

Keep Dancing

by Harold & Meredith Sears

Do you ever find yourself in the middle of a dance with no idea of what figure you're doing and no idea of what figure is coming up, either? Surely, the cuer has told you, but the words just flew on by. Then, he cues, "Lunge and Roll"? I heard that, but do we both lunge, or does one lunge and the other roll? Where? How far? She's rolling down line. What should I do?

You should keep dancing. If this is a foxtrot, dance slow, quick, quick — keep moving to the rhythm. You are really marking time, waiting for a cue that will sink in, but, until it comes, you are dancing and enjoying your partner and moving to the music. Do a little box in place, maybe a vine. If your partner appears to know what's going on, aim your steps in that direction. Go with the flow.



If you are able to do this, by the time that meaningful cue comes along, you will be able to blend smoothly from your primitive choreography into the intended choreography, like merging into traffic on the interstate. If one of the missed cues was a transition or a chasse, then you have the wrong foot free — just do a subtle close/point — now you can blend and merge, and off you go.

The ability to "fudge" is sometimes not given the respect it deserves. No one doubts the value of our ability to keep time to the music, to execute the hundreds of different figures in our round dance repertoire, and to lead and follow and so dance *with* our partners. But sometimes we will lose it, and the ability to fake it can go a long way toward making our round dancing smooth, comfortable, and fun.

"Man chasse, woman roll left to shadow." There are lots of opportunities for problems in that little cue. First, the man might hear the first part but not the second, so he leads a thru chasse for both. He does this with a little extra tone, a little extra lift in his frame, causing her to add the "skip," the syncopation, to her steps. But now you're in semi-closed, rather than shadow, with trail feet free. Or, you might both hear the cue, but the woman (if only subliminally) registers the "chasse" too. So he raises lead hands, and she rolls, but she syncopates her roll. Now you're in shadow, but again, trail feet are free, rather than right feet for both. Or the man realizes he must raise lead hands, but he swoops his hand clockwise to roll her right — maybe just because he's used to underarm turns, or because he doesn't know her right from her left. This is so awkward for the lady that she gets her feet tangled and doesn't know which one is free or what dance position she's in.

Round dancing is not simple. We are trying to move to the beat, listen to the cuer, feel where our partner is (and keep half an eye on other dancers), and think about rise and fall, arm movements, and upper body rotation. And we might even be trying to chew gum, too.



We will lose our way occasionally. It's inevitable. But you don't need to stand there, letting traffic pile up behind you, and causing your partner to wonder if you just don't want to dance with her anymore. Instead, develop the ability to shift into a simple freestyle sequence and to do a quick "change/point" adjustment when the proper foot just isn't free. And work on an anti-panic strategy. When you are lost in a dance, it is not the same as being lost and alone in a dark and snowy forest. Don't panic. Just keep dancing — something. Soon, you'll hear the cue "Maneuver." Get that trail foot free, and you're found — back in the dance again.