

Anatomy Of A Singing Call

The singing call is a fundamental part of modern western square dancing. From early in beginner lessons through the challenge levels, you will find singing calls. They are useful as a relaxing contrast to the mental intensity of today's patter calls as well as bringing a sense of completeness or closure to a tip. Take away the singing call that dancers are expecting and you can feel the disappointment and sometimes the frustration from the dancers. Singing calls are important.

This month we have a guest contributor to take you through the structure of a singing call. Eric Henerlau has been calling since 1980 and while he has a home program north of the San Francisco Bay area, you will find him on weekends and festivals throughout the country and overseas. He is a staff recording artist for Blue Star Music with some big hits to his name so he is well-qualified to present "The Anatomy Of A Square Dance Singing Call"

Square dance tips are often comprised of two parts: a "hash" or "patter" call where the caller gives calls without singing, and a singing call which is a song that is remixed to fit into a square dance. In a singing call, the dancers execute a sequence of calls (figure), and then take their corner dancer as their new partner. The new couple promenades to the boy's home. The figures are repeated three more times, and after the last figure each dancer gets his or her original partner back.

Almost all singing calls follow the same highly-structured pattern consisting of seven parts:

Opener	Grand Square, Circle Left, 4 Ladies Chain, etc.	64 beats
Figure 1	Heads.... ...Swing corner, promenade	64 beats
Figure 2:	Heads.... ...Swing corner, promenade	64 beats
Middle Break	Grand Square, Circle Left, 4 Ladies Chain, etc.	64 beats
Figure 3	Sides.... ...Swing corner, promenade	64 beats
Figure 4	Sides.... ...Swing corner, promenade	64 beats
Closer	Grand Square, Circle Left, 4 Ladies Chain, etc.	64 beats

Singing calls are meant to be choreographically relaxing. They are not usually meant to have challenging movements. Many times, figures will repeat. Take the time to enjoy the song. During Grand Square, use the full 32 beats allowed for the figure.

Notice the strict structure of the singing call: each section is 64 beats of music (usually 8 measures of 8 beats). The music and caller make it clear when each section starts.

At the middle break, every dancer should have his or her original opposite dancer as a partner (halfway point of the singing call).

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If your squares break down during any section, form a squared set quickly so you are ready for the next figure or break. The boy should go to his home. That would be your re-entry point into the singing call. Don't worry who your partner is. If you don't form a square, you will be wandering around for the rest of the song. Note: it is critical the boy remembers where his home is as the girls will be changing partners after each figure. If the boy doesn't get to his home, the square will fail.

Thank you Eric for sharing your experience. Readers, your comments are always welcome, please send them to: buddy@buddyweaver.com