

How Do You Integrate Beginners into an Experienced General Class?

Ideas gathered during a plenary session after group discussions at a TAS Workshop.

1. Split the class into beginners and experience if there are enough dancers.
2. Always have some experienced dancers in the class to help beginners.
3. Avoid beginners having to change sex. Let the women dance as either a “man” or a “woman” in the set.
4. Provide opportunities for inexperienced dancers to watch others dance (possibly with a tutor indicating what to observe.)
5. Explain and reinforce new terminology such as “top of the set.”
6. Provide a separate session before the main class to focus on practising some basic teaching on simple formations and steps.
7. Keep technique to a minimum at the start and concentrate on formations and timing.
8. Allow beginners to come early for basic tuition, then integrate them into the class getting experienced dancers to help them, and let the “old hands” have their own more difficult dances at the end of the class.
9. Keep reminding the experienced dancers, the newcomers need support.
10. Don't allow beginners to dance together.
11. Some technique is essential e.g. acquiring the rhythm of the steps. So always provide some step practice during part of the class.
12. Brief step practice, introducing little by little, but not necessarily at the start of the class.
13. Take the beginners out into a separate room with another teacher, while experienced dancers do something more challenging, and bring everyone together for social dancing in the second part of the class.
14. Have a beginners' benefit night/dance and a little later, a one off advanced/technique class dance for the more experienced dancer.
15. Use ceilidh dances as an introduction so there is less demand on footwork.
16. Allow beginners to have a walk through rather than those who should be able to dance from a recap.
17. Select dances carefully. Some dances allow beginners to be passed round by their partner and others in the set, and make little demand on an individual's memory.

18. For every movement in a dance use demonstration by the teacher or experienced dancers.
19. Select dances that are not too ambitious for beginners, but are unknown to the experienced dancer, and never select only from the next social programme that may well be out of the reach of a beginner's capabilities.
20. Encourage beginners to come every week to help their continuity of experience.
21. Always stress the fun in dancing.
22. Avoid beginners starting mid-term (but can we afford to turn them away?)
23. Help with transport from other members of the class.
24. Indicate a class culture of "being helpful" at all times.
25. It is usually easier to absorb beginners into a large class.
26. Give praise to all members of the class.
27. Stick to simple basic formations for the first few evenings.
28. Emphasise the rhythm.
29. Always dance well yourself to set a good example.
30. Once a general appreciation of rhythm is acquired, concentrate on phrasing, handling and communication.
31. Always provide materials for both beginners and experienced dancers in a mixed ability class.
32. Use fun dances to practise formations.

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