

# A More Sensitive and Sensible Approach to Forró and Social Dance: Horizontal Teaching and Laboratorial Exploration

## Introduction:

Are you ready to embark on a transformative journey into the world of Forró and social dance? At our classes, we believe in breaking free from the limitations of traditional teaching methods and embracing a new way of learning—one that empowers you, promotes collaboration, and celebrates the joy of dance.

## The Problems We Address:

*In the world of Forró, traditional teaching methods have often left students disheartened and disempowered. Let's confront these issues head-on and highlight why they're detrimental:*

1. **Dependency on Teachers:** Many dance classes depend solely on one teacher as the source of all knowledge. This approach stifles creativity and leaves students reliant on a single source for their dance journey, ending up feeling under-attended, disconnected and frustrated with the learning experience that lack elements that facilitate their specific needs for learning.
2. **Rushed Learning:** The relentless pursuit of new steps and figures in every class leads to superficial execution and a lack of fundamental understanding. This approach neglects the essence of social dance, prioritizing learning to do the things your teacher (and usually sole role-model) do, while not fully understanding how and why, not even considering whether that piece of knowledge, technique or figure will bring any value for your personal dance experience.
3. **Lack of Structure to Foster Artistic Expression:** Classes often lack pedagogic rigor and structure. This absence hinders deep learning and growth, limiting the individual potential of students. The mindless attempt to copy the industrial format of teaching we have in traditional school system doesn't foster real artistic and expression development, misguiding the social dance experience into a wild run to accumulate

knowledge (without understanding of the usage and purpose) and to become the best while such things are not rewarded with a medal, rankings or winners in a social dance movement, making the average student (already prone to fall into this mindset due to traditional education) to lose sight of the joys of dancing and connecting with their peers.

4. **Social Issues:** Traditional approaches can inadvertently perpetuate intolerance towards the different forms of expression and mistakes; dogmatism towards what the dance should look like aesthetically and what is right and what is wrong, arbitrarily decided by the teacher; sexism in terms of male chauvinism and gender expectations, creating an unwelcome atmosphere for many dancers; Hyper valorization of the figure of the Teacher, creating imbalance between them and the students, opening the door to idolization that for many times the teacher is willing to diminish the students throughout the learning process, to keep this fragile image of superiority.

*Mostly the fault of the social issues goes to the teacher and organizers that unnecessarily step into a position of authority which is totally insensible for a social movement that by definition it's progressive, freeing, with multiple paths and should grow and move organically to take the shape that best serves its participants.*

## **Our Solution: Self-learning through Laboratorial and Horizontal Learning**

*We're here to offer an alternative approach that empowers you as a dancer and embraces collaboration with your peers. Where you are the one dictating what you learn next, with who, in a manner that speaks to your learning comfort zone. We will have 2 stages, a Preparatory Course and then a never-ending Laboratorial Stage.*

1. **Fundamental Foundations & Teach How to Fish:** We start with strong fundamentals and a commitment to teaching you how to learn, in our Preparatory Course. This means understanding the dance from the ground up and developing the skills to explore it independently. You won't just memorize steps; you'll build a solid dance foundation, understand how your body works (which include discovering in a very personal manner what you can/cannot do, want/don't want to do); understand how bodies relate with each other not only on the basis of consent, but the pure physics/dynamics that mechanically influence how two bodies move together.
2. **Collective Exploration:** We reject the notion of separating dancers into levels based on technical skill. The most fundamental aspects of Forró and Social Dancing rely solely on the reality that you are a human being. Technical prowess (which may be

easier to separate into levels) are just 10% of what Forró is about. Therefore, we focus on the social human experience (which is 90% of what matters), where every dancer, regardless of their current skill level, contributes to the richness of our dance community with their “humanness”, not just steps.

3. **Intuitive Teaching:** Our approach revolves around intuitive teaching, using relatable everyday life concepts instead of complex niche terms. We believe that dance should be accessible and enjoyable, not shrouded in jargon that gets you lost on what to do next and shields the teacher of their flawed teaching skills. Unclear statements like “Now put a swing/feeling on with”, “Just feel the music”, “Open your heart”, “Just feel and follow”, “Don’t think” and others will also not be part of our dance journey because every content (specially technical ones) will be described in a relatable and rational way.

## The Preparatory Course: Your Path to Empowerment and Self Learning

*Before you dive into the never-ending laboratory of dance exploration, we offer a comprehensive "Preparatory Course." This three-month program lays the groundwork for a healthy mindset and skills in leading and following. You'll establish a common dance language with your peers to facilitate teamwork and exploration. We'll delve into the importance of human well-being and the shared dance experience, all while acquainting you with the "Teach How to Fish" approach.*

**During the Preparatory Course, time management is carefully considered. Each class of 2 hours consists of:**

- **10 Minutes:** A moment of self-connection and body awareness.
- **10~20 Minutes:** Social activities that foster connections with your fellow dancers.
- **1 Hour:** Practical dance teaching, emphasizing fundamental techniques and the intuitive approach. (Teaching how to Fish)
- **30 Minutes:** Social and free dance activities, where challenges and reflections will be interwoven, sparking creativity and the courage of creation, fundamental for the Laboratory Phase.

# The Laboratory Phase: Your Journey of Discovery

Upon completing the Preparatory Course, you'll enter the Laboratory Phase. Here, the class structure evolves:

**30 Minutes:** Social dancing in the first 30 minutes to spark ideas, questions and interests. Also a moment to dance and connect with our friends on the Preparatory Course.

**30 Minutes:** Weekly inputs and teachings that can spark new explorations.

**1 Hour:** Open exploration, that can be or not be related with the weekly input or any other aspect (social or technical) that you so desire. This is where you take charge of your learning journey, investigating topics that interest you, either independently or with like-minded peers.

## Extra Perks for being part of the Laboratory

1. **Free Access to other cities Laboratories** - Two new cities in Switzerland with laboratories expected in Spring/2023.
2. **Database/Wiki WebApplication** - Proper systematization of the researches and discoveries in all laboratories so all members can learn from it and identify peers that they might want to connect (even cross-laboratories) to learn and investigate together. (Development throughout 1st Season of Lab)
3. **Community Pool** - 10% of all financial profit of the Laboratories are split for its members, for personal use or communal effort to propel the Forró Community forward. Splits happen at the end of every Season.
4. **Give Away Tickets** - For each event we organize, we will give away a 2 ticket prize for a member of the laboratory to go and bring a friend (if the event also includes workshops, this is also included).
5. **Event Helpers** - 2 or 3 spots every event for laboratory members that want to be helpers (bar, entrance, overall organizing), also accessing the event for free.

## Q&A Section:

- **I will learn steps in this class?**

Yes, but the approach is just different and the process will give you a nice spike on your capabilities to learn new steps and figures after understanding some fundamentals of the dance. Which means that in the beginning there will be a more fundamental understanding of the dance and the body and since many of these pieces of knowledge are universal for many steps/figures and dynamics, you will be a machine of learning steps super quick, after a while. Sometimes just by looking once and trying a couple of times, instead of countless hours of counting and memorization to learn one single step.

*For more insight on Teaching how to Fish and Learning Steps, check the schematics on the last page of this document!*

- **There will be levels? How will we balance different Levels?**

Will not be levels. The only difference we will have is if someone is still doing the Preparatory Course or if they already finished it and are in the Laboratorial Phase. This separation is not qualitative, but more informative, once people that have already finished, can expect that they both can communicate using the same language to speak and investigate the dance and probably will share some compatible values towards social dancing. In Forró, we emphasize that 90% of what matters is the social experience, where we're all equals. We celebrate diversity, as both beginners and advanced technical dancers contribute to the richness of our activity.

- **But if we don't have levels, how do I measure my progress?**

We measure progress not only in technical skill but also in happiness, social connections, stress reduction, physical well-being, and creative expression. Our goal is to enhance your overall well-being through dance. We will suggest methods for you to evaluate yourself in this process in a more integral fashion.

- **Should I be worried 2 hours of class will be too much for my brain or my body?**

Our class structure balances self-connection, social interaction, practical teaching, and exploration, ensuring a comprehensive learning experience, while not overwhelming you in only one aspect. In the Preparatory Course we will feel, we will express, we will (for sure) think, but we will also relax. In the Laboratory Phase we would have learned (and you may already know) about what we need and we will have agency to decide ourselves what we need throughout our meetings.

- **I'm afraid I will feel lost and will miss someone telling me what to do next.**

Our class is designed for those eager to take control of their dance journey, embrace empowerment, and assume responsibility for their learning. We foster an environment where you can develop this power. Nonetheless, while your learning in the Laboratory Phase will be independent of a person that tells you what to do, you have the freedom to actually request it, not only I (Luís) will be there to assist people in their exploration, but you can always be the person that isn't having an specific topic to investigate and is jumping with other people (and small groups of people) to see what they are up to and learn with them.



FIGURE/TURN/DYNAMIC EMPTY



FUNDAMENTALS, CONCEPTS, UNDERSTANDING



FIGURE/TURN/DYNAMIC FUNDAMENTALLY RICH

## GIVING THE FISH

TRADITIONAL STRUCTURE | VERTICAL TEACHING

1 hour



1 hour



1 hour



1 hour



1 hour



1 hour



1 hour



1 hour



## TEACHING HOW TO FISH

LABORATORIAL STRUCTURE | HORIZONTAL TEACHING

3 hours



Fundamentals

3 hours



Social Awareness

3 hours



Concepts

10 min



Variation you discovered by yourself

15 min



You invented a figure or sequence that is a clever mix of other figures

5 min



15 min



Similar figure another person in the class showed you

10 min



10 min



A figure you dominate so well, that you are actually better than me to explain to new students



You figured out a move from a Youtube video

