

Technique by Stealth – 12th May 2007 Perth – Anne Smyth

The dictionary defines stealth as “a secretive or unobtrusive procedure or manner.”

Teaching technique by stealth is, therefore, teaching through example, and practice of dance rather than by direct instruction.

The fundamental principal behind it is to motivate dancers by requiring them to acquire skills in order to adequately perform particular dances.

The teacher, therefore, must:

1. Identify specific aims – these should be part of a timetable over the assigned course in which technique becomes more demanding and formations more complex. Aim to have one more complicated dance each class and place it nearer the beginning to the lesson when everyone is fresher. Be prepared to be flexible (See example timetable)
2. Identify particular dances which accord with these aims – look for dances which involve the formation you want to introduce, but that are otherwise simple. So many teaching points can be “drip fed” to more able dancers whilst less able dancers learn the basic traffic pattern. See *RSCDS Index to Formations and Movements in Scottish Country Dances* and/or *Napier’s Index*.
3. Identify strategies to teach these aims within the dance.

Strategies

- Decide what the class need to work on, then focus on that for one particular dance or even for the whole class but with sub-themes e.g. handing with sub-themes of anticipation and light and shade.
- Offer a variety of learning options designed to tap into different readiness levels and ways of learning (visual, kinetic and audio) providing:
 - a) Repetition in differing terminology and speed
 - b) Trial and error
 - c) Feedback through demonstration
 - d) Associations
 - e) Understanding of what they are trying to achieve
 - f) Use of voice
 - g) Pictures
 - h) Competition
 - i) If the dancers are not coping within the dance then put into a simpler situation e.g. slip step into pas de basque as in *The Happy Meeting* form a circle and practise 4 slip steps to the left pas de basque right foot then left. 4 slip steps to the right and 2 skip change of step. Repeat but pas de basque left foot then right. Everyone then has a chance to practise.
- Do technique in very short bursts aiming to drip feed information over a length of time e.g. concentrating on looking at the person you give a hand to.

- Remind dancers when they meet a formation before e.g. left shouldered reel of three from 2nd place similar to *The Highland Reel*.
- Always give the number of bars and number of steps.
- If dancing a slightly more complicated dance ask the more able dancer to take a less able dancer.
- Possibly try to only introduce one NEW formation per lesson so that the dancers can concentrate on the technique you are working on.
- Use dances with plenty of handing between partners e.g. *Machine without Horses*. Dances where you never see your partner until the end are not helpful when trying to concentrate on specific techniques.
- Use visual aids, not only for demonstrating the shape of the formations but also the markers etc.
- Without MOTIVATION learning cannot take place. Everyone reacts favourably to praise (only when deserved and tempered). It should be used appropriately to stimulate and encourage.
- There is a reluctance to give criticism but observations of faults and correcting them in a clear but kindly manner is usually very acceptable.
 - a) Demonstrate. Demonstrate.
 - b) Show where faults are occurring to the whole class hoping that the dancer who made the mistake picks it up
 - c) Dance along with them
 - d) Have a quiet word
- Be prepared to be sociable as well as being the teacher. Be prepared to share.
- Most of all enjoy your class.

Sample Course Plan Using Themes

Lesson 1

Theme: Shape

Sub-theme: 3rd position

Warm Up

March – walking forwards, backwards, sideways in a square formation, then circular etc

Waltz – show positions of feet in particular 3rd position

Strathspey travelling step forward and back before *I Canna Buckle To* (**reach and 3rd position**)

New formations before each dance

Dance	Cpls	Book	Music	Formations
<i>Kingston Jig</i>	4	24 Grad	Welcome to Skye 2	Chase, slip down middle, cast, turn RH straight line, oval
<i>I Canna Buckle To (S)</i>	2	Bk 24		Cast, O4, R & L , circle, square
<i>The Honeymoon (J)</i>	3	Gr Bk		Cast, X, O6 , cross, circle
<i>The Old Man of Storr (R)</i>	3	Gr Bk		(X chase)2, Set, R & L, cross, circle

Lesson 2

Theme – giving of hands and position of arms

Sub-theme – foot positions

Setting in reel time. (Jete) Setting on the move (**3rd position**) Long and short s/spey travelling (**pull through**)

Footwork and new formations before each dance.

Dance	Cpls	Book	Music	Formations
<i>The Honeymoon (J)</i>	3	Gr Bk		Cast, X , (theme) O6 , (theme)
<i>Corn Rigs (R)</i>	2	Bk 4		Cast, Fig 8, Pouss (theme)
<i>Rakes of Glasgow (S)</i>	3	Bk 11)		R&L (theme) All 2 (theme) O6 (theme)
<i>A Jig for Mrs Dunn (J)</i>	2	Ch. Bk		Fig 8, Prom 2 , (theme), O4 (theme)
<i>Lady C Bruce's Reel</i>	3	MMM1		Fig 8, O6, (theme) Prom 2, (theme) All 2 (theme)

Lesson 3

Theme – anticipate by changing the angle of your body

New steps and formations before each dance

Dance	Cpls	Book	Music	Formations
<i>The Honeymoon (J)</i>	3	Gr Bk		Cast, (theme), X, (theme) O6 , (theme)
<i>Knit the Pocky</i>	2	Bk 11		Adv & Ret T2H (theme), R&L, (theme)
<i>Lady Lucy Ramsey (S)</i>	3	MMM2		O6(theme) Gr. Ch , (theme) 1/2 R&L , (theme) T11/2 (theme)
<i>The Old Man of Storr (R)</i>	3	Ch. Bk		(X chase) X2 (theme), S (theme) R&L (theme)
<i>Lady C Bruce's Reel</i>	3	MMM1		Fig8, (theme) o6 (theme) Prom 3, (theme), All 2 (theme)

And so on until the end of the session

Dance	Cpls	Book	Music	Formations
<i>Machine without Horses (J)</i>	3	Bk12		(S, Cast,X), R&L
<i>Johnnie's Welcome Home (R)</i>	3	Bk32		(S cross) x2, 3cpl R&L, The Spoke
<i>Bruce's Men (S)</i>	3	Scotia		Circle 4, Diag R&L, ST RH, All 3
<i>Napier's Index (J)</i>	3	Bk45		Balance in line, R of 3 cr and sidelines
<i>Capetown Wedding (S)</i>	3	Bk39		R of 3 acr, S & pet in tand, the knot
<i>Maxwell's Rant (R)</i>	3	Bk18		Reel of 3 opp. Side and own side, solo, T RH