

Plus Dance by Definition Notes

Hal Barnes– October 2014

Introduction

I am not aware of a generally accepted definition for Dance by Definition (DBD) and callers' opinions on the topic vary widely. This paper is aimed at current Plus dancers who are interested in a better understanding of DBD. This paper describes DBD as currently danced at our major festivals in the Baltimore-Washington area. I do not speculate on "what should be" but rather on "what is."

DBD is generally used to describe a Plus level dance with significantly more challenging choreography. Its use at festivals in our area gives Plus DBD the distinction of a level of its own on a par with Mainstream, Plus, and Advanced. It is now common to have a hall dedicated to Plus DBD which is staffed for the vast majority of the festival rather than being treated as a one or two hour limited-interest specialty. Mainstream dancing by its nature has little use of DBD. Advanced programs and higher by their nature include DBD as a built-in part of the program. So DBD and Plus have a special partnership as a popular extension for those who seek more intricate choreography without having to learn a large number of new calls added by the Advanced programs.

DBD Definition

DBD is really a package of calling practices supporting the philosophy of getting the maximum choreographic usage out of all the calls using the definition as a foundation. This makes it different from "normal" dancing which uses a limited set of arrangements and formations of the Mainstream and Plus calls. Even though the name "Dance by Definition" implies strict adherence to the call definitions (as published by Caller Lab), this is not the case at all. As practiced by festival callers, DBD is anything you can get away with choreographically while using the definition as a foundation. The discussion below of various themes in DBD demonstrates the "wild west" nature of DBD as practiced.

- Calls from all arrangements (placing of men and women) and handedness (left & right). For example, COORDINATE from right and left handed columns with any arrangement of men and women. Most dancers think of this "all position" dancing as being the main difference in DBD dancing, but it barely scratches the surface.
- Calls from less common formations which are named in the definition. For example, calling CROSSFIRE from outfacing lines or inverted lines; calling FLUTTERWHEEL from a static square.
- Calls from additional formations which are consistent with the definition but not specifically named. For example, calling CROSSFIRE from diamonds.

- Calls using “BUT” to interrupt the call before it is complete or dynamically change the definition during execution. For example, SPIN CHAIN THE GEARS BUT TURN THE STAR HALF dynamically modifies a part of the definition in the middle of the call. SQUARE THRU BUT ON THE THIRD HAND TOUCH^{1/4} interrupts the call before it is finished and moves on to a different call.
- Fractionalizing Calls – Doing parts of a multi-part call. Identifying the component parts of a call and directing the dancers to do certain parts of the call. Different subsets of dancers may be separately directed regarding the parts.

For example, LINEAR CYCLE BUT LEAVE OFF THE LAST PART results in a completed double pass thru formation.

Calling DO HALF OF A LOAD THE BOAT results in outfacing lines.

Calling LOAD THE BOAT BUT THE CENTERS STOP AT 3 ½ (in a wave) results in a quarter tag formation. Note that callers may specify either a fraction or the number of parts.

- Fractionalizing Calls – Doing half of a single-part call. DBD makes extensive use of fractionalizing single-part calls such as CIRCULATES, TRADES, and FOLDS. For example, CALLING ACEY DEUCEY ONCE AND A HALF has the centers doing half of a trade while the ends do half of a circulate.
- Not starting a multi-part call from the beginning. These are difficult and require an intimate knowledge of the parts by the dancers.

From outfacing lines: START WITH THE SECOND PART OF LOAD THE BOAT.

From outfacing lines, IN REVERSE ORDER RIGHT & LEFT THRU. (Courtesy turn followed by a right pull-by.)

- Adopting a modified definition from the original and doing the call according to the new definition.

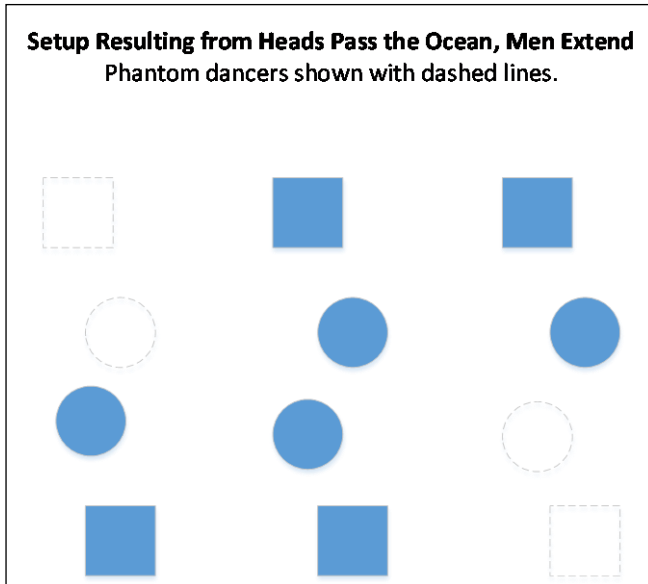
For example, if SPIN CHAIN THRU started with a designated hand rather than from the ends of a wave, then we could call SPIN CHAIN THRU from an Alamo ring, provided the caller specifies the starting hand. We could also call a right-handed SPIN CHAIN THRU from a left-handed wave. (Which then starts by the centers turning right.)

Another example is to generalize the arm turns in a SPIN CHAIN THRU as TRADES and CASTS (meaning two adjacent dancers can be facing the same direction rather than being in a wave. Using this definition do a SPIN CHAIN THRU from two-faced lines.

- Gender neutral positions. While STAR THRU and SLIDE THRU are defined by gender, even in DBD, all other calls which we think of as being gender specific become gender neutral in DBD.

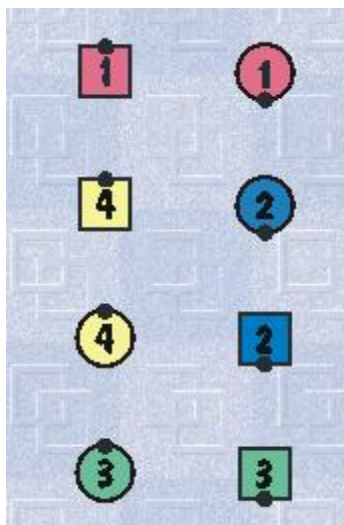
For example, RIGHT & LEFT THRU, DIXIE STYLE, LADIES/GENTS CHAIN, LADIES/GENTS CENTER GENTS/LADIES SASHAY are danced with any combination of men and women in any position.

- Using the phrase DO YOUR PART to have dancers do calls when some of the dancers in the



formation are missing or when some dancers are not facing in the correct direction. For example, the diagram on the left shows the setup resulting from calling HEADS PASS THE OCEAN, MEN EXTEND. The blue figures are the dancers (squares are men, circles are women). Consider the call DO YOU PART OF A RECYCLE. The center wave is complete but both pairs of outside dancers only have half of a wave. In order for RECYCLE to make sense, they must pretend that there are two additional phantom dancers to complete the wave. These are shown as dashed figures. So the

phrase DO YOUR PART tells dancers to visualize additional dancers to make the formation complete and then proceed with the call. Doing this call results in a double pass thru formation.

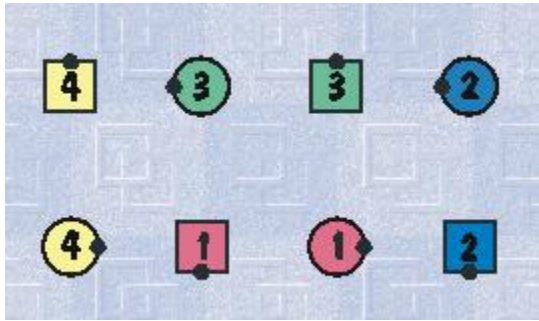


The figure on the left shows columns with the men in the front. The men are in the correct position to do a TRACK 2 but the women are not facing the right way, even though they are in the correct spot. Calling MEN DO YOUR PART OF A TRACK2, LADIES CIRCULATE TO A BOX results in two-faced lines. It is necessary to call DO YOUR PART because the ladies are not facing the correct direction and are not doing the call.

- Using a part of a call as a stand-alone call. For example, from a wave with men facing in, calling MEN SCOOT BACK, LADIES DODGE with the DODGE being taken from WALK & DODGE. This is really a short hand for the “Do Your Part” discussion above. A second example from facing lines: EACH SIDE DO THE CENTER PART OF LOAD THE BOAT. This example is a further extension

of the “Do Your Part” discussion because dancers are asked to pretend that they are the centers of a line where the call applies.

- Using mixed formations. This means that some of the dancers are in waves while others are in columns. When the square is in columns or waves, dancers are either facing the same wall or



the opposite wall. In mixed formations some are facing the side walls while others are facing the head walls. This means some dancers are looking at other dancers shoulders. The setup on the left results from calling SCOOT BACK & LADIES ROLL. Note that the women are in a left-handed column while the men are in a right-handed wave. Each group executes the next call according to the

formation they are in. For example, calling SPLIT CIRCULATE has the women stepping ahead one place in their column while the men loop right around the women to the adjacent spot in their wave. Note that both men and women dance exactly as if the whole square is in their formation (columns or waves). Their dancing is not affected by the facing direction of the other group.

- Extensive use of rolls. Rolls add complexity because they change the formation quickly and dramatically. Regular Plus dancing makes very limited use of rolls, with PARTNER TRADE & ROLL composing about 90% of the material. As a result many Plus dancers assume that rolls always end facing someone which discourages most callers from risking other types of rolls. DBD dancing includes rolls from any call which establishes a turning direction. For example, RECYCLE & ROLL to waves or columns. In addition, in some calls only half the dancers can roll because the others have no turning direction. For example, in SCOOT BACK & ROLL only the original out-facing dancers can roll because the in-facing dancers last move is an EXTEND which has no turning direction. In DBD dancing, the dancers are responsible for knowing which dancers can and cannot roll in each call – the callers may not tell you.
- Extensive use of leader/trailer calls. Normal Plus dancing obscures the calls where the roles are leaders and trailers. For example, ZOOM has leaders roll back while trailers step forward. However, most Plus dancers will say that ZOOM means centers roll back and outsides step forward. This happens because most callers present it this way. The implication of this thinking is that dancers are lost when we call ZOOM from a completed double pass thru formation because they are thinking centers/outsides versus leaders/trailers. DBD dancing restores the importance of leader/trailer recognition including ZOOM and PEEL OFF which allows them to be done from additional formations.

Please note that this list of DBD practices is neither a critique nor a justification of these practices; just a statement about reality of DBD dancing at our festivals.

Principles and Practices

Right Shoulder Pass

Two dancers passing each other in the same lane should pass right shoulders. Two dancers attempting to occupy the same spot should have right shoulders and connect hands.

Another Dancer Cannot Influence Your Call

The facing direction of another dancer does not change how you execute a call. For example, from normal waves CENTERS RUN results in a half circle move to the ends while the ends slide together. If the end turn to face the center's left ear, CENTERS RUN is exactly the same action with the ends stepping forward to adjust for the space. The facing direction of the end dance does not affect how the call is executed.

Anything & Roll

First complete the "anything" call, then drop hands and individually roll in the established direction. Then reconnect to the new formation and adjust spacing as required. A common mistake is to attempt to roll before the first call is completed. Another common mistake is to forget to roll individually. Note that if the previous call had no established turning direction, you can't roll. For example, from waves with the men facing in, SCOOT BACK AND ROLL allows only the women to roll as the EXTEND which finishes the call for the men has no established turning direction.

Formation Awareness

DBD is all about formations. Dancers must be connected to dancers beside them to recognize these formations. Mixed formation (some dancers in waves, some in columns) are unusual to new DBD dancers, but are critical to recognize how to do the next call.

After "anything & roll" calls, immediately connect to the new formation and adjust spacing as required.

Notes on Roles in Call Definitions

Dancers must know the important roles for each call which are referenced in the definition. For example, ZOOM had Leaders/Trailers while WALK & DODGE has in-facers and out-facers in a box. The chart below shows the important roles for a number of box calls.

Box Calls	Roles
Follow Your Neighbor	In-Facing/Out-Facing
Scoot Back	In-Facing/Out-Facing
Walk & Dodge	In-Facing/Out-Facing
Peel Off & Peel the Top	Leader/Trailer
Zoom	Leader/Trailer
Flutterwheel, Reverse Flutter	Left/Right Dancer
Dixie Style	Left/Right Dancer
Half Sashay, Roll Away	Left/Right Dancer

Calls from Waves

This point applies to hand turn calls from waves – SWING THRU, SPIN CHAIN THRU, RELAY DEUCEY, and the GEARS calls. If any of these calls is directed to facing couples, first step to a wave, then do the call. Note that SWING THRU is unique in that it starts with the right hand while all the others start from the ends of a wave, whether right handed or left handed.

References

Caller Lab Definitions can be found here:

<http://www.callerlab.org/DancePrograms/AllProgramDocuments/tabid/610/Default.aspx>

Look for Mainstream Definitions and Plus Definitions.

DoSaDo.com also has these definitions in a more user-friendly list:

<http://www.dosado.com/lists/>

Animations of calls can be found here. Select the program from the top of the screen and then pick the call from the drop down.

<http://www.tamtwirlers.org/tamination/info/index.html>