



Puttin' on the Dance Session Notes

“Shaping the Dance Experience”

With: Lisa Greenleaf

Transcribed by Wendy G Jensen

Scribes Notes:

Discussion and suggestions of Manners:

1. Inclusivity-make your dance welcoming, particularly to new dancers
2. If dance at Senior Center - be aware of possible limitations
3. Wear nametags discerning whether a dancer is a: “Newbie” or a “Contra Buddy”
4. Show respect and have sensitivity to others, dance safely (no one wants an injury), dance politely (asking if there is already an injury, or if one likes to “spin”), be aware of a crowded hall.
5. Suggestion to welcome newbies by giving first 3 dances free
6. Encourage new dancers to dance with experienced dancers (above nametags may be helpful)
7. Greet everyone at the door and if a new to dancing couple, split them up and pair them up with an experienced couple
8. Create positive behaviors, be role models
9. One dance even called newbies after their first dance to discuss how it went
10. Dancers want to feel included
11. Ask experienced dancers to dance with newbies directly, feels good to be considered an experienced dancer
12. Can welcome dancers right at the admission table, the \$ is secondary
13. It's important for dancers to know who the committee is, who to ask, etc.
14. Relieve “center set syndrome” by a dozen experienced dancers looking for new dancers and bringing them in
15. Greeter can also monitor shoes and educate
16. Thank dancers at end of dance, and also at end of entire night
17. Experienced dancers allow newbies to be #1s to get the dance before hitting an “end”
18. Learn dancers names...it feels inclusive
19. Ask for volunteers from the dance community for running of dance, setup/takedown, snacks.....share ownership of the dance with the dancers, be a part of it.

Welcoming Newbies, Beginner Session

What are new dancers afraid of?

1. Looking like a fool (particularly as an adult)
2. Being called a beginner as an adult

What do you expect in your Welcome/Beginner Session?

1. Making people feel comfortable
2. To teach basics, etiquette, letting newbies know that asking others to dance is ok, that making mistakes is ok
3. That this is a safe place
4. Introduce organizers
5. Keep it all positive
6. Have experienced dancers take part in beginners workshop
7. Make sure to give info about beginners in hall to caller

What if there is no Beginner Session?

1. beginners will have to integrate, experienced dancers have to be aware
2. In a small dance, the committee seeks out newbies and models helpful behavior
3. Have a wireless mike available for the caller so he/she can help directly “on the floor”

What about the “Style” of the dance?

1. Organizers have influence of style of dance
2. For instance: Boston Intergenerational (BIDA) has brightly colored posters on the walls with one tidbit of information on each one, ie: ask others to dance, be friendly
3. Have a printed list of helpful hints
4. Review your handout often, if you have one.
5. Have a dance community survey or discussion, in person or via website
6. Make sure to publish results of such a survey
7. Find time for simple discussions, make a circle of chairs during break?
8. Have a potluck to meet the committee
9. Offer the second dance free for beginners, survey them when they return
10. Let everyone know what the mission statement is, particularly to callers.
11. If style has broken down, have workshops
12. Ask caller to do 2 style points on floor
13. Demonstrate on the floor
14. Never underestimate the power of a one on one conversation
- 15.

How have you talked to a disruptive dancer about unsafe dancing?

1. Keep it positive
2. Unless behavior changes, you will no longer be welcome....very difficult to do
3. Use other organizers for help, use all resources
4. Have teaching moments..maybe 3-4 from caller
5. If person is damaging, use other experienced dancers to dance with Newbies directly after bad experience
6. If disruptive dancer is male, have experienced female dancers to ask the man to dance, protect the new dancers.

What can we ask the caller to do?

1. Encourage people to mix, newbies with experienced
2. If it's crowded, remind dancers to be aware
3. Inform caller of issues or potential issues without micromanaging the caller
4. Role modeling
5. Help to relieve center set dance syndrome, alleviate center set...even numbers?
6. Whooping up a dance, or toning it down, help to keep control of the dance.