

Checklist for a dance

By Seth Tepfer

Prior to the gig

- ❑ Find out all details – where, when (date & time), who (playing and dancing), what type of dancers
- ❑ Get directions to the hall!
- ❑ Understand expectations the organizers have for you – types of dances, who the target audience will be
- ❑ Discuss money up front – write down what you will be paid
- ❑ Get a phone / email contact for the band

Ask the organizer / contact / scheduler the following questions:

- ❑ When and how long is the break(s)?
- ❑ when are announcements?
- ❑ do they have a tradition of couples dances at certain times– waltz, hambo, swing?
- ❑ When does the dance end, and what type of ending - sharp at 11, or loosely before 11:30, or sometime before dawn?
- ❑ Special traditions at beginning or end of evening?
- ❑ Will there be a beginners workshop? What is the length / time for it? Will you be teaching it?

At the beginning of the evening

- ❑ Get there early – around sound check for the band is good or hour before the dance starts
- ❑ Talk to the evening's coordinator. Find out:
- ❑ Anything special going on?
- ❑ Last minute changes to program, band, other events intersecting?
- ❑ Ask above questions again: when are announcements, breaks, how long, evening ends when, etc.

Talk with the band before the dance starts

- ❑ who in the band do you communicate with – band leader, guitar player, piano player, all of them
- ❑ How do they start a tune with 4 potatoes – 8 potatoes – no potatoes – weird potatoes
- ❑ How to end a dance – do they want to know “2 times through”, “1 time through,” “3 times through,” just tells us at the end of B2?
- ❑ Define “ending right here, immediately NOW!” versus “ending at the end of this phrase”
- ❑ How do you change tempo? Who sets tempo?
- ❑ Do they want to see the dance card, or just have a description, or do they not want to know anything?
- ❑ What types of music do they play – reels only, jigs, hornpipes, swing music, etc.
- ❑ When you call squares how will you end the square? What speed do you want them?
- ❑ How the evening will flow – number of dances, etc.

Before each dance

- ❑ Give the dancers time to socialize for a bit. If the dancers aren't listening, perhaps they need more time to socialize.
- ❑ Double check they have hands four all the way to the bottom *before* you start any sort of walk-through. You *occasionally* have to remind them to do this. Do they need to cross over?
- ❑ Tell them exactly what they need in a walk-through, but no more.
- ❑ After the walk-through (before the music starts) remind the dancers of the first move, e.g. *Starts with a neighbor allemande Right*. This reminds the dancers of the first move – which they might have forgotten, especially if you did only one walk through. This is also insurance against strange or shaky potatoes.

After each dance

- ❑ Immediately tell the dancers the next formation (especially if it is a waltz, a square or a strange formation)
- ❑ Remind people to dance with people they have never seen before, or ask people who are sitting out to dance
- ❑ Show the band leader the card for the dance, or tell them what type of feeling you are looking for
- ❑ Tell the band if it is a no-walk-through

During the Evening

- ❑ Acknowledge the band – without whom this would be dancing to dead music
- ❑ Thank the newcomers – they are the future of the dance. Plan the first part of your evening with them in mind, and they will keep coming back!
- ❑ Thank the band
- ❑ Acknowledge the organizers, the coordinators, the people who put in the work for the dance series
- ❑ If the musicians have product to sell, mention this – it is a courtesy, and has more punch coming from you than from the band
- ❑ Acknowledge the sound techs – without whom the dance would be 20-30 people
- ❑ Did I mention thank the band?

At the end of the evening

- ❑ Publicly acknowledge the sound tech and band one more time
- ❑ Remind dancers to help clean up, and look for all belongings (purse, shoes, stray children, etc)
- ❑ Remind dancers about after party or gathering, if one
- ❑ Remind dancers about the next dance