

a "Crash Course" in basic dance-patterns

{an informal proposal submitted to UWMBDA, August 1994, by Craig Rusbult}

[2012: This is extremely rough. If any parts are confusing, just ignore them and ask me about it.]

BY WHOM? I would be director and instructor, but I would appreciate input and assistance from other UWMBDA members. { A co-instructor who is a follower would be especially helpful. Also, occasional in-class help with "technique" tips [this is not my specialty] would be useful. } [2012 - I want a course to be co-developed by me and UWMBDA people, with lots of input; I have the main ideas, but these can be revised, and also important details.] [I need a female co-instructor, selected by UWMBDA.] [One week of a series could emphasize "style", and UWMBDA people will be better for this; or maybe do this in parts of every class; there would be some style in the first class, especially what is needed/helpful for leading & following; and in every class; I like an "inner game" approach (Tim Gallwey,...); As with other aspects of instruction, I'm open to input.]

FOR WHOM? beginners and "low intermediates" (such as students who have finished Ballroom I). The lessons should be OK for beginners because no prior experience will be needed, and it also will be OK for intermediates because I'm sure they'll learn useful things they don't know already.

WHAT? The goal is to help beginners learn a "basic repertoire" of patterns that will allow them to quickly get through the awkward stage of not feeling confident enough to want to attend a dance and ask others to dance (or to be asked). [2012: knowing a large number of patterns is especially useful for leaders, but also for followers.]

5 dances: **waltz, rumba, cha cha** (+mambo), **foxtrot, swing** (SSQQ, triple triple QQ, QQQQ), plus "transfer descriptions" for tango & samba. [2012: these are open for discussion.]

Some technique (especially what is useful for leading-and-following) will be taught. Mainly, though, I'll recommend that students, in order to improve their "technique and style", *watch* the better dancers in UWMBDA, and *take lessons and workshops* (like those taught by Mike Argue and arranged by UWMBDA). { My lessons would "fill a different niche" than other UWMBDA lessons. } [2012: This is described above; in the first class, emphasis will be on what is useful for leading-and-following]

WHEN? Wednesday evenings, starting Sep 21* (after the first dance), for 8 weeks. { all of this, especially the 8-week length, is negotiable } *or begin Sep 28, after the second dance? [but starting early lets students get involved earlier; and there is one W-dance, Oct 19, and maybe other delays?]

[2012: I haven't looked at this since 2012, but my thinking in 2012 has been 4 weeks, maybe 5, and I'm open to suggestions from you; not 8 weeks, especially for a "pilot" course.] [2012: W & F were the "lesson & practice days" in 1994.]

I would also strongly encourage students to attend Friday practices, and I would be available (and not "busy dancing") on Fridays, to answer questions, show steps, offer encouragement,... [2012: The 30 minutes you offer before & after lessons will be very convenient for students, and they're more likely to use these practice times, when I'll be available for feedback & explaining.]

HOW MUCH? no cost to students, and no pay for me (or anyone else working on the course) [2012: I'm open to whatever your policies are.]

PUBLICITY? A description of these lessons (and the other lessons being offered by UWMBDA) could be written for the first newsletter of the Fall Semester. Also, the usual "announcements at dances", EMailings,... [2012: Now you have the website, Facebook, plus dance announcements,...]

ideas to put blackboard (for first lesson)

[2012: Most of this can be cut, and what remains could be on a powerpoint or, more likely, just announced and then put on handouts or in a webpage for the course.] [all of what's in this part will be re-thought and re-done, using what is useful and discarding the rest]

MUSIC: listen (how many instruments,...)

DISTINCTIONS: rotations, turns, spins
{ later — cuddles & sweethearts, wheels }

for L-rotation (forward on L, back on R),
for R-rotation (forward on R, back on L);
usually, one goes forward and one goes back

MENTAL IMAGERY + MUSCLE-MEMORY

GRID-#s, #s on *pictures* and *descriptions*

RHYTHM (explain rhythm-pictures) for rumba

TECHNIQUE-and-STYLING

Some in my lessons (especially for lead-follow).
Watch skilled, "highlystylish" uwmbda dancers.
Take lessons/workshops: Mike thru uwmbda! ...

PRACTICE: private (groups) + Friday!
{ "social director"? form dancing-alliances }

CONSISTENT ATTENDANCE: series is based on transfer (i.e. build on foundation, branch out), so **take advantage of this opportunity** (to learn "much more than usual" in 1 hour of dancing and thus make effective use of YOUR TIME)

comments about the course as a whole

Dennis Conner: Think of everything, and do it.
[2012: This was his "strategy" for re-winning America's Cup series of sailing races in 1987.]

[2012: This year I haven't looked again at the "matrix" and "system" I wrote in 1994. I doubt if they would be directly used for a pilot course.]
There are (on 9-25-94) 80 patterns listed on the matrix, plus "abc..." variations for a few patterns, plus tango & samba, for ≈ 100 total patterns.

I'm sure we'll be able to teach all of the **bold**-faced moves, so each main pattern (11, 12, 13, 21, 22,...) will get covered and practiced in-class, and most other patterns (these are just adaptations of the bold patterns) can be demonstrated (often, with a chance to let students practice a little — for some adaptations, this will be very useful, but for others, students can probably get it on their own.

ESSENTIAL IDEA: The course goal is not to "cover all of the numbers", but to let students learn more than they would in a conventional class*.
And I'm confident that this will occur.
{ * typically, 7 or 8 patterns [or less] in 4 weeks }

[2012: These are comments about classes by Michael Argue in 1993-94, when he taught long choreographed sequences that didn't seem very useful for social dancing - there was a difference in philosophy, obviously, with how I would want to teach & be taught] choreographed sequences?? (as in classes of Mike & Gwen) This is ok to learn "how to move together" in a pattern, but not for learning how to lead-and-follow. I will do a few short sequences (or at least describe them, for out-of-class practice), but mainly I will emphasize ENTRANCES-and-EXITS, and TRANSITIONS.

Also, I'll make a "flow sheet" for waltz, and maybe (in simplified form) for other dances.

musical analogy: longtones + transitions

improvised sequences (of basic patterns):
For example, choose 3 (or more) patterns; if doing A, have 3 options (continue A, or go to B or C), so he must lead and she must respond to cues.

NUMBERING SYSTEM (for steps)

steps ≠ beats [explain the distinction]

[2012: making a distinction between steps and musical beats is important for "transfer between dances" - for example, 6 steps can be done in either 6 counts or 8 counts, so teachers should "count" with steps (which remain the same), not counts (that shift from 6 to 8); the systems of counting used by some teachers were not very useful in 1994, and we can do better.]

3-step dances: 123456 (w), 1-234-56 (r);
123••456•• (c), 123-456- (m)(and ≈ samba)

4-step dances: 1-2-34 (f, s), 1••2••34 (s),
1234 (f, s), 1-2-34h- (t)

balance of men & women? (leads & follows?):
change partners (but no "musical chairs" scramble),
use uwmbda volunteers (as needed; also, so half of the dancing-team knows what is happening),
[2012; uwmbda volunteers could help with the balance, and also help teach; but these would not be necessary, this is just an option.]

HANDOUTS: uwmbda pays copying-costs; at first lesson, hand out some (all?); for a few diagrams, I'll use a large "blown up" version to show "how to understand/interpret the pictures"; show pattern in-person, then show it in-pictures (so students can "connect them together").
[2012: All of this would be negotiated, re: how much to use handouts, for what, and so on. The internet provides options that weren't available in 1994.]