

NOTES on VOICE DEVELOPMENT

for the SQUARE DANCE CALLER -----

by Edith Murphy

INTRODUCTION ---

by Ardy and Dick Jones

The material presented in the following pages is the reproduction of a paper written and distributed in 1958 by Mrs. Edith Murphy of East Bridgewater, Mass. for one of the early New England "Modern Square Dance" Callers Schools.

Edith Murphy was truly a "first lady" of square dancing, - a talented musician, caller, elocution instructress, analytical square dance authority and an encouraging, guiding light to many of the prominent New England callers of today. This paper is reproduced, by virtue of Edith's long ago given permission, as a tribute to a truly fine lady who gave so unselfishly of her knowledge and talents to the advancement of the Arts and Sciences of Square Dance Calling and to the development of callers, hence to the betterment of square dancing for all.

The concepts, philosophy and technical information which this paper includes will be forever timely and applicable to square dance calling. They possess a depth comprehensible only after careful study and repeated reading. Study of this small, masterful bit of Edith's work may enable you to share a portion of that which we feel so privileged to have had the opportunity to learn from our personal association with her and guidance by her.

Edith's talent for developing the best in each potential caller never can be reproduced adequately in written words. However, all who will take the time to analyze and apply that which she would have been thrilled to present in far greater detail with her dynamic, personal manner, can only become improved callers. Each will see himself or herself in retrospect or anticipation, in all the various stages of the development of a finished, polished caller. One may also discover, after sufficient introspect, otherwise missed details of one's calling development which should and must be given adequate concentration and perfecting if the goal of becoming a fully developed, polished caller is ever to be realized. These aspects of calling development have been touched upon generally in some current materials outlining the learning of square dance calling. We believe this to be one of the first, and by far, the most depthfully detailed presentation of its kind. It is well worth the time required for interpretation, digestion, and personal application.

Edith would have been thrilled with some of the modern square dance developments of today - the greater and ever improved variety and quality of musical accompaniments, improved sound systems, ever better callers, and the National Convention finally coming to the northeast. She would have been even more thrilled to realize that the techniques which she pioneered in detail and scientific application to the art of calling are now becoming recognized generally as an integral and important part of calling ability and achievement.

With humility and unending gratitude, we present this paper for your study, and we dedicate all other materials we have developed relative to this subject to the memory of Edith Murphy and to the continuance of the work she pioneered and initiated.

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Square dancing is growing - in ALL directions! It used to be that if there were one person available who could prompt or shout one or two dances, it was an easy task to get together a few people for a "Kitchen Junket" or "Barn Dance".

The field was enlarged when there were two or three callers from which to choose, and the choice depended upon the style of dances called.

As callers became more numerous, dancers became more selective. One caller not only had a variety of styles of dances, but he also had a distinctive style of calling. It might have been a hill-billy style, or a machine-gun effect, or a western twang, or a southern drawl, to mention a few among the many that have been heard. In other words, besides calling a good dance, the caller put on a good show.

The ultimate is reached when a caller can satisfy dancers with a good repertoire of challenging and relaxing dances, appeals to their dramatic sense with his style of calling and his showmanship, and, SOUNDS GOOD! His voice not only is pleasing to the ear, but appeals to the imaginations and emotions of the dancers. And it now appears that this stage of development is gaining in recognition.

As with leading educators, the thought is now turned from the what to the how: to the development of systems of progressive steps through which a person may be led to a realization of himself. This development is very like the four stages in the development of a child: (1) Animation - a palpitating mass; (2) Attraction - awareness of surrounding objects; (3) Selection or Choice - preference: hands clutch and retain certain objects; (4) Separation or Analysis - objects which at first appeared to him as a mass now begin to stand out clearly, one from another.

In the development of voice, the same succeeding stages are found:

ANIMATION ... is the period when the individual is engrossed with subjects or objects as a WHOLE, and his passion for life is expressed through rude energy and size - the COLOSSAL period. Let no one mistake loudness for animation. A whisper may be more vital, more animated than a shout. Invite freedom and abandon, regardless of good taste at this time. Yet, let the freedom and abandon be the result of thought. Let there be a reason behind it.

EXERCISE: Imagine that you are on a mountain top and wish to attract the attention of Jim, who is on another mountain peak. In full, deep tones, prolonging the vowels, call:
"Yo -o- Ho -o- Ji -i- im"

ATTRACTION:.... is the time when one recognizes the individual parts of the whole and delights in presenting THE PARTS to which he has been attracted, wanting to make them EFFECTIVE in attracting the attention of others. This leads to smoothness, and smoothness will bring about a sense of oneness with the dancers. So long as there is a gulf between the caller and dancers, there is conscious and apparent effort in the calling. This second step grows in natural sequence out of the first. In all the successive steps of the student's progress, he is constantly to add, never to discard or lay aside any power previously gained. Rather than outgrow it, he will grow into it. All that he will outgrow will be his faults, his mannerisms, his limitations.

SELECTION is appreciation of the use or SERVICE of the PARTS, when individual parts take on a meaning, a purpose. The will, directed by an understanding of values, expresses itself in the added quality called VOLUME OF VOICE. When the will becomes definitely aroused, the student will feel his new power and should be inspired to direct it definitely toward his dancers.

A difference exists between true and mechanical expression. Failure to perceive what is desired may lead the student to offer as a counterfeit of volume, force or loudness. Volume of voice, free from force or loudness, is the expression of growing appreciation of values.

ANALYSIS ... is the realization of that higher service resulting from the meaningful relationship of the parts to each other. In forming the elements of speech, the intellect, seeing more clearly, appeals to the intellect of those who listen. By aiming to present calls so as to be clearly understood, distinctness and precision of speech are gained. The elements of speech become more perfectly chiseled. Careless enunciation is usually due to careless thinking. Clear speaking comes from clear thinking. The caller's effort to impress his hearers with the parts which make up his dance figure will result, in due time, in accurate, distinct articulation.

As the caller earnestly strives to impress each command in all its new interest, his voice becomes more decidedly modulated, rising and falling in distinct intervals. As the mind of the caller separates each command from the other main commands of the dance and brings it before the minds of his dancers, he finds it more and more attractive. His effort to interest others deepens his own interest, and the slides in his voice report this increased concentration, and increased vitality. In seeing the life of the WHOLE in each vital part, he desires to make each part important in the minds of the dancers. He no longer touches it with an uncertain stroke. Each thought, each touch becomes a vital thought or touch. The desired effect in the voice results from the workings of the mind. It is not developed mechanically, but grows out of thought. The caller must be sure of what he wants the dancers to do in order to be effective. He cannot afford to be introspective while calling, for the mind cannot be in the creative and in the critical state at the same time.

VOICE TECHNIQUES:

The knowledge of technique must be thoroughly mastered, and then the conscious use of it laid aside. The five qualities to work for are as follows:

1. Naturalness - a. Freedom from self-consciousness and affection.
b. Avoiding mechanical affect. When we're obliged to repeat words or actions over and over, we are apt to make them mechanical.
2. Spontaneity - To take hold of a situation on the instant and know what to do. Even though worked over and over, the presentation must appear impulsive, not monotonous.
3. Variety - - - Lights and shades in the voice - important words to be intoned differently than other words.
4. Vigor - - - Demands animation of body and mental alertness
5. Personality - Projection of personality is the deliberate impression of thought experience and vision upon the minds and hearts of people. Personality is projected when the same thoughts and imaginations are caused to arise in the hearts and minds of the hearers.

INTERPRETATION:

1. Intellectual - Complete knowledge of the dance. Analyze in sections: Opener, Figure, Break, Closer. A good impression on your own mind is necessary before expression.
2. Emotional - - Excitement - Drive - Humor - Musical Lift - Spirited Imagination. All are necessary in calling in an interesting manner. All are necessary to develop an individual style of calling.
- 3 Aids for Successful Interpretation:
 1. Instinct - - - - - a faculty or impulse which produces action in such a way as to attain certain ends without foresight.
 2. Dramatic Intelligenece- the faculty to develop a situation or mood, responding with power and persuasion.
 3. Insight - - - - - gift of proper choice of the significant, with great imagination; choosing spots needing special emphasis; the power to select what means the most to the hearers.
 4. Selection - - - - - adapting calls to your style and your personality
It is not enough to merely repeat another's words.

ARTICULATION :

Spoken language is sound made significant: back of sound there is thought. People must hear, see and feel what you say.

The organs of articulation are: Jaws, Lips, Teeth, Cheek, Tongue, Hard Palate, Soft Palate.

For good articulation, these organs must respond quickly to thought. To acquire ease, accuracy and fluency of speech, certain exercises should be practiced.

Faults in articulation are: Stiff jaw; Inactive lips; Sluggish tongue; Incorrect vowel formation; Back placement; Slovenly initial and final consonant formation; Hesitation (er er er); Mispronunciation; Inserting elements which do not belong in a word, as the t in 'often'; Dropping final consonants.

Exercise #1 - To Eliminate Restriction of the Jaw.

Place two fingers between the teeth as a standard of excellence for the widest vowel, the Italian 'a'.

1. Think the standard - make a mental picture of it.
2. Think the standard and think the syllables: mah, bah, pah.
3. Respond vocally, observing action of jaw: mah, bah, pah.
4. Repeat those syllables, using strength.
5. Repeat those syllables, singing lightly.

Practice Sentences: a. Half a league, half a league, half a league onward.
b. A hundred voices answered 'I'.

Exercise #2 - To Eliminate Restriction of the Lips.

1. Smile gently, uncovering the teeth. Say, ee-dee.
2. Pucker, rounding the lips. Say, doe.
3. Repeat many times: ee-dee, ee-doe, ee-dee, ee-doe.

Practice Sentences: a. Oh East is East and West is West.
b. Each and All.
c. So sweet it seems to me.

Exercise #3 - To Eliminate Restriction of Lips and Jaw.

1. Think the mould for 'ah-goo'.
2. Give the vocal response to 'ah-goo'.

Exercise #4 - To Eliminate Restriction of the Tip of the Tongue.

1. Lightly press the tip of the tongue to upper gum; release it.
2. Respond vocally to: tah - tay - toe - tee
dah - day - doe - dee
nah - nay - no - nee
lah - lay - lo - lee
3. Think the syllables, then respond vocally to:
do di di di di
4. Repeat rapidly: la la la, lilili, lo lo lo, loo loo loo.

Exercise #5 - To Eliminate Restriction of the Whole Tongue.

1. Run the tongue out as far as possible and turn it back and try to touch the uvula. The result is OPEN THROAT.
2. Lapping movement.
3. Fold the sides of the tongue over.
4. Let the point of the tongue try to touch the point of the chin.
5. Turn back the tip of the tongue.

Exercise #6 - The sound of R.

The regular consonant form of r, as in race, rain, ray, etc., is formed by the point of the tongue rising until it is near the center of the upper gum. The tongue touches the teeth and the upper gum at the sides, but there is a small opening in the center for the voice to pass. The breath is directed over upturned tip of tongue, causing it to vibrate against back of upper teeth. (People who substitute w for r make the mistake of placing tip of tongue against lower teeth. Try saying "Red Robin" with tip of tongue against lower teeth and you'll readily see what happens.)

Practice Sentences:

- a. Row on row.
- b. Promenade, go round the ring, where the roosters crow, etc.

Practice Syllables:

- a. Free, Pray, Pry, Pro, Proo.
- b. Putterer, Putterer, Putterer, Putterer.
- c. Whir, Whir, Whir, Whir, Whir.
- d. Purr, Purr, Purr, Purr, Purr.
- e. Rat-a-tat-tat, Rat-a-tat-tat.
- f. Rah-rah-rah, Rah-rah-rah.

Exercise #7 - For Acquiring Front Placement

- First Step - 1. Think the sounds formed with the lips
2. First with power, then with conversational slides, say:
pea, pay, pie, po, poo; bea, bay, by, bo, boo;
me, may, my, mow, moo; fee, fay, fie, foa, foo;
vee, vay, vie, vo, voo; wee, way, wie, woe, woo;
whee, whey, why, whoa, whoo.

Second Step - on page 5

Ex. #7 For Acquiring Front Placement

- Second Step - 1. Think the sounds formed with the tip of the tongue.
 2. Use first with power, then with conversational slides:
 tea, tay tie, toe, too dee, day, die, doe, doo
 nee, nay, nie, no, noo lee, lay, lie, low, loo
 zee, zay, zie, zo, zoo ree, ray, rye, roe, roo

- Third Step - 1. Think the sounds formed by the back of the tongue touching the soft palate. Try to think of them as coming through the lips. The mental attitude will bring the sound forward.
 2. As above, say:
 kee, kay, kie, ko, koo; ghee, gay, guy, go, goo.

- Fourth Step - Combine the 1st, 2nd and 3rd steps:
 1. Join your hands and circle to the left. (in four counts)
 2. Circle to the left in a pretty little ring. (four counts)
 3. Ladies to the center and back to the bar. (four counts)
 4. Like a jaybird walking on frozen ground. (four counts)
 5. Every other lady with every other hand. (four counts)
 6. Come back home and swing and whirl. (four counts)

Exercise #8 - To Eliminate Nasal Tone

An erroneous conception held by many is that when one speaks in a nasal tone, it is said that he "talks through his nose". Actually, it is just the reverse. Pinch the nostrils together and you'll find that it is impossible for the tone to come through the nose. It is only when the voice does come through the nose that a good resonant tone is made.

1. Close the lips. With one impulse, expel the breath from the nostrils, using the syllable "hm" without using the voice.
2. Close the lips, and using voice this time, repeat "hm".
3. With point of tongue to upper gum, prolong sound of N....
4. With back of tongue touching soft palate, prolong sound of NG...
5. Avoiding any change in sound when opening and closing mouth, produce a steady hum while shaping the mouth for the following sounds: M . N . NG . M . N . NG . M . N . NG
6. (Hum) N... (pucker lips for full, round tone, add: O... M...
 O... M... N... O... M... (gnome) repeating over and over.
7. Working for resonance, intone:
 Most Men Want Poise and More Royal Margin.

BREATHING EXERCISES

1. Inhale deeply, through the mouth. Exhale, using syllable "so".
2. Inhale. Count from 1 to 10. Count from 1 to 20. Work towards lengthening count on one breath.
3. Repeat all on one breath:
 Allemande left with your left hand
 A right to your honey, go right and left grand
 Grand right and left go round the ring
 Meet your own and give her a swing. - 16 counts.

OPEN THROAT

One of the first essentials in developing a good calling voice is Open Throat. Open the mouth to the standard for the widest vowel (two fingers width). Take a quick, deep breath through the mouth. With the mouth and throat in this position, practice all exercises given, aiming for a big, round and full tone. With Open Throat, there should be the sensation of yawning, or having a hot potato in the mouth.

Exercise: Take a deep breath and say "Whoa", long vowel.

DEVELOPING RANGE IN VOICE

To develop a voice that responds at will, it is necessary to strengthen the muscles around the vocal apparatus. The muscles of the arm are strengthened by bending and stretching (relaxing and contracting). The vocal chords are strengthened in the same way. By relaxing and contracting these muscles, power is developed.

Exercises: (Use a piano if possible)

1. Play or sing: do re do re do re do. On the same notes sing: ah-ah ah-ah ah.
2. Starting one-half note higher than before, repeat the exercise.
Each time, start one-half note higher, developing range upwards.
DO NOT strain the voice. Go only as high as is comfortable. With practice, a higher range will be developed.
3. Begin again at the normal range, each time going one-half note below.

LINE OF VOICE

.... begins in the lungs. Air is squeezed out of the lungs, passes into the throat to the vocal chords where tone is produced, then to resonant chambers where tone is shaped into words, then sent away. Voice is like all sound, it travels in straight lines till it meets with resistance. The syllables formed are the result of resistance, or lack of it, met by the voice.

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