge/Couples Hinge was moved from call #67 on the existing list to call #56 on the proposed list. This change was also done in an effort to better utilize the action sooner with existing calls.

There have been some cosmetic changes and an attempt to spit Basic between the columns as A and B. Some areas host open dances with new dancers and this division assist with these events. Non English speaking countries also need to teach terminology not listed; something taken for granted in the U.S. The division of Basic is very useful in this respect.

Is this all that needs to be changed? Probably not, but it is a starting point that is better than the existing teaching order. Could amendments be made to improve this proposal? Sure, but a strong case would have to be made supporting the Teaching Order Design Principals. Arguments could be made that the programs are not balanced, redundancies are not being considered or that the two programs should be integrated if Mainstream is the destination. The charge of the Ad Hoc Committee was to provide a revision of the existing teaching order based on the current programs. Understanding the rationale behind the changes should provide evidence and support of the improvements made by the Proposed Teaching Order with the hopes the membership will give this proposal a closer look for approval.

Respectfully Submitted,
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