USE OF STANDARD APPLICATIONS
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The concept of "Standard Applications" has been with us since around 1990 and has become accepted as a valuable tool when discussing choreographic applications. Prior to conception of the term "Standard Applications" the only terms used when discussing differences in choreographic applications were "APD" and "DBD". Unfortunately, there was no definitive answer to the question of which choreography was APD/DBD and which was not, we could only explain what the terms stood for i.e. "All Position Dancing" and "Dance By Definition". The reason for this ambiguity was the fact that while one caller and set of dancers would consider a certain choreographic application as APD/DBD, another caller and set of dancers would consider the same application as routine and not APD/DBD. This situation led to much confusion and criticism of both concepts. Because of this confusion and ambiguity, a need was identified to develop a means to define different choreographic applications, in clear-cut terms. The CALLERLAB Choreographic Applications Committee was charged with the task of researching this situation and in developing an answer to this problem.

This project was begun in 1988 and included research and analysis of choreography from all over the square dance activity. Although most callers certainly realized it, one of the first results was the realization that there are certain applications, i.e. formations and arrangements (F/A), for each move which are used much more often than others. A major goal was to determine the choreographic applications (F/A) which are called most often. Once this information was gathered and analyzed, these applications could be identified and listed, thus providing callers with a very valuable tool when discussing choreographic differences. Thus the concept of "STANDARD APPLICATIONS" was born and has now been with us over three years. It is becoming widely accepted as a valuable tool for caller communications and a major step forward in the search for ways to increase new dancer success. The basis for the concept of Standard Applications can be found in the definition, i.e. "The formation(s) and arrangement(s) from which a move can be called with nearly 100% success at an open dance or festival." A major point of this concept is that CALLERLAB did not establish nor define which positions are to be named "Standard". The committee merely collected the data of what F/As are being called most frequently and then provided a report of this information.

After more than four years of hard work by the Choreographic Applications Committee, the result of this project was the publication of two caller aides which provide a listing of the most frequently used applications (F/A). Both books, STANDARD MAINSTREAM APPLICATIONS and STANDARD PLUS APPLICATIONS, are now available through the CALLERLAB office. Contact the office - CALLERLAB@aol.com. The documents are available at no cost to CALLERLAB Members on the CALLERLAB web site - www.callerlab.org. These books contain a listing of the F/As used most frequently for each program.

Now that we have the means to precisely define differences in choreographic applications, the terms "APD" and "DBD" are no longer needed when discussing choreographic applications. This in no way implies that the choreography which has been identified as APD/DBD should not be used. This only means that we should now use the term "Standard Applications" when discussing choreographic differences.

Certain applications become "Standard" because they are the ones used most often. That is precisely the point of the Standard Applications books. The books are not intended nor do they in any way establish what is "Standard", they merely report what is being called most often. Nothing in the concept of Standard Applications is intended to reduce or limit the amount of non-standard choreography being used. It is simply a tool to be used to alert callers to the fact they are calling material which the average dancer may have some trouble with. This will help callers identify those places in their choreography where they may need to provide some additional assistance to help the dancers succeed.

One of the major benefits of the Standard Applications books is that they provide the most frequently used F/As for the listed moves. There are callers who regularly call and dancers who can dance moves from many F/As not listed as "Standard". For instance there are dancers who can Coordinate from Facing Lines of Four, Relay The Deucey from Left Handed waves, and who can Spin Chain Thru from Left Handed BBGG waves. There is nothing wrong with this and there is nothing in the concept of Standard Applications which indicates callers should not use this type choreography. What is contained in the guidelines concerning Standard Applications is that when we do call non-standard applications we should be aware that some dancers will require additional help and that we should be prepared to provide that help, if needed. We should not be caught off guard and expect them to execute non-standard applications with the same proficiency as they do Standard F/As. Of course when we are calling to dancers who can dance non-standard choreography automatically, we will provide less help.

Calling a dance without using at least some non-standard F/As can result in a program without challenge which can very easily become boring and uninteresting. Through research, imagination, and some work callers can use the information in the Standard Applications books to add bit of spice to their calling by including some non-standard choreography into their program. Most experienced callers agree the innovative and imaginative use of non-standard choreography can add variety and individual flavor to a caller's program.

Another benefit of the Standard Applications books is that they provide the minimum applications dancers need to learn to be successful at nearly any open dance or festival. By using the information in the books an instructor can concentrate on the applications most needed by the new dancers. The additional non-standard applications can be covered during workshops or theme tips during regular club dances.

One of the problems of not using the information in the Standard Applications book is that many callers calling for a group they do not see regularly do not realize they are calling unfamiliar (non-standard) material. This type material is the kind the average dancer will most likely have trouble with. Not because they are poor dancers nor that their caller did a poor job. It is just that they have not been given enough training (repetition) in the non-standard applications to become familiar with them. Some callers (usually newer callers) calling for these dancers are caught off guard when dancers have trouble with the material they were calling. They would say "What is wrong with these dancers? My dancers don't have any problem with this stuff." They simply do not realize they are calling non-standard choreography because they are calling what they always call and to them it is standard.

The following is provided as one example of the information available in the books. The Mainstream book lists the Standard Application for Swing Thru from Right Hand Ocean Waves as "ALL ARRANGEMENTS". What this means, of course is that ANY Right Hand Wave is considered Standard including (BGGB, GBBG, BBGG, GGBB, BGBG, GBGB), not just the Right Hand Wave with boys at the end. The book further states that Standard Applications for Swing Thru include "ALL ARRANGEMENTS" from the following Formations: 8 Chain Thru, 1/4 Tag, 3/4 Tag, Double Pass Thru, and Trade By.

Many callers agree that many of the problems in square dancing today can be traced directly to poor teaching. The concept of Standard Applications can help, if instructors will use the information available. Adequate teaching means different things to different callers. Some feel that by teaching the definition and showing the moves from one or two F/As, the dancers should be able to dance all other applications (F/As) with the same proficiency. The average dancer automatically executes the moves they are very familiar with. They gain this automatic reaction by repetition of the moves from a certain set of starting F/As. In most cases, if they have not had adequate repetition to react automatically, they do not have time to recall the definition, then put that definition to work while actually dancing. If the caller provides enough time for them to recall the definition, then react to the definition, a dance with stop and go action will result. The automatic reaction comes only after a certain number of repetitions from a certain set of F/As. This repetition and the use of specific F/As more frequently than others is the basis for the concept of "Standard Applications". Again CALLERLAB did not establish these Standard positions, it merely reported what is being called most frequently.

Simply learning the definition of moves does not translate into dancer success. While there are many dancers who are be able to recall the action required from unfamiliar (non-standard) F/A, they will not be able to react automatically nor as smoothly as from the F/A they dance most often.

The Illustrated Handbooks (available thru Palomino Records) are very valuable tools and provide a wealth of excellent reference material. One problem with the handbooks, in the context of this discussion, is that they do not provide any information about how to use the moves, that is, what F/As should be used when teaching or calling any of the moves. Information about which F/As are used most often is contained in the Standard Applications books. This information makes these books excellent companions for the Illustrated Handbooks.

The question then is "Where do we learn what F/As to use when teaching and calling these moves?" For instance, should we spend 2, or more, class sessions teaching Scoot Back from every possible F/A, including all six Right Hand waves, all six Left Hand waves, all six Right Hand 1/4 Tags, all six Left Hand 1/4 Tags, and ALL POSSIBLE columns? Believe it or not there are callers who say they do this. These same callers go on to say that when their dancers graduate they will not be given the chance to dance all these non-standard F/As. A valid question is "Why spend valuable class time on these applications they won't need? Why not spend class time giving them repetition on the F/As they will hear most often?" How do we know that this type of indepth teaching (and learning) is not required for every move? Normally we learn this through experience or from calling tools such as the Standard Applications books.

It has been estimated that if we tried to teach every possible F/A for every move on the Mainstream Program it could take at least 2 full nights (or more) of class to teach (and learn) each move. This would translate into nearly 2 1/2 years in class, figured as follows:
    66 M/S moves x 2 nights = 132 nights
    132 nights divided by 4.3 = 30.7 months
    30.7 months divided by 12 = 2.5 years

If we had an unlimited amount of time for classes we may be able to provide this degree of indepth teaching (learning) for every move. The reality is that few, if any, class situations allow enough time to teach (and learn to react automatically) every possible F/A for all moves being taught. There simply is not enough time. Since we do not have unlimited time we must limit our teaching in some way. Without the use of Standard Applications each caller chooses on his/her own which moves to teach indepth and which ones to teach only the Standard F/As. When calling to other new dancers taught by some other caller, we may tend to think they have had the same training as the dancers we taught. This can lead to frustration on the part of the new dancers as well as the caller. The use of Standard Applications seems to be a logical and organized way to provide the basic training each new dancer needs.

Thank you for taking the time to read this article, our goal in presenting this information is to continue the process of improving square dancing by making it easier for new dancers to succeed. If you agree or disagree please let me know your thoughts. I feel we can improve our activity by taking positive steps, and I believe acceptance of the concept of Standard Applications and use of the Standard Applications books are very positive steps.

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