

MERIFEST CENTRAL SQUARE

Created by Kim Smith for the first Meriden (The Centre of England) Folk Festival in June 1985.

A dance for six couples. Four couples (the outers) are in normal square set positions. The other two couples (the inners) stand in the centre, facing each other and with their backs to the head couples.

Music: 16 + 32 + 32 + 16 + 32 + 32 + 16 reels, smooth jigs, or reels for the 16 bars and jigs for the 32 bars.

Colin Hume created some unique music for the dance, this is available in "Dances with a Difference; volume 4 and has been recorded on the CD "Elizabeth and Other Dances" by Masquerade.

CHORUS (16bars); Grand Square:

A1&A2: Outer four couples dance a normal grand square (heads to centre, sides divide) and reverse.

WHILE: Centre two couples dance a reverse grand square then a forward one (starting from the "bar 15 position" of the head couples' figure). *[Their steps are therefore: back out to head places, separate to corner positions, walk in to side couple places, lead in to the centre; back out to side places, separate out to corners, walk in to head places, lead in to centre positions].*

There are two "rules of the road"; any couple backing out from the centre must make an arch for any incoming couple to go under and once original centre couple people have backed out from the centre they stay outside everyone else until it is their turn to lead in to the centre.

STAR-CHAIN FIGURE

A1: Outers face own partners and take right hands, inner dancers individually join their nearest couple to form right hand stars (inner men will join head couples, inner ladies will join side couples).

Rotate the stars one full turn.

Inner four form a left hand star in the centre and rotate three quarters round WHILE outers do two changes of a grand chain.

A2: Form new right hand stars, rotate them once, inners do left hand star three-quarters in centre while outers do two changes of grand chain.

B1&2: Repeat two more times hence a total of four outer stars, four grand chain quarter position changes, four centre left-hand three-quarter stars.

It is important for the outers to take right hands before the inners join them for the stars so that each can flow smoothly to the subsequent move. Colin added a balance before each right hand star, I use four steps to get into position for the star.

HALF-REELS FIGURE

A1: Centre couples face each other and pass right shoulders with opposite to dance half a reel of four up and down the hall. Centre four circle left three quarters [outer heads can have a full two-hand turn in their new position];

A2: Centres couples face each other and pass right shoulder with opposite to dance half a reel of four across the hall. Centre four circle left three-quarters [outer sides can have a full two-hand turn in their new position].

B1&2: Repeat two more times until all are home.

Note that centres really have to force themselves to face their opposite to start each reel after the three-quarter circle.

SEQUENCE

Grand Square, Star Chain, Reels, Grand Square, Reels, Star Chain, Grand Square.

(Difficulty level 3): *Having danced it through swop someone from outside to centre!*