Concept for the implementation of a Teaching Order

1. Preliminaries

At the Cuer-Meeting in Cham 2008 we discussed a few problems. All participants agreed that solutions to these items would be helpful to the European RD. Among others we dealt with the Two-Step as first rhythm for the class, a lack in standardization of beginners education and the implementation of a teaching order list for figures combined with dances as „milestones". The past RD Council Meeting in Leverkusen already adopted some resolutions addressing these issues.

If we are honest with the criticism expressed in Cham, the European RD-scene finds itself at least in regard to the education of **new** dancers **and** teachers in an all sides tolerated disorganization. One will hardly find two beginner classes in Europe with the same degree of dance level and one will hardly find two cuers with a comparable educational resume. Either no standards are defined or existing standards – for whatever reasons – are ignored.

What can we learn from?

Let´s take a look at SD. Here we have a list of figures that at the end of the class must be mastered by the dancers. That defines a goal, which makes the education comparable and results in students that have a consistent educational level. And thereof new callers know exactly what is required from them. These standards have advantages that we could utilize to a certain degree to RD.

What is provided by the existing system?

Certainly one could say: „That's all past history now!". Let's target the figures of RAL Phase I and II for beginner classes and download the lesson plan for Waltz and Two Step from their homepage. The mentioned discussion in Cham shows that it is not that simple.

Where do we need to go?

Nowadays teaching aims need to be transported in a minimum of time and must quickly lead to satisfactory results. The rhythmic richness that RD offers should be addressed in beginners classes at least rudimental. But the phases I,II and III as a whole are much too wide-ranging to be taught in a beginners class completely. One needs a targeted selection to lead beginners to the maximum of success, and to motivate them with milestones easy to achieve. Further one has to be able to provide future step stones (like Basic, Mainstream, Plus ....) in order to retain the students to RD.

If we wish to standardize the education of beginner students we have to start with the education of teachers. A consistent and binding figure catalogue with clear goals for beginner students would at least have the advantage that not every new cuer has to „reinvent the wheel". But also experienced cuers might find advantages in a modular system providing even better education to their students and finding a way of sustainable motivation through a more transparent and comparable educational system.

Our first approach addressing the RD Council to establish a dance list that provides a teaching tool was years ago and very immature. The goals had been weakly described and even less specific. After many discussions and not least because of the suggestions of the cuer meeting in Cham 2008 I took on the task to approach this issue again and like to start with the following thesis:

*A clearly defined and **binding** list of figures and dances provides a better understanding of both **students and cuer education** and therefore contributes to a standardization of the two most essential columns of our dance activity.*

2. Implementation of a binding catalog for figures and dances (beginners class)

We need to create a list of figures and dances that are bindingly taught in every beginners class. The choreographies of these dances built up upon each other in a way that a teaching order can be applied.

Example:

Figure list		**Dance list**
Figure 1 to 10	=	1st Dance
Figures from 1 to 10 + Figures 11 to 13	=	2nd Dance
Figures from 1 to 13 + Figures 14 to 16	=	3rd Dance . . .

A list of figures should be easily decided and agreed upon on the base of the RAL phase system. For the selection of the corresponding dances (choreographies) I suggest the following criteria:

a) The first dance of each rhythm should incorporate not more than 10 to 15 figures.
b) The following dances should consist of not more than 3-5 new figures.
c) The choreographies should be chosen in a way that these new figures are at least danced twice.
d) It would also be nice if following dances could incorporate the new figures of its direct predecessor in order to provide additional practice for these figures.

3. Standardization of beginner class education

The new beginner class consists of three rhythms. It therefore is automatically divided into three sections. Section 2 and 3 could be arranged more interesting with repetition or adding few new figures (and thus dances) of the previous rhythms.

At the beginning of each rhythm there has to be a longer period of hash-cueing until a certain amount of figures is mastered. These figures are part of the first choreography in the teaching order list. With the following educational units the hash-concept is extended to the figures of the next choreographies in the teaching order.

Hash-Cueing is therefore rooted as a continuous concept within the beginner class education. The advantages having clear defined choreographies to work up to lies in the comparability of the education and the chance to provide cued versions of the dances in an early stage for home practices. New cuers meet clear requirements and are able to motivate their dancers with easy achievements (milestones).

4. Advantages for the teacher education

The designated target of the EEP is to improve the education of all ECTA leaders. The EEP has accomplished a lot on this way and sure will bring more improvements in the future.

But it still is fact that no binding guidelines for (new) cuers are established how to teach a beginners class. The EEP is based upon input of senior colleagues that are willing to share their time and knowledge and support newbie's with seminars or otherwise. Due to the lack of standardization as described above every established cuer will answer differently when it comes to questions like "What Rhythm should I start with?" or "What is the right amount of material to graduate the dancers on?".

It is extremely important that especially new cuers are not facing loads of material and unanswered or even contradictory answered questions. They need clear and manageable sections of their own education and that of their future students.

On the basis of the teaching order with its clearly defined figure- and dance-material standardized seminars for newbie's could be held. Ideally these should be visited **before** starting to teach beginners. The teaching order provides a clearly defined goal that must be reached in a certain amount of time respectively is reachable in a certain amount of time. This makes it easy especially for new cuers to estimate and narrow down the necessary efforts and enables a good preparation for the upcoming task.

5. Proposal as a basis for discussion

After presenting the arguments I like to share a first proposal how a teaching order for a beginners class could look like.

Teaching Order 1st Rhythm: Cha Cha Cha

	Figures	Dances (Milestones)	Basics that have to be taught in regard to the figure material
1	Walk 2 & Fwd Cha		OP, BFLY to OP, to BFLY, to FC Lead Foot (Hand) Trail Foot (Hand) WALL, COH, (R)LOD No Hands Twice
2	Circle Cha		
3	Basic		
4	Half Basic		
5	New Yorker		
6	Fence Line		
7	Shoulder to Shoulder		
8	Slide The Door		
9	Cucaracha		
10	Time Step		
11	Twirl 2 & SD Cha (& REV)		
12	Hand to Hand	Dance A (proposal: Rebecca)	
13	Back Break to …		Apart & Point
14	Spot Turn		
15	Traveling Door		
16	Crab Walk(s)	Dance B (proposal: Wheels)	
17	Underarm Turn		
18	Whip		
19	Chase	Dance C (proposal: Chatanooga Cha Cha)	
20	Alemana		
21	Lariat		
22	Open Break		
23	2 SD Closes		
24	Spot Turn in 3 & Freeze	Dance D (proposal: I´ll Be The One)	
25	Chase Peek-A-Boo		
26	SD Walks		
27	SD, Draw, Close	Dance E (proposal: On A Star)	

The first three dances are specially written (headcues only!) in order to explain and experience the concept. The music is available. All five dances could be replaced by others that fit the criteria.

Teaching Order 2nd Rhythm: Waltz

	Figures	Dances (Milestones)	Basics that have to be taught independently from the figure material
			those basics introduced in the first rhythm are assumed to be known here
1	Balance L & R		
2	Waltz Away & Tog		
3	Box		
4	Left Turning Box		Standard Intro to BFLY
5	Twirl/Vine 3		
6	Thru, Face, Close		CP
7	Dip Back		
8	Maneuver, SD, Close		Maneuver-concept
9	(2) Right Turns		
10	Twinkle Thru	Dance A (Proposal: Tips Of My Fingers)	
11	PU in 3		Standard Intro to PU
12	One Left Turn		
13	Back Waltz		Pickup-concept
14	Fwd Waltz	Dance B (Proposal: Shadows And Light)	
15	Vine 3		
16	Step & Cross Point		
17	Spin Maneuver	Dance C (Proposal: All Night)	
18	Solo Turn 6		
19	Step & Swing		
20	Canter		
21	Twinkle from CP or BJO		Rec to …
22	Lady Wraps	Dance D (Proposal: Jacalyn´s Waltz)	
23	Both Wrap		
24	Lady Roll to LOP		
25	Rock Thru, Rec, Close	Dance E (Proposal: Could I Have This Dance)	

A lesson plan for the beginner class on the basis of the teaching order could look like this:

Timeframe January-June	Cha	Waltz	Two-Step	
1.-3. Week	Figures up to Dance A			
4. Week	Figures up to Dance B			The timeframe up to the graduation and for the educational sections is surely subject to further discussion!
5.-6. Week	Figures up to Dance C			
8.-10.Week		Figures up to Dance A		
11. Week	repetition as far as needed	Figures up to Dance B		It probably would make sense just to give approximate values here since these times may strongly vary due to individual circumstances (e.g. club night each week or fortnightly, 1 h or 1,5 h time per session etc.)
12.-13. Week		Figures up to Dance C		
14.-16. Week	Figures up to Dances D/E	repetition as far as needed	Figures up to Dance A	
17. Week			Figures up to Dance B	
18.-19. Week		Figures up to Dances D/E	Figures up to Dance C	
20. Week	**Graduation**	**Graduation**	**Graduation**	

6. Next steps – What do we need to do?

> - We need to decide if we want to establish such a system.
>   If yes, we need to agree upon
>   > - the rhythms to be taught in a beginners class,
>   > - the figures to be taught for each rhythm in a beginners class,
>   > - corresponding dances (choreographies) as milestones.
> - We urgently need an internet based forum to discuss this concept and other ideas among all ECTA cuers without meeting personally. Christian Schidler has agreed at Cham to take care of this task.

7. How we should proceed after the decision about the beginner class?

The concept should be further extended. We need to develop a modular assembly system that fit to the beginner class construction. I suggest the following (Example with fictious numbers and rhythms for the advanced classes, since I haven´t tested what is possible here):

Time	Class		Advanced-Class I		Advanced-Class II	
	Rhythm	**Program**				
20 weeks 1,5 h per evening Graduation	Cha	27 Figures 5 Dances				
	Walzer	25 Figures 5 Dances				
	Two-Step	24 Figures 4 Dances				
20 weeks 1,5 h per evening			**Rhythm**	**Program**		
			Rumba	24 Figures 4 Dances		
			Jive	20 Figures 3 Dances		
			Slowfox	16 Figures 2 Dances		
			Cha Cha	8 Figures 2 Dances		
			Walzer	8 Figures 2 Dances		
			Two-Step	8 Figures 2 Dances		
20 weeks 1,5 h per evening					**Rhythm**	**Program**
					Mambo	20 Figures 2 Dances
					Quickstep	12 Figures 1 Dance
					Rumba	8 Figures 2 Dances
					Jive	8 Figures 2 Dances
					Slowfox	8 Figures 2 Dances
					Cha Cha	8 Figures 2 Dances
					Walzer	8 Figures 2 Dances
					Two-Step	8 Figures 2 Dances

At the end we have a figure list for each rhythm, a corresponding dance list and a schedule with a note when the specific rhythm can/should be introduced.

8. Effects on the ECTA-Repertoire

The dances from the teaching order list and the ECTA-Repertoire coexist. From the ECTA-Repertoire we have to determine those dances that are useful as milestones fitting the described concept. This is the link of both lists.

The vote for new dances to be taught at official events should be focused to the teaching order concept. Questions like,

„Is this dance the next in line of already available dances?"

„Does the dance fill a gap in the teaching order?"

will have priority when voting. With a positive answer to these questions the dance will automatically be both a milestone in the teaching order and after the official workshop an experimental in the ECTA-Repertoire. The lists will therefore grow together. In a couple of years we can decide if both lists are still useful for programming or if we can merge them to one list in the end.

The extension of the teaching order list should not be limited to workshops on an official dance event. It would take way too long to establish a usable list. Dances should also be adopted (and dropped) after a predominantly acceptance of all ECTA-cuers entitle to vote. This could be monitored through an internet poll for example.

9. Further reflections

a.) In order to make classes more interesting for both dancers and cuers, the dances in the teaching order list could be consigned with „Siblings". Siblings would be dances of the same rhythm that consist of the same figure material with different music and different amalgamations. This would enable dancers that learnt e.g. the first 10 Figures of a rhythm to do more than only one dance. It definitely means a higher effort to find or write suiting choreographies.

b.) We sure have rhythms that are „less favored" by dancers and cuers. We have gone through several attempts to establish these rhythms in the repertoire with little success. For rhythms like e.g. Tango, Samba, West Coast Swing etc. I could imagine 3 dances each (one basic dance and 2 advanced) that could be taught consecutively according to the mentioned criteria described above. Thereby we might have a chance to fascinate a broader range of dancers and cuers for these rhythms.