

MS Workshop:  
**"Giving Meaning to the Dance"**  
by Peter Höfelmeyer and Martin Kull

## Foreword

For the past three years, we, Peter and Martin have been discussing the topic "Giving Meaning to the Dance" in our podcast [callerlounge.de](http://callerlounge.de), in over eighty episodes. In this workshop, we operate on two foundational beliefs:

- Square Dance primarily consists of dance motion and choreography. The pursuit of excellent choreography is equally important as mastering dance motion. In other words, understanding definitions and dancing motions proficiently are equally expected and essential.
- Well-danced Square Dance looks significantly better and brings even more joy.

We would like to express our gratitude for allowing us to present our convictions in this workshop. We hope that everyone who participated had a great time. If you'd like to learn more, please feel free to reach out to us.

## Workshop Structure:

We have planned six tips, each with its own theme. The themes are interconnected:

1. Introduction and Willingness to Dance
2. The Joy of Dancing / Wanting to Dance
3. Synchronicity in the Square
4. Square Breathing
5. Putting Pressure on the Caller - Not on the Tempo
6. Synchronicity in the Hall - the Bigger Picture

## **Tip #1: Willingness to Dance**

What do we mean by "willingness to dance"? Why is it important to project this attitude, and how can we achieve it?

Willingness to dance means projecting our inner attitude and enthusiasm for dancing outward, while maintaining an upright posture and basic body tension. These factors are crucial for dancing in harmony with the music and connecting with our fellow dancers.

An upright posture has two significant effects. It signals our willingness to dance externally and provides the necessary stability during dancing.

Here are three tips for achieving an upright body posture:

1. **The Fountain**  
Imagine standing firmly on both feet. Visualize a fountain of water rising from below, straightening your body before cascading down the sides. While your shoulders relax, your head remains upright and high.
2. **Chest Forward**  
Imagine an imaginary band pulling you diagonally forward from your breastbone. This simple thought is sufficient to adopt the desired upright posture.
3. **"Turn" Your Shoulders**  
You can extend your arms sideways and rotate your palms upward. This action causes your shoulders to move backward, automatically straightening your upper body. Another method is to let your arms hang at your sides and rotate your palms so that your thumbs point forward. If your thumbs point forward, your shoulders and chest will be open, and you'll maintain an upright and stable posture.

### **Active Arm Posture**

In addition to an upright body posture, maintaining an active arm posture is crucial.

So, what do we mean by this? Let's imagine we're standing in the typical partner setup. The Boy has his right palm facing upward, while the Lady has her left palm facing downward, resting in the Boy's hand. The hands are roughly at waist height. Here's a simple test: If the Boy slightly raises his hand, he should feel a slight resistance, and the same applies in reverse. Even if one of the dancers takes a step to the side, an active arm posture allows them to perceive their partner's movement. This active arm posture not only stabilizes the dance position but also promotes interaction between dancers. It enables discreet assistance and contributes to harmonious partnering.

## **Tip #2: The Joy of Dancing**

To make Square Dance a genuine dance pleasure for all, it's crucial to take responsibility as a dancer and experience the joy of dancing.

This includes mastering the dance step, where you step to the beat of the music with the ball of your foot. For example, when you move your right foot forward, the power comes from your left foot, propelling your body forward. Ensure that you move forward in the space.

During Arm Turns, an active arm posture is vital. This allows you to lean slightly backward during the turn, generating a momentum that enhances the fun and energy of the dance.

"Desiring to dance" also means wanting to dance together. "The eyes dance along" - this means seeking eye contact with your fellow dancers. It's remarkable how a simple eye contact can impact the atmosphere.

The caller can provide excellent choreography set to good music, but the responsibility for the dance experience lies with you as a dancer.

## **Tip #3: Synchronicity in the Square**

Square Dance is a formation dance, and every dancer is responsible for ensuring that the figures are executed in synchrony. This requires fundamental knowledge of the number of steps required for each figure. When steps are danced in rhythm with the correct posture, synchronicity naturally follows.

Synchronicity enhances orientation since formations become recognizable. Hand contacts at the right moment enable mutual support. Synchronous dancing - when everyone moves uniformly to the music and all dancers end up in formation simultaneously - promotes shared dance enjoyment.

## **Tip #4: Square Breathing**

That is the supreme discipline of Square Dance - the interaction between active and inactive dancers.

The inactives shape the square, while the active dancers require space. The inactives give up space for the actives but reclaim it just before the figure is completed.

Let's take the example of "Heads Square Thru". The heads actively dance a Square Thru 4 and require space. The inactive sides step out of the center, yielding this space to the heads. When the heads give hands for the fourth Pull-by and essentially stand on a line, it's the right moment for the sides to move toward the heads and prevent the square from expanding.

Square Breathing always requires thinking inward and staying close to the center. It's always about PASS THRU! Pass Thru consists of only 2 steps. A well-danced Pass Thru keeps the Square together, shortens the paths, and maintains dance energy.

Take a closer look at "thinking inward" during the figures Couples Circulate and Ferris Wheel. The principle is always "as little as possible, as much as necessary - and always the exact number of steps."

Pay attention to the movements of other dancers and strive to be prepared, even when you don't know precisely what's coming next.

Finally, here's an example of the beautiful effect of Square Breathing in most Singing Calls: Before the call "Swing," the boys simply stop, and only the ladies move toward the boys - the result is that the couples are already on a circular path, and during the Swing, each couple has enough space for the turn.

### **Tip #5: "Putting Pressure" on the Caller - Not on the Tempo**

It's all about attitude: Not only does the caller give commands, but the dancers can also demand them. When dancers move synchronously and fluidly, there won't be any stop-and-go.

The demanding body language of the dancers will be responded to by the caller. If dancers show an interest in synchrony and fluid movement, the caller will also seek new appropriate combinations. Many new pathways will become apparent almost naturally because the dancers present them. The caller sees the beauty of smooth direction changes.

Of course, the caller won't always provide the expected call, but that's also not a problem because the changed attitude toward dancing for both dancers and caller makes these "surprises" manageable. Success

quickly follows for everyone. It's not about being the first or the fastest. It's about dancing forward in the room actively, decisively, and with as few unnecessary turns as possible, always consciously taking all the steps, neither more nor less.

It's best to always keep an eye on the other dancers and try to consciously observe their movements so you can anticipate what's coming next.

### **Tip #6: Synchronicity in the Hall - the Bigger Picture**

Finally, let's expand this concept to the entire hall, with all squares aligned to create an impressive spectacle.

An acoustic signal can bring us all together. (GRD SQ - 1,2,3 Clap)

In conclusion, we've summarized several tips to help you not only dance better but also have a fantastic dance experience. Dancing is not just movement; it's also communication and expression. Enjoy it and share the joy with your fellow dancers!