Calling Through Ring Formations

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English Abstract

This document gathers my experiences and thoughts about calling 'in the ring'. By this term I understand all formations that can occur before the caller names dancers by terms such as *heads* or *sides* or by their couple numbers, usually in the very beginning of a tip – formations which include circles, stars, thars or the alamo ring. The reader should be a square dance caller and familiar with the theoretical terms involved in the FASR system.

Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Dieser Artikel richtet sich an Squaredance-Caller mit einer gewissen Erfahrung und Kenntnis des FASR-Systems. Er fasst meine Erfahrungen im Callen 'im Ring' zusammen. Darunter verstehe ich all die Formationen, die auftreten, bevor Begriffe wie *Heads*, *Sides* oder die Nummern der Einzelpaare gefallen sind. Das Callen im Ring scheint mir eine aussterbende Kunst, die immer ein wenig den Geruch des Altmodischen hat; oft scheint die mehr traditionelle erste Sequenz eines Tips eher eine lästige Pflicht.

Inhalt des Artikels ist nicht die Verwendung ungewöhnlicher Formationen oder anderer Arrangements als *normal* und *half-sashayed*, sondern eher das Durchmustern und Verallgemeinern des Standardmaterials – mit dem Ziel, eine größere Souveränität im Umgang damit zu bekommen. Ich habe mich inzwischen weitgehend von der Handvoll gängiger Routinen lösen können und calle auch im Kreis nach Sicht.

Introduction

I have the feeling that the handling and knowledge of the ring formations is a more or less endangered art. Callers today are eager to get into more 'modern' formations such as waves, lines and columns, and this is also what their dancers expect. Higher levels than Basic mainly expand the repertoire by non-ring calls and formations; this may be one of the reasons why the ring formations always feel a bit traditional and dated. Today, every tip starts with a ring routine, but this custom often seems to be more an inconvenient duty, which is handled by one of just a handful possible routines.

Years ago I visited a club in Hamburg, and the caller, **Ilona Airoldi**, decided to dedicate the first almost ten minutes to ring formations only. There was not a single time she used the term *heads* or *sides*, and she managed to keep us in a continuous, natural and diversified movement without making a fuss out of it or even making use of other than the normal and half sashayed arrangements. I was rarely so much impressed but sadly, I failed to tell it her. We **must** make people know if we like what they do: Criticism is so easy and omnipresent.

Calling through ring formations is usually not exactly easy. Most of these formations are turning, and in some cases two groups of dancers are constantly shifting against each other – in these cases the caller will need a good timing.

On the other hand, we can usually be sure that the dancers keep always in sequence. This is a big advantage in the resolution process – it is enough to bring one dancer to his partner or corner to be sure that everybody is there. This is a result of the special fourfold rotational symmetry in the circle: We cannot only rotate it by 180° as any other formation but also by 90°.

Structure of this Document

Basically, we can distinguish seven or eight different formations (or better: formation types). This document includes one chapter for each of them, covering its characteristics and possibilities – see the index above.

But let us before start with some more general theory.

FASR Theory

Layout Model

For the most basic grouping of dancer formations, it is good to only consider the spot the dancers occupy, for the moment neglecting their facing directions. If we look this way at lines, columns, an eight chain thru formation and many other ones, we will realize that they all put the dancers on the same spots within a 4 x 2 matrix. I call such a matrix the *Layout Model* of the formations. In most Mainstream calling we only have a few of these models: The 4 x 2 matrix as the most frequent one, the 8 x 1 matrix for tidal formations, and a 2+4+2 alignment for quarter tag, diamonds and similar formations. The only exception is the static square, which has its own layout model.

The ring formations covered here make use of three different layout models: I call them the *Circle Set-Up*, the *Promenade Set-Up* and the *Four Against Four Set-Up*. The first one is the layout model for circles, single file promenade, right and left grand formations, and alamo rings. Promenade formations and thars are based on what I call the *Promenade Set-Up*. Only stars of four are special: We have four dancers turning their star, the other waiting, for example at home, facing possibly straight into the middle or – more likely – towards the direction where the star dancers are coming from.

Formation

We will soon be talking about the different *formations* that belong to each of these layout models. In my theory of formations and my personal abbreviation system (which I hope to present one day at another place) I accept that there are usually two different formations that are very much related as one can be reached from the other by having all dancers doing a *U Turn Back*. Examples include right and left handed waves as well as infacing and outfacing lines. In my abbreviation system I use upper case letters for the more common formations (which are always consistent to the Callerlab system) and lower case letters for their sibling formation. Using the above examples: I notate [W] and [w] for right and left hand waves, or [L] and [l] for infacing and outfacing lines.

In the ring, most formations also occur in pairs: Allemande thars and wrong way thars are an obvious example, single file promenade after *Circle Left* and after *Circle Right* another one. An alamo ring on the other hand has no sibling, as a *U Turn Back* of all dancers will simply result in another alamo ring – the difference exists only in terms of

arrangement.

We will discuss these effects together with each single formation in the dedicated chapters.

Arrangement

The term *arrangement* describes the exact distribution of boys and girls within a given formation. The chapters dedicated to the formations themselves will reveal a lot of cases where we have only two or four possible arrangements instead of the theoretical six. The reason is that in many ring formations the borders between the couples are blurring. Just consider a circle: There is no difference between a 'normal' arrangement (boys left, girls right) and a half sashayed arrangement.

As Callerlab did not define abbreviations for the formations discussed here, they also did not define the arrangements. I found my own abbreviations which try to stay close to Callerlab in that the most simple and 'natural' setting is always called 'normal' and denoted by the number [0]; an arrangement that is the exact opposite would be called 'half-sashayed' and symbolized by a [5] – note that according to Callerlab '[1/2]' should be used; I stick with the change initiated by Rich Reel (all8.com) who for good reasons prefers the '[5]'.

An arrangement that keeps two boys together and two girls together is represented here by '[1]' and its opposite '[2]' (if existing in that formation). The arrangements formed of one normal and one half-sashayed couple are logically called [3] and [4].

Sequence

The only really ambitious (and most successful) square dance theory, the FASR model, uses a parameter to measure the sequence of dancers. It keeps the information if the boys, the girls, all, or none are in sequence.

It is typical for the calling in ring formations that the *Sequence* does never change – or better: Without the usage of one of the dancer denominators *heads* or *sides* or a couple number it is plain impossible to change it. Therefore, we will not consider sequence in this document, usually assuming that all dancers are always in sequence. There is little point in having dancers out of sequence in a ring formation: For the dancers, this does not offer any special sensation but solutions become apparently difficult if not impossible.

In a few cases a particular call allows a change of the sequence – I will then mention this as a valuable

tool in the resolving process for the re-construction the original sequence.

Relationship

As opposed to the *Sequence,* which can and does not change while calling in the ring, the *Relationship* of dancers typically changes with every call.

There are particular situations where the dancers continually shift against each other – examples include *Girls Make a Left Hand Star*, or *Boys Take a Backtrack*. After such a call, the relation between the inner and outer dancer group is undefined, and if we do not want to make vague assumptions about the timing, the only possible way out would need a call like *Find Your Partner/Corner*. Finding the partner and the corner do both only work if all dancers are in sequence.

Relationship has different notations: the classical one, featured by *Callerlab*, uses the letters 'p c o r' for partner, corner, opposite and right hand 'lady'. Rich Reel introduced another system with tick symbols (' '' ''') where the number of ticks means the distance from partner, ['] meaning with corner, [''] with opposite, etc. As I include lower case letters in my formation abbreviations, I adapted Rich Reels system, adding the small zero [°] to indicate 'with partner'. Sometimes I instead use superscript small numbers [^{0123}] for partner – corner – opposite – right hand lady relationship. As Rich points out, the three ticks (or the number ^{3}) clearly do manifest the long way home.

Relative Relationship

In the ring formations, relationships are always an important aspect. Therefore I want to be able to notate with every routine if it leads to a change of relationship, and how much.

Although I did everything to avoid unfamiliar symbols in this essay, I want to introduce here the system I found. Similar to the increasing number of ticks in Rich Reel's system, I understand that the tension increases when we go to the corner and decreases when we come back to the partner. For a musician, it is like going to the dominant and coming back to the tonic. Trying to avoid letters and dig-

its (which represent formations and arrangements), I chose arithmetical signs: [+] means 'more tension' which happens by going from the partner to the corner, from there to the opposite, to the right hand lady, to the partner. [–] is the opposite direction, releasing tension. [±] means a change by two places (which can be understood both by building tension or releasing tension), [=] signifies that we did not change relationship.

Neutral Call

In many of the ring formations there is at least one call that is used frequently. Its effect is only a change of relationship, in the best case by two places so that calling it two times in a row will re-establish the original FASR. In analogy to a mathematical term I call this call the **neutral call** because it does not disturb the formation. For each of the ring formations I will check the existence of such a neutral call. The idea here is not to list all possible zero routines but the one or sometimes two calls the dancers are most likely to expect when the formation is reached.

Focus of this Article

On the following pages, we will have a closer look on each of the formations, in a more or less 'natural' teaching order. The idea is not to introduce fancy arrangements and unusual applications but to sift through the material used most of the time and to try to generalize it in order to get a broader repertoire. We all practice wrong way thars with our students at a particular point in time, but we should also make use them – sure not as often as *Right and Left Thru*, but nevertheless use them. Even if we regard allemande thars in mixed arrangements as a topic for a workshop, this should not prevent us from a use of normal and half sashayed arrangements.

Although most European callers do almost all their calling from sight, in the ring they rely on some (but usually very few) modules. Why not learn sight calling here as well? A closer view might show that it is less difficult than many people might think.

Circles of Eight [RING], [ring]

Formations

On first glance, the reader might assume that *Circle Left* and *Circle Right* are two different formations. For obvious reasons, they are not – both are in fact the same formation. The body flows certainly differ but although it would be very useful to keep the

body flow information within the FASR abbreviation, it is certainly not part of the formation.

We will therefore symbolize all infacing circles, moving in any direction or not, by the abbreviation [RING] – I decided to use 'four letter words' for all ring formations to make them easily distinguishable from the better-known ones defined by Callerlab.

Not very popular but nevertheless possible in Mainstream is a circle of outfacing dancers which I always call [ring] (remember that I change the case of the abbreviation to represent the sibling formation).

Some authors (like **Rich Reel** on his wonderful web site all8.com) claim to make no difference between a static square and a circle, moving or not. I think this is not fully correct although it is a trivial task to transform one into the other. My reasons include:

- [S] allows more arrangements than [RING] (see below).
- As a result, *Roll Away* from [5S] will mean to have the boys roll in front of the girls; *Roll Away* from a moving circle is defined as always the girls rolling in front of the boys.
- *Boys Run Right* from [S] will lead to four disconnected mini waves whereas *Boys Run Right* from a circle will lead to an alamo ring.

Movement

We all know that circles usually move: Left or right, but also up to the middle and back. The FASR system does not allow symbolizing this information. I use different symbols for a 'normal' and a 'reversed' movement but this would certainly lead too far if it was part of this document concentrating on the choreographic aspect.

What is the 'normal' movement in a circle – *Circle Left*, or *Circle Right*? I think we can agree that *Circle Left* is by far more common and also feels somewhat more natural. Apart of dancer usage, I think the reason is a secret rest of some 'real dancing' where a boy leads a girl, and sometimes perhaps even tears her...

Arrangement

Opposed to the static square, a circle makes it impossible to distinguish between the couples; therefore in a symmetrical setting we can only have two arrangements, which I abbreviate in the following way:

- [0]: Alternating boys and girls ('bgbgbgbg')
- [1]: Pairs of boys and girls ('bbggbbgg')

Get-In from Static Square

The following get-ins all do start from [S] and lead to everyone in sequence:

Routine	Result
• *Join Hands and Circle Left* • *Circle Right*	**[0RING]**
• *Heads Roll Away – All Join Hands and Circle* • *Head Ladies Chain 3/4 – Side Boys Courtesy Turn Them – All Circle Left*	**[1RING]**

Routine	Result
• *Circle Left – California Twirl and Circle Right* (gimmick) • *All U Turn Back, Join Hands and Circle Left* • *Heads Pass Thru – Sides Pass Thru – Circle Left*	**[0ring]**
• *Heads California Twirl, Sides U Turn Back – Circle Left*	**[1ring]**

Get-Ins from Other Ring Formations

(Note: The symbols for the other formations are introduced in their respective chapters below.)

To Infacing Circle:

From	To [0RING]
[PROM]	• *Back Out, Circle Left*
[prom]	• *Back Out, Circle Right*
[5GRND]	• *Wrong Way Grand – Slide Thru*
[GRND] [SFPR] [sfpr]	• *Up to the Middle and Back, Join Hands*
[SHFR] [shfr]	• *Back Out at Home, and Circle Left/Right*
[THAR]	• *Shoot the Star, New Centers Run, Back Out and Circle Right*
[thar]	• *Shoot the Star, New Centers Run, Back Out and Circle Left*
[0thar]	• *Slip the Clutch – Star Thru – (Up to the Middle and Back –) Circle Left*
[ALAM]	• *Outfacers Run Right – Circle Left* • *Outfacers Run Left – Circle Right*

To Outfacing Circle:

From	To [0ring]
[RING]	• *California Twirl – Circle Left* • *All Four Couples Lead Right – Circle Left*
[PROM]	• *Insides Out, Outsides In, Go a Quarter More and Circle Left*
[prom]	• *Insides Out, Outsides In, Go a Quarter More and Circle Right*
[0GRND]	• *Right and Left Grand – Slide Thru* • *Weave the Ring – Star Thru*
[GRND] [SFPR] [sfpr]	• *Face Out – Join Hands and Circle Left*
[5thar]	• *Slip the Clutch – Star Thru*
[ALAM]	• *Infacers Run Right – Circle Left* • *Infacers Run Left – Circle Right*

Typical Choreo From and To [0RING]

Some typical choreo from the moving circle draws on its similarity and the simple transfer to and from

the static square; *Ladies Chain* is an example. We will cover the static square later and just concentrate here on choreo that is typical and appropriate to a moving circle:

- *Circle Left – Ladies Center, Men Sashay* [+]
- *Circle Left – Boys Center, Girls Sashay* [–]
- *Circle Left – All Four Ladies Roll Away* [–]
- *Circle Right – Ladies Center, Men Sashay* [–]
- *Circle Right – Boys Center, Girls Sashay* [+]
- *Circle Right – Four Ladies Roll Away* [–]
- *Forward and Back* [=]

(In brackets you find the relative relationship change, as explained above in chapter *FASR Theory*.) Interesting is how the effect of the call *Ladies Center, Men Sashay* is depending on the circle direction. With *Sweep a Quarter* it is the only call in Mainstream where the result fully depends on the preceding call; you might in fact want to consider it as a modifier of the preceding call.

Typical Choreo Within [0ring]

The outfacing ring is rarely used, and if so, regarded more as a gimmick. If a caller likes it, he might want to make use of the following calls:

- *Ladies Out, the Men Sashay*
- *Ladies Center, Men Sashay*
- *Four Ladies Roll Away*

Suggestions for Get-Outs:

- *All California Twirl – Circle Left* [0ring]
- *Boys To the Left: Fold – Star Thru – Promenade*
- *Boys Run Right/Left – Girls Run Right/Left*

Transformations

To transform [RING] into another formation is not difficult due to its implicit relationship to the static square; almost all calls can be used here that would be used from [S]. Therefore the reader can simply refer to the get-ins given in the following chapters.

[ring]: Transformations into [RING] (e.g. by *California Twirl*) or into a single file promenade probably feel the most natural.

Neutral Call

Ladies Center, Men Sashay does not change the formation but only relationship – but only by one place which is rare for a neutral call in a ring formation (as most callers would not repeat the same call four times). The same is true for the other neutral call, *All Four Ladies Roll Away*.

The common usage is to begin with a *Four Ladies Chain – Circle Left,* which allows using these calls only two times in a row. An alternative is to use one of the two calls two times for the girls and then two times for the boys, or similarly.

Sequence Changer

If all dancers are with their original partners but out of sequence, the following routine offers a sequence change:

- *Circle Left – Ladies Center, Men Sashay – Circle Left – Boys Center, Girls Sashay – Circle Left – As Couples: Heads Centers, Sides Sashay – Allemande Left.*

Promenade [PROM], [prom]

Formations

Promenade is known as a call but while it is performed the dancers are in a characteristic formation, which is subject of this chapter. We will call it the *promenade formation*. Four couples with their sides to the flagpole, or – if you want so – two interlocking two-faced lines. As the call can also be performed in opposite direction we have two versions:

- **[PROM]** Promenade formation (left shoulders to the flagpole)
- **[prom]** Wrong way promenade formation (right shoulders to the flagpole)

In a 'classical' promenade, the couples are disconnected, but it is also possible that the centers dancers put their hands on the flagpole, which is called a *Star Promenade*. Although the dancing sensation of a star and a star promenade is certainly different

from a 'classical' *Promenade* (mainly due to the calls that lead there), I consider the geometric view and the choreographic possibilities from both formations as quite similar; so the following treats the formations as identical.

Moving and Body Flow

Certainly the dancers will usually walk forward, but exceptionally and as a gimmick, walking backwards should be possible (but is not covered here).

Different from all other formations in these articles, promenade inherently ends when the boys are at home; if we want to do more, we will have to add *But Don't Stop, Don't Slow Down*. As a curiosity also note that if *Promenade* is called as a beginning of a routine from a static square, most dancers will have a tendency to stop half way, especially if it was called for *heads* or *sides* only. This 'tradition'

results from a very frequent usage in singing call routines; it is nevertheless against definition.

Arrangements

The call *Promenade* can only be called for couples in normal arrangement. Opposed to this, *Star Promenade* allows four arrangements:

- [0PROM]: Normal couples
- [5PROM]: Half sashayed couples
- [1PROM]: 'bbgg' – everybody with same sex
- [3PROM]: Mixed couples

Get-Ins to Arrangements

It is trivial to get [0] arrangement but note that for a change, promenade can also be reached in other relationships, in a routine such as *Walk Around Corner – See Saw – Swing Your Corner and Promenade – Don't Stop, Don't Slow Down…*

Star promenade is not limited to [0] arrangement; the following sample leads to [5]: *Boys Make a Right Hand Star* (or: *Girls Make a Left Hand Star) – Pick Up Your Partner/Corner – Star Promenade.*

Here is what I found to get into the two other arrangements:

Routine	Result
• *Heads Make a Left/Right Hand Star – Pick Up Corner for a Star Promenade*	[3PROM] [3prom]
• *Heads Make a Left/Right Hand Star – Pass Your Home Position and Pick Up the Next of Your Own Sex For a Star Promenade...*	[1PROM]

The second routine is admittedly not very elegant (perhaps you find a better solution?)

Get-In from Other Ring Formations

From	To [0PROM]
[0RING] [ring]	• (After *Circle Left*:) *Allemande Left, Swing and Promenade*
[prom]	• *California Twirl and Promenade Home* • (From star promenade:) *Insides Out, Outsides In*
[GRND]	• *Swing and Promenade*
[SFPR]	• *Boys / Girls Move Up and Promenade*
[SHFR]	• (After *X Make a Left Hand Star*:) *Pick Up Partner (Corner) for a Star Promenade*
[SHFR] [shfr]	• *Meet Your Partner (Corner), Swing and Promenade*
[THAR]	• *Centers Run, All (Star) Promenade*
[thar]	• *Ends Run, all (Star) Promenade* • *Slip the Clutch, Swing and Prom.*
[ALAM]	• *X Fold, Swing and Promenade*

From	To [0PROM]
	• (If body flow supports:) *Swing and Promenade*

To reach [prom], it is always possible to say *Wrong Way Promenade* after *Swing* instead of *Promenade* – but this is most probably more a kind of gimmick.

From	To [prom]
[PROM]	• *All Wheel Around, and Wrong Way Promenade* • (From star promenade:) *Insides Out, Outsides In*
[SFPR] [sfpr]	• *X Move Up and Wrong Way Promenade Home*
[shfr]	• (After *X Make a Right Hand Star:*) *Pick Up Partner / Corner for a Star Promenade*
[THAR]	• *Ends Run*
[thar]	• *Centers Run*

Transformations and Get-Out

Promenade does not need a get-out as it by definition automatically ends at home (of the boy). This is not true for *Star Promenade*.

Promenade and Star Promenade

Immediate transitions between the two types are not usual as the two formations represent two different stylistical worlds, and as the choreographical effect would be almost zero.

Although callers and dancers are usually not very much aware of such stylistic differences, they know the freedom in arrangement and turning direction that a star promenade offers as opposed to a promenade. Here are a few more observations:

- *Promenade* automatically leads home; *Star Promenade* should actually not (this is perhaps more due to definition than to style).
- *Heads/Sides Wheel Around – Lines Forward and Back* is quite common in a promenade but not in a star promenade.
- *Insides Out, Outsides In* is restricted to star promenade.
- *Ends Take a Backtrack* is more common in star promenade; dancers will often expect the remaining centers to form a star (and would most probably also if called from a promenade).

Neutral Calls in [Prom] and [prom]

Star Promenade allows *Insides Out, Outsides In* which is not even defined in the glossary but nevertheless usually regarded as an – admittedly dated – part of the Mainstream program. It seems to be a local tradition if it is performed as a half turn or as a turn once and a half (the call is unique as it seems not to be defined in the Mainstream definitions or glossary, nor in Burleson's but nevertheless known

to many dancers). If the 540° turn is desired, why not prompt it: *Insides Out, Outsides In, Once and a Half, and the Girls (Boys) Are In*.

A star promenade allows *Roll Away*, *Half Sashay* or the surprising *All U Turn Back,* which all change arrangement.

There is another neutral call that is not exactly uncommon (although slowly extincting). It is only defined in the glossary: *Boys/Girls Roll Back One*. It is used by some callers to change relationship in both promenade and star promenade formation, most of all in an early class phase to practice singing call routines in a pattern and use pattern routines in a singing call. Sometimes you also encounter the wording *Roll Back One* and even *Roll Back Two* (letting pass two other dancers).

Sequence Changer

The promenade formation is the one used most for the purpose of changing sequence, usually by *Don't Stop, Don't Slow Down – Heads Wheel Around* (to reach a zero line out of sequence); the simplest resolve then is perhaps *Pass Thru and Swing*. As we quit ring formations here, this actually exceeds the focus of this article – nevertheless, here are some other possibilities after *Don't Stop, Don't Slow Down:*

- *Heads Wheel Around, and Make an Arch – Dive Thru – All Promenade Home*
- *Heads Make an Arch, Let the Others Promenade Through the Arch – All Promenade Home*
- *Heads, You Are the Leaders: Zoom* (this is difficult. Can be eased a bit if done first with the boys and then with the girls)

Uncommon, but possible is the usage of *U Turn:*

- *Heads U Turn Back – Step to a Wave – Heads Fold – Promenade Home*
- *Heads U Turn Back – Make a Line – Forward and Back – Pass the Ocean – (This Way Grand –) Swing*

'Grand' Formation [GRND]

Formation

The '**grand' formation** is the one before (and after) a *Right and Left Grand*. In other words: Every dancer faces another dancer, having turned his back to a third one. If every dancer does a *U Turn Back*, the resulting formation will be very similar to the original one – not enough to be regarded as something different. So there is nothing like a "wrong way grand formation"; in other words, the grand formation has no sibling.

I call it *grand* instead of 'right and left grand' and abbreviate it [GRND] because any hint to a particular hand usage in the name or abbreviation would be misleading.

Arrangement

Four arrangements are possible

- **[0GRND]** = Boys face into promenade direction, girls face opposite. *Right and Left Grand* could be the next call. Or *Left and Right Grand.*
- **[5GRND]** = Girls face into promenade direction, boys face opposite. *Wrong Way Grand* would be possible.
- **[1GRND]** = Everybody faces same sex – the caller will say *This Way Grand.*
- **[2GRND]** = Everybody has turned his back to same sex and faces opposite sex.

I regard my arrangement numbers as consistent to the Callerlab system. Nevertheless, there is one puzzling observation: Outside of the circle, *Right and Left Grand* is also called, usually from formations like [B], [W] or [T] – but in these formations it is always the [5] arrangement that leads to a *Right and Left Grand* ([0] arrangement leads to *Wrong Way Grand*). I found it strange that these FASRs were defined as having [5] arrangement but allow to be treated as what I am just going to call [0] in a [GRND] formation. But I think you will agree that from traditional usage in the ring it should always be 'normal' if the boy looks into dancing direction.

Hand Availability

In everyday calling, only [0] and [5] arrangements will occur. But there is something of at least equal importance: Hand availability, or better: Shoulder preference.

So actually, there are four possible situations (the second column shows the preferred shoulder):

Arr	Shldr	Expected Call	Symbol
0	r	**R**ight and Left Grand	®
5	r	Walk Around **C**orner	©
5	l	**A**llemande Left	@
0	l	D**ø** Pas**ø**	Ø

In the last column, I introduced new symbols that encode facing direction, hand availability and passing shoulder at the same time. Although they do not fit into the Callerlab FASR system they seem appropriate here. I choose the letters to match the typical

call to be used from this FASR (and therefore marked them bold in the third column). Note the symbols do not talk about relationship (although some of the example calls expect to be with partner, others to be with corner).

The symbols are available on every computer system, and as they all make use of a circle, the reader sees that they belong to one system.

Get-In

The calls *Allemande Left* and *Right and Left Grand* include a turning to the corner or partner; therefore they implicitly lead to a 'Grand' formation:

From [S] [s] [RING] [ring]

- *Right and Left Grand* ®
- *Face Your Partner* ®, Ø
- *Face Your Corner* @, ©
- *Allemande Left* ®
- *Walk Around Corner* Ø

Other Arrangements

In this formation, the [1] and [2] arrangements are not really uncommon. Sample way to get into it (from zero lines out of sequence): *Pass Thru – Boys/Girls Fold – This Way Grand.*

From Other Formations

Every formation that allows an *Allemande Left* or *Right and Left Grand* is by these calls automatically converted into [GRND]. By analogy, we would expect the same for *Wrong Way Grand*, but the result is less reliable as dancers are not always sure about their default direction around the flagpole. There is another call that can be of good use here: *Walk Around Your Corner* – quite unusual from anything else than ring positions but effective and not difficult.

From many formations (such as waves or two-faced lines), calls like *Fold* and *Cross Fold* lead to an undefined offset formation; again *Right and Left Grand* (or *Wrong Way Grand*) automatically converts it into [GRND] or [grnd].

Neutral Calls

There is just one call that lets the formation intact – it has some variants. Note that in its basis usage it also does not affect the relationship:

- *Right and Left Grand, Wrong Way Grand, This Way Grand*
- *Weave the Ring* (*Wrong Way* or *This Way* are not defined but often used and certainly no problem)
- *Go Forward 1, 2, 3, 4* is an older variant of the above, today only used in connection with thars

Other Choreo Within Grand Formation

The formation allows much more things than the neutral calls – here are examples:

® © (i.e. right shoulder)

- *Dosado*
- *Dosado Once and a Half*
- *Turn by the Right*
- *Walk Around Corner* (© only)
- *Right Pull By*
- *Pass Thru*

Ø @ (i.e. left shoulder)

- *Left Shoulder Dosado*
- *Left Shoulder Dosado Once and a Half*
- *Turn by the Left*
- *See Saw* (Ø only)
- *Left Pull By*
- *(Left Shoulder Pass Thru)*

Sample choreo: Replace *Right and Left Grand* by *Dosado Once and a Half – Left Shoulder Dosado Once and a Half – Dosado Once and a Half – Left Shoulder Dosado Once and a Half.*

Or call it from sight: *Allemande Left – Right Pull By – the Next Turn Left – Turn Partner Right – Left Shoulder Dosado, Once and a Half – Right Pull By – The Next Turn Left – Box the Gnat, Pull By – Turn by the Left...*

Single File Promenade [SFPR], [sfpr]

Formation

These two formations have all the dancers walk in single file promenade, or in an eight-hand star (similar to promenade formations which also include the *Star Promenade*, I make no difference here).

- **[SFPR]** = single file in promenade direction (i.e. after *Circle Right, Drop Hands*)
- **[sfpr]** = single file in opposite direction (after *Circle Left, Drop Hands*).

Arrangement

Similar to the circle formation, the couples can not be distinguished here; hence we only have two arrangements:

- **[0SFPR]** 'bgbgbgbg'
- **[1SFPR]** 'bbggbbgg'

Relationship

It might perhaps seem not trivial to define the relationship in a moving single file promenade. But as it is usually reached by *Drop Hands, Go Single File* from a circle, we will assume that this call did not change relationship – in other words, from [0SFPR] we will consider the girl going before the boy she belongs to, from [0sfpr] we understand she goes behind him. (Nevertheless, the following will not further draw on the relationships.)

Get-In from Static Square or Ring

This formation is usually reached from a moving circle (see below). Direct access from the static square is not common; could be done via *Face Right/Left – Promenade Single File*. Or, of course, using *All Make a Left/Right Hand Star*. Perhaps a funny start of a tip could be *Bow to the Left, Bow to the Right – Promenade Single File*.

Similarly, arrangement [1] will most naturally be reached from a circle in the same arrangement.

Other attempt to reach [1SFPR]:

* *Boys Make a Left Hand Star – Don't Stop – Side Girls Step Behind Your Corner – Head Girls Step Behind Your Partner (Side Girls Let Them In)*. – Variant: Not only heads and sides can be exchanged here but also boys and girls.
* *Boys Make a Right Hand Star – Side Girls Step Behind Your Partner, Head Girls Step Behind Your Corner*
* From [0SFPR]: *Only the Head Girls Roll Back Behind Your Boys*

Get-Ins from Other Formations

To Single File Promenade Counter Clockwise:

From	To [SFPR]
[RING]	• *Circle Right – Drop Hands, Go Single File* • *All Star by the Left*
[ring]	• *Circle Left – Drop Hands, Go Single File*
[PROM]	• *Put the Boys/Girls in the Lead – Promenade Single File*
[0GRND]	• *Girls U Turn Back* • *(Left and Right Grand –) Left Shoulder Dosado But Girls Finish Like See Saw – Promenade Single File*
[5GRND]	• *Boys U Turn Back* • *(Wrong Way Grand –) Dosado But Boys Finish Like Walk Around Corner – All Promenade Single File*
[SHFR]	• (X = the non-moving dancers:) *X Step Behind Your Partner*

From	To [SFPR]
[THAR]	• *Shoot the Star (or Slip the Clutch) – Centers Step Behind the Ends*
[0ALAM]	• *Boys Face Right, Girls Face Left, Promenade Single File*

To Single File Promenade Clockwise:

From	To [sfpr]
[RING]	• *Circle Left – Drop Hands, Go Single File* • *All Star by the Right*
[ring]	• *Circle Right – Drop Hands, Go Single File*
[prom]	• *Put the Boys/Girls in the Lead – Promenade Single File*
[0GRND]	• *Boys U Turn Back* • *(Left and Right Grand –) Left Shoulder Dosado But Boys Finish Like See Saw – Promenade Single File*
[5GRND]	• *Girls U Turn Back* • *(Wrong Way Grand –) Dosado But Girls Finish Like Walk Around Your Corner – Promenade Single File*
[shfr]	• (X = the non-moving dancers:) *X Step Behind Your Partner*
[thar]	• *Shoot the Star (or Slip the Clutch) – Centers Step Behind the Ends*
[5ALAM]	• *Boys Face Left, Girls Face Right, Promenade Single File*

Choreo

It was already said that there are not many possibilities to stay in the formation. *All U Turn Back*, *Promenade* and *All Eight Backtrack* change from [SFPR] to [sfpr] and vice versa.

Something similar can be done in two steps from [0]: *Boys Take a Backtrack – Meet Your Partner/Corner – Girls Step Behind Your Partner/Corner*. Note: Depending if called from [SFPR] or [sfpr], started with boys or girls, and if stepping behind partner or caller is required, this can lead to a change of relationship. The basic rule here is:

> If girls go into promenade direction, boys must step behind partner to get original relationship.

Exchanging *girls* and *boys*, or replacing *promenade* by *wrong way promenade*, means to also have to exchange *partner* by *corner* in the preceding sentence.

Roll Back One

This is an old call (almost a directional), which is not part of the Callerlab Mainstream list but of the glossary; it is rarely used but not uncommon and can easily be taught. I am convinced it can be of

good use for single file promenade. Here are some variants:

- *Boys/Girls Roll Back One*
- *Roll Back Two*
- *To the Inside Roll Back One*

Get-Out

Boys/Girls Backtrack leads into what I call a 'shifting four against four formation'. From [SFPR] *Girls Take a Backtrack* has everybody in right and left grand direction, right hand free; so we will symbolize this by ®. Likewise, *Boys Take a Backtrack* results in a wrong way grand direction with the same handedness, which we abbreviate by ©. – Similarly, from a wrong way single file promenade *Boys Take a Backtrack* leads to Ø ('Dø Pasø'), *Girls Take a Backtrack* to @ ('Allemande').

An unusual but easy get-out is *All Eight Up to the Middle and Back*.

Boys/Girls Move Up – Promenade is another way to get out of a single file promenade.

Sequence Changer

It is not common to change sequence in this formation, but we might think of *Heads Roll Back Two* as a possibility.

Another possibility from [sfpr] is perhaps *Heads*

Take a Backtrack – Find Your Corner – Allemande Left.

[0SFPR''] is reached from a 'normal' promenade by *Put the Boys in the Lead – Promenade Single File*. This allows a striking routine that can have a great effect: *Where is Boy Number One? – Boy Number One, Take a Backtrack, all Follow Boys Number One… Until You Are Home* (note that any dancer, boy or girl, can be used to start this Backtrack).

Neutral Call?

Both single file promenade formations are the most unstable ring formations as there is not a single call that would leave either of them intact. If we wanted to invent such a call, we might make use of the directional *Roll Back One*. It is rarely used here but could serve this purpose (meaning that the activated dancer rolls by the outer shoulder, letting the next dancer pass, and again steps into the queue). If we want to change the relationship by exactly two places with a balanced flow (i.e. if we want to find a real analogy to *Swing Thru* from alamo ring or *Shoot the Star, Go Forward Two* from allemande thar), we need to establish a new call. I tend to think it could be something like *X Roll Back One, X to the Inside Roll Back One*.

But actually I do not want to invent and propagate 'missing' calls here; this is just a thought, for the purpose of comparison with other ring formations.

Shifting Four Against Four [SHFR], [shfr]

Formations

This chapter covers an entire set of formations which have one thing in common: There is one inner group of four dancers, usually moving forward and an outer group of dancers who either stand still or move into the opposite direction. The interesting and outstanding feature is that the two groups of dancers constantly shift against each other. Here are some examples:

- *Heads/Sides/Boys/Girls Star Left/Right*
- *Heads/Sides/Boys/Girls Circle Left/Right*
- *Four Ladies Promenade*
- All Circle Left/Right – Single File Promenade – Boys/Girls Take a Backtrack
- *Put the Ladies Back to Back – Boys Promenade*
- *Heads Pass Thru – Turn Left and Single File Promenade on the Outside*

Obviously, these formations feel quite different for the affected dancers. But as the choreographic effect is very similar, I want to subsume them all under a common name. I call this class of formations *Shifting Four Against Four*.

The promenade direction is regarded as a kind of default direction in square dance, which leads to consider the left hand star as 'normal'; hence we have the following symbols:

- **[SHFR]** Left Hand Star of four, or any four dancers in the center in promenade direction against four at the outside in wrong way promenade direction. The right hand will be expected next.
- **[shfr]** Right Hand Star, or any four dancers in the center in wrong way promenade direction against four at the outside in promenade direction. The left hand will be expected next.

(Note that my naming system unfortunately restricts the usage of digits consequently to arrangements.)

At this point we might even ask if there is really a difference between this formation and the 'grand' formation. I actually think so, and here are my reasons:

- The inherent movement of the shifting formations, which blurs or better: deletes relationship (more on this below)
- The two easily distinguishable traces which

clearly allow talking about centers and ends.

The grand formation misses both features. On the other hand, the two formations are so related that I tend to reconsider my decision every other week…

Dancer Sensation

It is obvious that the 'shifting' formations covered here have a quite different dance feeling, depending not only on the facing direction and the usage of arms towards the middle (star or circle or single file promenade) but also if the inner, the outer or both part formations do move. They are grouped here together because the possible choreo, most of all the get-outs, are identical. Nevertheless we should be aware of their differences, and also of the variety they offer to our dancers.

There is even one case that I tend to subsume here where the dancers groups come out of a movement but would actually not go further if the next call was not delivered immediately: After *Slip the Clutch* from a thar. As we have clearly two groups of dancers, each in their own path, I think the (temporary) formation should be handled here; it is identical to the situation after Star *X Left/Right – Meet your partner/Corner*.

Arrangement

I regard it as the most 'normal' if the boys are in the center, but only because this can naturally end with *Swing Your Partner*. This lead me to the following distribution of the symbols to the dancer settings:

- **[0SHFR]** Boys in the center
- **[5SHFR]** Girls in the center
- **[0shfr]** Girls in the center
- **[5shfr]** Boys in the center
- **[1SHFR]** Heads/Sides in the center
- **[1shfr]** Heads/Sides in the center

I currently tend to think that there are no more arrangements but the decision (and the entire handling of this formation type) is not exactly easy. Perhaps I change my opinion again – wait for a future version of this article...

Relationship

A unique feature of the shifting 4:4 formations is that the relationship constantly changes. In other words, there is no relationship at all. The relationship is re-established in the moment when the movement stops. This is usually achieved by either *Find Your Partner* or *Find Your Corner*, or by *Get Out at Home*.

Hand Availability

The shifting formations are very related to the grand formation. In the chapter about the grand formation I motivated the introduction of symbols that com-

bine the facing directions of dancers, their arrangement and their hand availability into one. The advantages become even more obvious here:

- [0SHFR] = ® (b Star L: '**R**ight and Left Grand')
- [5SHFR] = @ (b Star R: '**A**llemande Left')
- [0shfr] = Ø (g Star R: 'D**ø** Pas**ø**')
- [5shfr] = © (g Star L: 'Walk Around **C**orner')

Get-Ins from Other Ring Formations

From	To [0SHFR] ®
[RING]	• *Boys Make a Left Hand Star* • *Four Boys Promenade* • *Boys Circle Right*
[0PROM]	• *Girls Take a Backtrack*
[0GRND]	• *(Dosado) – Boys Make a Left Hand Star*
[0SFPR]	• *Girls Take a Backtrack*
[5thar]	• *Slip the Clutch*

From	To [5SHFR] ©
[RING]	• *Girls Make a Left Hand Star* • *Four Girls Promenade* • *Girls Circle Right*
[0PROM]	• *Roll Away, Boys Backtrack*
[5GRND]	• *(Dosado) – Girls Make a Left Hand Star*
[0SFPR]	• *Boys Take a Backtrack*
[0thar]	• *Slip the Clutch*

From	To [0shfr] Ø
[RING]	• Girls Make a Right Hand Star • Four Girls Wrong Way Promenade • Girls Circle Left • Put the Ladies Back to Back – Boys Promenade Outside
[0prom]	• Boys Take a Backtrack
[0GRND]	• (Left Shoulder Dosado) – Girls Make a Right Hand Star
[0sfpr]	• Boys Take a Backtrack
[5THAR]	• Slip the Clutch

From	To [5shfr] @
[RING]	• *Boys Make a Right Hand Star* • *Four Boys Wrong Way Promenade* • *Boys Circle Left*
[0prom]	• *Roll Away – Girls Backtrack*
[5GRND]	• *(Left Shoulder Dosado) – Boys Make a Right Hand Star*
[0sfpr]	• *Girls Take a Backtrack*
[0THAR]	• *Slip the Clutch*

Note that *Single File Wrong Way Promenade* is not used often and not explicitly part of the Mainstream program (the definitions do not mention it although it is neither inconsequent nor misleading. The transfer from *Wrong Way Promenade* is definitely not difficult).

Get-Out

The definitions do not tell where stars or circles of four end, and usually we will assume that they go on eternally until the next call. In many cases, this will be *Meet Your Partner/Corner* to transform in this moment into a [GRAND] formation.

In case of four dancers promenade inside or outside the ring, the movement ends naturally at home of the dancers.

® [0SHFR] (≈ 'Boys Star Left')

- *Meet Partner – Right and Left Grand*
- *Meet Partner – Box the Gnat – Wrong Way Grand*
- *Meet Corner – Right Pull By – Do Paso*

© [5SHFR] (≈ 'Girls Star Left')

- *Meet Partner – Wrong Way Grand*
- *Meet Partner – Right Pull By – Allemande Left*
- *Meet Corner – Walk Around Corner – Do Paso*

Ø [0shfr] (≈ 'Girls Star Right')

- *Meet Partner – Do Paso*
- *Meet Corner – Left Pull By – Swing*
- *Meet Corner – Allemande Left (With a Full Turn)*

@ [5shfr] (≈ 'Boys Star Right')

- *Meet Partner – Left Pull By – Turn Corner Right – Courtesy Turn Your Partner*
- *Turn Partner Left – The Next Turn Right – Courtesy Turn Your Partner*
- *Meet Corner – Allemande Left*

Note that every *Pull By* can be replaced by an arm turn *With a Full Turn*.

'From the Wrong Side'

We just had an example (see Ø) where the dancers came from the 'wrong side' for an *Allemande Left*: This is a bit intricate as although the definitions say clearly that the *Allemande Left* turns until the dancers can drop hands in front of their original partners, this may not be apparent to all dancers. Either we

want to workshop this, or we will prefer to help our dancers by using *With a Full Turn*.

As the reader will already have noticed, the four ways out from the four direction/hand combinations ® © Ø @ are *Swing, Walk Around Your Corner, Do Paso* and *Allemande Left*.

Obviously, they are all connected with a particular relationship. The corner only offers a way out from © and @, and the partner only from ® and Ø. If the other person is approached, it feels as coming from the 'wrong side'.

The examples above gave examples for all possible combinations to show how this can be handled – best obviously by a *Right/Left Pull By* or instead by an arm turn *With a Full Turn*. Inserting a grand is possible and often a good idea: *Right and Left (Wrong Way) Grand, Wrong Way Grand,* or *Left and Right (Wrong Way) Grand*. The pull by can be integrated by modifying it to *Five Hands*; so after this, we are back on the 'right side'.

Swing makes no problem at all if done from the 'wrong side'; *Allemande Left* as we saw is legal but dangerous so I certainly would not recommend it. The calls *Walk Around Your Corner* and *See Saw* are probably sleeping beauties that still wait to be kissed and introduced into our inventory (see my German article *Eine neue Figur*); but certainly we cannot rely on them. While the definitions do not allow a *wrong way* usage of *Do Paso*, it can always be replaced by an appropriate sequence of arm turns and a final *Courtesy Turn*, or the *Courtesy Turn* only (which again should work from both sides).

Neutral Call?

A turning star with its inherent shift of relationships seems not to need a neutral call.

As we know, every formation can be changed into its sibling by *U Turn Back*. In case of Stars, this equals a change of the hand: *Boys Make a Right Hand Star – Reverse, Make a Left Hand Star*. This sequence actually feels a lot better than a body flow conscious caller might assume.

Allemande Thar [THAR], [thar]

Formation

Thars have often been described; they are perhaps the most interesting ring formation. We distinguish **allemande thars** where center and end join the left arm, and **wrong way thars**, where it is the right arm. We might even simply call them *left hand thar* and *right hand thar*. I use the abbreviations [THAR] and [thar] respectively. The wrong way thar is a good

example for one of those elements in the Mainstream program that are part of the teaching order, usually extensively practiced and trained for two weeks in class and never used again.

Arrangement

Allemande thar is almost always done with the boys in the center. We will call this [0] and logically the version with the girls in the center [5].

It is also possible to construct an allemande thar with mini waves of boys and mini waves of girls, which I symbolize by [1]. The last possibility is two boys and two girls in the center, each with somebody of opposite sex at the arm, for which I use [3].

Wrong way thar: I tend to call the arrangement with the girls in the center [0] and with the boys in the center [5].

Allemande Left to an Allemande Thar

Before we start with get-ins, a word about the most classical call that leads in to it. We know that *Turn Partner Left to an Allemande Thar* will lead to a thar with the partner at hand, and consequently we can expect *Turn Corner Left to an Allemande Thar* to lead to a thar with corner at hand. This sometimes raises the question how *Allemande Left to an Allemande Thar* can be different from *Turn Corner Left to an Allemande Thar*. Some callers prefer to say *Allemande Left, Go Forward Two to an Allemande Thar*.

While I think that *Allemande Left, Go Forward Two* is always correct and clear, a look into the definitions shows that *Allemande Left* is not only an arm turn but includes a step towards the partner. After this step, there is certainly no other way to go to an allemande thar than by *Go Forward Two*. Therefore I personally consider the classical wording *Allemande Left to an Allemande Thar* as consistent with the definitions and as acceptable.

Get-In: The Classical Way

In this chapter I will list get-ins into partner and corner relationships ([°], ['], and sometimes also other ones) of both thar formations in normal and half sashayed arrangement.

[0THAR] (Allemande thar with boys in center) is always reached like Ø ('Dø Pasø') by a left arm turn:

Routine	Rel.
• *Walk Around Corner – Turn Partner Left – Boys Swing In to an Allemande Thar*	[°]
• *Do Paso to an Allemande Thar*	[°]
• *Allemande Left – Right and Left Grand – On Your Fourth Hand, Boys Swing In to an Allemande Thar*	[']
• *Four Ladies Chain to a Do Paso (Turn Left, Corner Right) Turn Partner Left, Boys Swing In to an Allemande Thar*	['']
• *Allemande Left – Right Pull By – the Next Turn Left – Boys Swing In to an Allemande Thar*	[''']
• *Allemande Left to an Allemande Thar*	[''']

[5THAR] (girls in center) is reached like @ ('Allemande') by a left arm turn:

Routine	Rel.
• *Allemande Left – Turn Partner Right (or: Wrong Way Grand – Pull Partner By) – Turn Corner Left – Girls Swing In to an Allemande Thar*	[']
• *Walk Around Your Corner – Left Pull By – the Next Turn Right – Turn Partner Left – Girls Swing In to an Allemande Thar*	[°]
• *Wrong Way Grand – on Your Fourth Hand, Girls Swing In to an Allemande Thar*	[''']

[0thar] (wrong way thar with girls in center) is reached like ® by a right arm turn:

Routine	Rel.
• *Allemande Left (or: Right and Left Grand) – Turn Partner Right – Girls Swing In to a Wong Way Thar*	[°]
• *Walk Around Your Corner – See Saw – With Corner Box the Gnat – Right and Left Grand – Turn Corner Right – Girls Swing In to a Wrong Way Thar*	[']
• *Walk Around Corner – Left Pull By – the Next Turn Right, Girls Swing In to a Wrong Way Thar*	[''']

[5thar] (boys in center), reached from © by a right arm turn:

Routine	Rel.
• *Four Ladies Promenade – Meet Partner, Turn Partner Right – Boys Swing In to a Wrong Way Thar*	[°]
• *Walk Around Your Corner – See Saw – Turn Corner Right, Boys Swing In to a Wrong Way Thar*	[']

We don't want to cover other arrangements here — note that *This Way Grand* should always offer a good way to get into them.

Summary: Left Arm Turn leads to [THAR], Right Arm Turn leads to [thar]. Right and Left Grand direction leads into [0] arrangement, wrong way grand direction leads into [5] arrangement.

Get-In With a Full Turn

Doing the final arm turn *With a Full Turn* gives a variation to all get-ins up to here. This brings the other dancer into the center and changes therefore the arrangement but not the formation. Every routine *Turn Right (Left), Boys Swing in can be* replace by *Turn Right (Left) With a Full Turn, Girls Swing In* and vice versa. Again – the formation does not change; an allemande thar stays an allemande thar, and a wrong way thar stays a wrong way thar.

Cheap Get-Ins

Using Stars

Stars are a particularly easy way to get into thars, as they free us from considering the preceding relationship:

Routine	Result
• *Girls Star Right, Meet Your Partner – Turn Left, Boys Swing In to an Allemande Thar*	[0THAR°]
• *Boys Star Right, Meet Your Partner – Turn Left, Girls Swing In to an Allemande Thar*	[5THAR°]
• *Boys Star Left, Meet Your Partner – Turn Right, Girls Swing In to a Wrong Way Thar*	[5thar°]
• *Girls Star Left, Meet Your Partner – Turn Right, Boys Swing In to a Wrong Way Thar*	[0thar°]

In all four cases, 'partner' can apparently be replaced by 'corner' to lead into the corner relationship [']‌.

Get-In from Alamo Ring

Alamo rings allow an easy transformation into thars: *With Your Right/Left Single Hinge* and *With Your Right/Left Cast Off Three Quarters* will do the trick. *With Your Right* must always lead to a wrong way thar, *With Your Left* to an allemande thar. The two mentioned calls lead to two different arrangements, from a [0] or [5] alamo ring to a [0] or [5] thar respectively.

Step to a Thar

In analogy to *Step to a Wave* it might make sense to try *Step to an Allemande Thar, and Turn*. I think it is a good idea to indicate the way the resulting thar should turn, so I would add *The Boys/Girls Push*.

Possibly even a better get-in could be *Dosado to a Wrong Way Thar* and *Left Shoulder Dosado to an Allemande Thar*. I admit I did not try either of them, but it is the 'cheapest' get-in I can think of.

Shoot the Star Choreo

Shoot the Star, Go Forward Two to Another Thar changes relationship by two places (±).

Shoot the Star, Go Forward Three changes the formation but not the arrangement number, which means it exchanges allemande thar and wrong way thar and also exchanges centers and ends. From a [0] arrangement, the relationship changes into positive direction ('+': e.g. from partner to corner), from [5] into negative direction ('–': from corner to partner).

Shoot the Star, Go Forward Four is not common but can effectively used with a zero effect. This idea also leads to 'Go Forward One' which I consider more or less impossible due to timing reasons; instead, *Shoot the Star – With the Next, Turn Right/Left to a Wrong Way (Allemande) Thar* will do fine. The effect on formation and arrangement is identical to *Go Forward Three* but the rule for the relationship is opposite.

Relationship After Shoot the Star

Shoot the Star, With the Next… changes relationship to the next dancer and consequently, *Shoot the Star* alone seems to mean staying with the one we have at hand. And in fact, the letter of the definition tells nothing about a step forward (as the definition of *Slip the Clutch* does). It also does not say what the dancers should do afterwards (stand pat? Turn the thar again?), but it should actually allow to call something like *Shoot the Star, Stay Where You Are, and the Boys/Girls Push, Push That Same Old Thar* (sorry for the silly rhyme).

Actually we all know that the dancers will expect to do something with the next dancer; it is possibly part of the – unwritten but traditional and quite strong – *gestalt* of the call. I am convinced that a choreo relying on doing the next call (say, *Swing* or *Right and Left Grand*) with the dancer at hand is highly mistakable.

In this sense, knowing the words of the definition, the following for simplicity assumes that *Shoot the Star* leads to the next dancer and therefore changes the relationship. None of the choreography presented in this essay expects the next call to be done with the person at hand.

Go Forward *Without* Shoot the Star?

If *Shoot the Star* without *Go Forward* is unattractive, we might also ask if there is a way to use *Go Forward #* after any other call. Some callers use *Allemande Left; Go Forward Two to an Allemande Thar*, which apparently works well. Can we for example say *Slip the Clutch, Go Forward Three*?

After *Slip the Clutch Go Forward Three* the dancers will most probably be unsure if they are supposed to pass same shoulder without hands or to do alternating pull bys. And they are correct, as *Go Forward* is not defined on its own, and if understood as a directional, it does not talk about hand usage. Therefore I consider it as hopeless to try to give it a meaning, most of all because a sequence of right and left *Pull Bys* will just have the same result – without any uncertainty.

Neutral Call

Shoot the Star, Go Forward Two to Another Thar is by far the most used command. This routine exchanges only between two relationships ([±]) so that a thar that was reached with partner can this way

never lead to the corner and vice versa.

Extended Choreo – Stylistical Musings

All Eight Spin the Top is used in Plus and might be tried in a strong Mainstream group. It changes formation but not arrangement number and not relationship.

The same is true for *All Eight Scoot Back* (which I personally never heard and never tried). It might perhaps work better from [thar]; one problem might be that the dancers afterwards will need time to decide who goes forward and who goes backwards.

Frankly, I do not like both, simply for stylistical reasons: These 'modern' calls do not fit well into the world that a Basic or Mainstream dancer associates with the formation. Why actually call *All Eight Spin the Top* from thars? Something very similar can be reached by *Shoot the Star, Slip the Clutch, Pass Three and Form Another Thar*. Why call *Scoot Back* from a thar? *Slip the Clutch, the Next Turn Left/Right, and Step to Another Thar* can do it! Why call *All Eight Circulate* from a thar? A replacement in Basic could be *Slip the Clutch, Pass One, Step to Another Thar*.

But there is another aspect. *All Eight Spin the Top* defines exact spots on the floor where the dancers must meet afterwards. This idea is apparently quite different to the world of thars as defined in Basic where dancers count the number of dancers they pass or expect to meet a particular person. In this world there is no space for geographically defined spots on the floor. So for stylistical reasons I conclude that this kind of extended choreo somehow does not 'strike the right note'. My idea is not the leveling of the differences but to recognize the ring formations as a world in its own rights.

Classical Get-Out

In its first version, this article included a long list of possible get-outs for both formations, two arrangements and four relationships. For every caller it is a lot of fun to think about this, but I sincerely doubt anybody will want to read this stuff and learn it; instead, every caller will want to make his own lists, and I can recommend this very much to learn more about the formations and the transitions between them.

I call 'classical get-outs' the ones using *Shoot the Star* and *Slip the Clutch* from [°] or ['] relationship. After both calls, the dancers are expecting to do something with the next dancer (see remarks above), so we can say that in the [0] arrangement of both formations, *Shoot the Star, do something with the next* changes the relationship into '–' direction and *Slip the Clutch* into '+' direction. In the [5] arrangement it is the other way around.

The good news is that a turning thar usually gives the caller a bit time to imagine the result of his next call. For the classical get-out, he will first bring the dancers together either with their partners or their corners and choose *Shoot the Star* or *Slip the Clutch* in such a way that the call brings them to the other one: If with partner, *Slip the Clutch* will bring them to the corner, if with corner, *Shoot the Star* will bring them to the partner.

In a left hand thar, we would expect a left shoulder call after *Slip the Clutch*; so we can say that this call does not change the preferred shoulder while *Shoot the Star* does. We can understand the result of both as a 'shifting four against four' formation; for sample get-outs see above. But every caller will immediately know what to do in this situation – one of the following four calls will always be correct: *Allemande Left, Walk Around Corner, Swing, Do Paso (or Courtesy Turn)*.

Do not forget that *Slip the Clutch* from [thar] allows a *Star Thru*, which can certainly be a nice variant, leading either to an in- or outfacing circle.

Variants of the Classical Get-Out

Shoot the Star With a Full Turn

The resulting formation of *Shoot the Star With a Full Turn* on FASR is identical to *Slip the Clutch*. The difference is that the dancers will expect the other shoulder/hand to be used. As a result, *Do Paso* will have to be replaced by *Swing*, and *Allemande Left* will have to be replaced by *Walk Around Corner* and vice versa (note that Swing does not need a special hand availability, although the boys have the feeling to start by the right and the girls to tar by the left).

Slip the Clutch – Pass One

There are three ways to handle this (not counting the case of a module prepared in advance). Either the caller already sees the resulting relationship and knows what to do, or he simply relies on his reflexes. The third strategy is more aware of square mechanics: As *Slip the Clutch* changes relationship by one place, *Slip the Clutch – Pass One* will mean a change by two. We can handle this for example if we use *Shoot the Star, Go Forward Two to another Thar* before and remember that the entire sequence will bring us back to the dancer that we had at hand before (same hand, same facing direction).

Slip the Clutch – Pass Two

This brings us three places further. As there are only four places, it can be considered as a replacement for *Shoot the Star*: As a result, we will meet the same dancer we would meet after *Shoot the Star* – but from the other side, and with the other hand. Find more about the topic 'wrong direction' in the chapter about the shifting four against four forma-

tion.

Example: From [0THAR'] (allemande thar with boys in center and corners at left hand), the call will bring us to the partner; *Left Pull By – Walk Around Corner – Courtesy Turn Your Own* could be the way out.

Slip the Clutch – Pass Three

Dancer confusion guaranteed! We meet the one we had at hand before in the thar, and at the same hand. I think it will be best to help by *Meet Your…*

Get-Out from Other Relationships

Knowing how to handle the 'wrong direction' problem opens the way for get-outs not only from [°] and ['] but from all relationships: If the dancers do not have partners or corners at hand, they will in half of the cases look at one of them so that *Slip the Clutch* will bring them there – from the 'wrong direction', so that a *(Left) Pull By* will be a good guess for the next call. As you can see in advance whom they meet next, you will not need an advice here.

In the last case, dancers have neither partners nor corners at hand, and they also do not face one of them. This might look hopeless, and most callers would try another *Shoot the Star, Go Forward X*. But I guarantee that in all of these cases, a simple *Shoot the Star* will be enough. Perhaps a list can show the possibilities:

FASR	Next	Get-Out
[0THAR'']	c: R	*Shoot the Star – Right Pull By – Courtesy Turn*
[5THAR''']	p: R	*Shoot the Star – Swing the Next*
[0thar'']	c: L	*Shoot the Star – Left Pull By – Swing*
[5thar''']	p: L	*Shoot the Star – (Left Pull By – Walk Around Corner) – Courtesy Turn*

The second column shows if we will meet partner or corner after the *Shoot the Star*, and with which hand.

This is certainly not easy to remember or to decide on the fly. Perhaps a good guess is calling *(Left Shoulder) Dosado* next; this will give time for orientation. Another option from [thar] is *Shoot the Star – Box the Gnat*, also allowing a bit time for thought.

Emergency Exit

If you want to try these things but fear not to be able to react, remember what was just said about *(Left Shoulder) Dosado* – it works both after *Slip the Clutch* and *Shoot the Star*, and gives time to decide on a boys/girls right/left hand star.

Variants use *Pass One* or *Pass Two*. Every caller can find this type of get-out in his preparation at home; but they are not exactly easy to call from sight, and consequently I do not further cover them here. With a bit practice, you will sure see these possibilities.

'Modern' Get-Outs

Again another possibility is to make use of the more 'modern' calls – such as *Run*, which allows a change to the promenade formation, or *U Turn Back*, which does the same trick (although it will not be easy to get it into a good flow). *Single Hinge, Touch a Quarter* and *Cast Off Three Quarters* similarly change to an alamo ring. For stylistical reasons (see above) I am not perfectly happy with this approach; I would for example call *Shoot the Star and Turn a Quarter More* rather than *Cast Off Three Quarters*. But this is most probably a matter of personal taste.

If we are talking of this kind of surprising material, we might go even further: *Shoot the Star, and Finish Your (Left Shoulder) Dosado* is an example that comes to my mind – I never tried it, though.

Something else I never tried is *Four Ladies Chain* which I think fits much better into the stylistical world of thars. It will sure be a big help to name the person the dancers are to meet. Sample choreo: *Allemande Left, Forward Two to an Allemande Thar – Shoot the Star to a Four Ladies Chain – Meet Your Corner – Courtesy Turn With a Half Sashay*.

Sequence Changer

It is possible to construct some routines but the good ones I found rely on other formations and are therefore mentioned in the respective other chapters.

Alamo Ring [ALAM]

Formation

Alamo ring is again a formation that has no sibling: If all dancers do a *U Turn Back*, we will again have an alamo ring. The formation is basically understood as a kind of an endless wave (right hand and left hand at the same time), and those calls that are possible in a wave and do not ask for centers and ends should also be possible in an Alamo Ring.

The calls that involve two parallel mini waves (such as *Scoot Back*, *Walk and Dodge* or *Box Circulate*) are not exactly easy and therefore rarely used here.

Callerlab did not provide an abbreviation; I decided to use [ALAM].

Movement

Alamo ring does not move naturally, but some callers use effectively either *Boys Circle Left, Girls Circle Right* as a gimmick or simply (but less funny) *All Circle to the Boys' Right*. From this movement a call like *X Center, Y Sashay* is rarely used but should actually not cause a problem (it will feel like a gimmick as dancers have no eyes on the backside).

Arrangement

Alamo ring is perhaps one of the most neglected formations. I estimate that 99 percent of its usage is with the boys facing in – almost only in the one routine we all know.

Technically, four arrangements are possible (as always, the arrangement numbers are by me):

- **[0ALAM]** Best known: boys facing in, girls facing out
- **[5ALAM]** The opposite: boys facing out, girls facing In
- **[1ALAM]** 'bbgg', same sexes holding right hands
- **[2ALAM]** 'bbgg', same sexes holding left hands

Examples for transformations from [0ALAM] to other arrangements:

- → **[5ALAM]**: *Everybody Trade by the Right/Left*
- → **[2ALAM]**: Heads (Sides) Trade
- → **[1ALAM]**: *Head Boys and Side Girls: With Your Corner Trade*

Some callers might want to replace the term *Trade by the Right/Left* by *Turn by the Right/Left and Balance* to stick closer to the Basic stylistics.

Others want to use *Scoot Back* instead, which is possible but makes it more difficult.

Another possibility is *Heads/Sides Box Circulate*. – I personally am not a friend of this type of choreo as the dancer orientation needs time, and therefore it inevitably leads to a dancing style stop and go.

Relationship

When dancers are between their partners and corners, we will use the symbol [°]. In case of [1] and [2] arrangements, we will always consider the nearest dancer of opposite sex to construct pairs where we can consider the relationship.

Zero Alamo Ring

The most common Alamo Ring has 'normal' arrangement with boys facing in [0ALAM]; everybody is holding partner at the right hand. I call this FASR 'zero alamo ring' as it allows an immediate get-out,

just like a zero line or a zero box.

'Classical' Get-Ins

Looking at *Allemande Left in the Alamo Style* we find that the arm turn goes half way plus so much more that the endless wave is reached. (Considering the above statement about *Allemande Left to an Allemande Thar* we might be irritated that the step towards the partner is left out here.) The following get-ins use the 'classical' approach, using other arm turn entries by analogy; but note that we will most probably first have to explain this to our dancers – especially for the [5] arrangement, as the boys will have a strong habit to face in. Although the wording *and Balance* should let no doubt that the expected result is an alamo ring, there will still be some dispute who is to face in or out. All in all, the following get-ins are logical and flowing but quite unexpected.

Routine	Result
• *Allemande Left – Turn Partner Right in the Alamo Style and Balance* [zero alamo ring]	[0ALAM°]
• *Turn Corner Right in the Alamo Style and Balance*. (*Left Swing Thru – Balance – Left Swing Thru – Do Paso* will return dancers.) • *Walk Around Corner – Turn Partner Left in the Alamo Style and Balance*. (*Swing Thru – Balance – Swing Thru – Turn Partner Right – Allemande Left* is the way out.)	[5ALAM°]
• *Heads Half Sashay – All Face Your Partner – Turn Partner Left/Right in the Alamo Style and Balance*	[1ALAM] [2ALAM]

Get-Ins from Other Ring Formations

For shortness, the following list does not make a distinction between [0] and [5] arrangements:

From	To [ALAM]
[0RING] [0ring]	• *Boys/Girls Run Right/Left and Balance* • *All Four Ladies Roll Away and U Turn Back* (Overflow!) • *Four Ladies Chain (Three Quarters) With a Half Sashay – Boys Run*
[0PROM]	• *Back Out – Girls Run and Balance*
[0prom]	• *Back Out – Boys Run and Balance*
[SFPR] [sfpr]	• *Boys Face Right, Girls Face Left and Balance*
[GRND] [SHFR]	• *(Left) Touch a Quarter and Balance*

From	To [ALAM]
[THAR] [thar]	• *With Your Right/Left Cast Off Three Quarters to an Alamo Ring* • *With Your Right/Left Single Hinge to an Alamo Ring and Balance*

Neutral Call

Swing Thru from alamo ring is an almost 'classical' example for a neutral call. *Left Swing Thru* has the same effect and can always replace it – in both cases, relationship changes by two places [±]. When returning to zero alamo ring, *Swing Thru* should be followed by *Turn Partner Right* or *Right and Left Grand*), *Left Swing Thru* should be continued by *Allemande Left*.

Get-Outs and Transformations

From [5ALAM°] (i.e. girls facing in), the following get-outs will do:

• (*Walk Around Your Corner –) Do Paso*
• *(Turn Corner by the Right, Go Full Around –) Courtesy Turn your Partner*

We already said that the neutral calls will bring the dancers from [°] to ['] and vice versa. But if we managed to get them into another relationship, *Allemande Left* or *Swing* does not help for the resolution. In this case everybody is either between partner and right hand lady ['''] or between corner and opposite ['], and the trick is again to decide to use *Swing Thru* or *Left Swing Thru* to bring the dancers **away** from the person that we know, i.e. away from partner or corner:

From	Get-Out
[0ALAM']	• *Left Swing Thru – Turn Partner Left and Walk Around Your Corner – Courtesy Turn Your Partner*
[0ALAM''']	• *Swing Thru – Turn Right and Courtesy Turn Your Partner*
[5ALAM']	• *Swing Thru – Turn by the Right – Allemande Left*
[5ALAM''']	• *Left Swing Thru – Turn Corner Left and Swing Your Own* (or: *Allemande Left With a Full Turn…*)

Other get-outs – which bring us at least back into [0RING], where we will later fix the relationship – include (do not forget to replace the words *outfacers* and *infacers* by *boys* or *girls* respectively):

• *Outfacers Run Right – All Circle Left*
• *Outfacers Run Left – All Circle Right*
• *Infacers Run Right – California Twirl – Circle Left*
• *Infacers Run Left – California Twirl – Circle Left*
• *Outfacers U Turn Back – All Circle Left/Right*
• *Infacers Make a Right/Left Hand Star – Find Your Partner (Corner)…*

Here are some transformations into a thar (again do replace *X* by the originally outfacing sex – i.e. by *boys* or *girls*):

• *With Your Left Cast Off Three Quarters – X Swing In To an Allemande Thar*
• *With Your Right Cast Off Three Quarters – X Swing In To a Wrong Way Thar*
• *Left Hinge To an Allemande Thar*
• *Right Hinge To a Wrong Way Thar*

Turn Thru?

The alamo ring is sometimes used to discuss the difference between *Turn Thru* and *Turn Partner by the Right*. As the dancers in an alamo ring either face in or out, and as *Turn Thru* has every dancer doing a 180° turn, the result will be four dancers facing in, back to back with four dancers facing out. This clearly shows the need for an old-fashioned call like *Turn Partner Right*, which does not have a defined ending position so it can be used to get dancers to their corners.

If we say *Turn Thru* instead we reach an interesting, nameless formation, which seems not very versatile – but if you want to rely on it, but if it happened, *Centers Circle Left, Ends Single File Promenade* is a possible way out into a shifting 4:4 formation.

Calls such as *Allemande Left* or *Right and Left Grand* include a prior turning to the affected person, but this is not true for their components. Therefore arm turns and pull bys must usually be avoided in an alamo ring if the caller and his dancers are not fully aware of their effect.

Trade

It can puzzle me sometimes how *Trade* can actually work from an alamo ring. If I say *Heads Trade* from zero alamo ring, the dancers have apparently no difficulty to find the one the caller meant, although there are actually three other head dancers waiting. There is actually no indication in the definition to find the 'nearest' match.

Some More Ideas and Get-Outs

Allemande Left in the Alamo Style and Balance – Swing Thru and Balance. Why not make use of the facing couples rule at this place? …*Swing Thru – Slide Thru – Promenade Home* is a possibility; …*Swing Thru – Finish Your Dosado* (getting inner and outer dancers facing) *– Star Thru, Promenade Home* is another.

And finally something that actually goes beyond our focus as it uses the five letter words *heads* and *sides* (from zero alamo ring): *Heads Walk and Dodge, and Cloverleaf – Sides Walk and Dodge* (we are in zero box here) *– Allemande Left.*

Static Square [S] and Similar Formations

Eighty percent of this article had been written before it came to my mind to add a chapter on the static square. It also seemed persuading to add a static square facing out (with [s], a lower case letter, as a symbol). I hesitated because the static square somehow feels different from everything we have up to here: It does not move, dancers are well adjusted to the walls, some callers (like Rich Reel on all8.com) distinguish six arrangements.

We find six arrangements only if we make a difference between *Heads Half Sashay* and *Sides Half Sashay* which I personally do not see and do not regard as a good path to go. (As a consequence, we sooner or later would have to consider lines adjusted to a head wall as something different from lines adjusted to a side wall. It is a big advantage of the FASR system not to do so.)

A similar formation is what we get when calling *Boys (Girls) Run* from a static square – four disconnected mini waves in the foot prints of [S] which is

no alamo ring but resembles much to it, and can be confused with it. Mixtures are also possible (two couples, two mini waves).

Coming back to what was said in the beginning, all these formations do not move, and therefore we cannot leave the dancers just dancing in rhythm and enjoying the music, not even for a second. Static squares and related formations will therefore immediately transform into another formation, typically into a moving circle.

The neutral call in a static square is *Grand Square*. Its usage in a pattern apart from other places than the very beginning is limited as it is not easy to find the correct place to start calling it (five beats before a four-bar period, i.e. slightly less than eight possibilities per minute). Most callers obviously are unconscious to this problem – a fact blatantly revealing the general unconsciousness of how far square dancing can be away from what could rightly be called dancing.

Other Formations, Other Arrangements

Goal of this article was to just cover a very basic usage of the most common formations. I think that this goes already far beyond what is usually called and danced. It would as well be possible to invent new ring formations on the basis of the existing ones, and/or to make use of the other possible arrangements.

I admit that personally I am more a friend of fluent dancing than of the typical stop and go experience that comes from unexpected difficulties. This was one of the reasons to keep other formations and other arrangements out of this article. But apparently an experienced caller with a group of confident and reliable dancers might want to extend the material given here. (I am planning a future article about further usages, but it can well take a long time until I have gathered enough material, as it is not in my focus as a caller. See below for my recommendation for further readings.)

Formations

I find basically two approaches: New formations and new arrangements. Here are some ideas for new formations (not thinking about unsymmetrical usages):

- Two couples in a star promenade and two in a thar

- Two couples in a star promenade or thar, the others in a single file promenade between them
- Two-armed 'tidal' stars or thars
- Stars of two or six dancers
- Circles but two dancers facing the other side
- Rings/alamo rings *as couples* (two dancers facing in, two facing out, etc.)
- Promenades and thars moving backwards
- Combinations of allemande thars and wrong way thars
- Circle and Star: *Girls Circle Left, Boys Step Behind Your Partner and Make a Right Hand Star – Girls Backtrack*

There seem to be a lot of possibilities; the question is if dancer sensation is special enough to justify them and, most of all, the problem of reaching, using and again leaving them in a naturally flow without stop and go.

Arrangements

Another approach is the usage of other arrangements than [0] and [5]. In this case a major advantage is usually the easy get-out by simply addressing the boys or girls. For this reason, this type of ring formations can also occasionally be integrated into the 'normal' calling in rectangular formations, as the caller does not have to ensure the sequence of the dancers. Example from a two-faced line with a boy

and a girl couple: *Ferris Wheel, Centers Sweep a Quarter More – All Join Hands and Circle – Up to the Middle and Back – Boys/Girls Square Thru…*

For further readings on this interesting topic (and other more sophisticated usages of ring formations) I very much recommend the article *Non-Traditional Choreography from Traditional Setups* **by Tomáš 'Doug' Machalík** (on his web site http://etc.square.cz/etc6.pdf). In a way, this article starts at the point where the document at hand has to stop.

Colophon

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Source

Find this article in the internet at www.calling.scootback.de.

Who Are My Readers?

I got some response in the beginning when I started my site but much less in the recent year. Of course I ask myself if what I write can be of any use for somebody else. So I invite you to let me know that you read the article and tell if you did find anything in it that can be of use to you. By writing even a short email, you actually help convincing me of the sense to write an essay like this and motivating me to go on.

Typeset

Written in Word 2004 on Apple Macintosh, style sheet by Martin Ingenhütt. – Fonts: Body: Optima 9; Marginalia: Optima 7; Sub-headings: Papyrus 9 (Blue RGB 52-144-203); Main Headings: Papyrus 22.

Version History

2006-07-02	First version
2006-09-01	First published version
2006-09-17	Major additions to thars; minor additions and other changes in the other chapters.
2006-10-0	Minor additions of choreo
2007-07-15	Amended structure by introducing FASR as an independent chapter Replaced the wrong term *matrix* by *set-up*. Minor corrections and amendments.
2007-08-08	Added *Who Are My Readers?*, and a few minor amendments.