

Band how-to:

## Play bow-and-curtsey chords for SCD

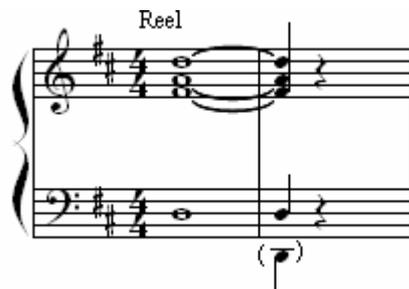
The chord at the beginning of a dance is really important. Done badly, it leads to a ragged start to the music and uncertainty in the dancers. Done well, it leads to a confident, cohesive start and gives the dancers confidence in the dance timing and overall ability of the band. As a band, if you get your chords right you make a good impression from the start.

### Start-of-dance chords:

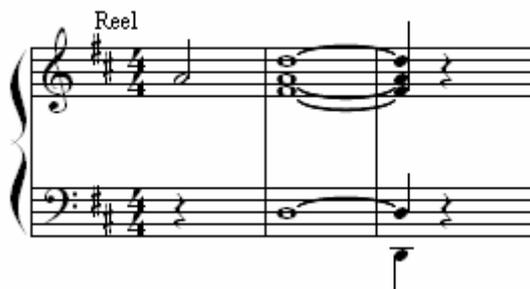
#### *Components of the chord*

Your chord style becomes part of the signature sound of your band – listen to some of the sound samples on your CDs or on Dancedata, to hear the differences. There are two main structures to choose from, with the opportunity to add your own style:

Single chord, without an up-beat (often heard on recorded music from Scotland), with or without a “tail”



Three-part chord: an upbeat, a main chord, and a positive “tail” to finish it.



The tail can be as simple as an extra low note from your lead instrument, or may include an extra bow stroke from your fiddlers. The lead note sounds best if it's one of the chord notes – another area of choice - but different musicians get quite different effects. Again, listen to musical examples to find what sounds/feels right for you.

## Chord Timing

Chords usually sound best when played in time with the music that is to follow. It's really important for the leader to signal the speed in some way, to bring everyone in at the right time and so that everyone knows where the chord stops. I find that counting "1-2-1" (these are half-bars) for reels and jigs, and "1-2-3" (crotchets) for strathspeys, works well for my bands.

The timing varies according to the style of the dance (reel, jig or strathspey). In fast time (reels and jigs) the upbeat is half a bar (minim or dotted crotchet) and the chord is a whole bar long. In strathspey time, the upbeat is a crotchet and the chord is half a bar long.

Reel

1

2

Jig

1

2

Strathspey

1

2

## Two chords

Some dances start with two chords – usually the second one is so that some dancers can move to a new place to start. Take care to leave enough time for dancers to arrive in their new places, before launching into the first tune.

### End-of-dance chords

Usually these are played without an up-beat, but some clubs/tutors find the upbeat helpful. Be prepared to be flexible and practice them both ways. The duration and timing of the final chord is a bit more fluid and depends on factors such as how the tune finishes, whether an upbeat is used, and local expectations. Leave enough time for dancers to complete their steps and regain their balance, but not so much that they are left wondering where the chord is! The band leader should lead the final chord decisively, and indicate when it is to stop.