

serTA Workshop – Sunday 24th September 2023

Teaching after Unit 5 / Teaching an Advanced Class

Pat Houghton – teacher

Adam Brady – musician

Pat said first of all that she had been given lots of food for thought with the title for this presentation – what is an advanced class? She said she mainly teaches advanced classes nowadays, with lots of advanced technique, but hadn't had to consider and put into words what she does until now.

She feels it is important to help dancers become competent and confident enough to go out to social dances, to get all the benefits of this, but this is different from teaching and developing better technique.

She attempts with her classes to develop more challenging dances, more challenging formations and more challenging techniques, so that the dancers get a higher sense of achievement.

Pat told us about the list of [Core Dances 2008](#) on the RSCDS website, and the structured list of core formations in the Core Repertoire 2016 that is available under [Resources for Dancers](#). She advised us also to look at [Resources for Teachers](#) for ideas about what our advanced dancers want to achieve.

Resources include three levels of the DAA, with formations for each level, an assessment form (we were urged to look at what is being assessed at each level, plus “anticipation”), the level of expectation of dancers and teachers, etc. She also urged us to look at older dances too for interesting, complicated formations, rather than always going to new dances for these.

Classes should always include step practice and can include some Highland steps. Demonstrations can be useful, with dancers urged to watch for good steps. Skills practices are also helpful, and progressive teaching, ie adding unknown formations/dances to known formations/dances.

We did a warm-up dance and stretches, and then danced the following:

Pinewoods Reel, with petronella double triangles

Something in the Air, with the rose progression

We danced *Meeting of the Waters* and Pat advised us to get couples 2, 3 and 4 to watch the walk-through carefully so that it only needs to be done once. Scottish dancing is a team sport but dancers need to take responsibility and not always rely on others in the set.

Pat suggested that if we have older dancers in our classes, if they cannot do the steps well, they should at least be able to get to where they need to be in the set, and taking hands where possible is always helpful for dancers who begin to be forgetful.

Bonnie Gallowa', with *rondel and diagonal chain*, was used as a useful example of a dance where the dancing couple are always holding someone's hand.

In the afternoon, we danced the following dances:

Chased Lovers – corners, reels of four, corners pass and turn

Water of Leith – reel of 4, Espagnole

Elsbeth Gray's Reel – half-diagonal chain, modified set and link for three

Niles Roberts' Farewell to Pasadena

Ysobel – Pat suggests doing this as a Medley with Mrs Stewart of Fasnachoich!

Toast to the Mousies

Adam Brady provided lively and interesting music for the two workshop sessions. He also complemented Pat's work by contributing relevant information about the music and how it supported the dancing.

Thanks were given to Pat for a most enjoyable, fun and informative workshop and to Adam for playing.

A short meeting was held after tea, coffee and cake. The next Workshop will be held on Sunday 17th March 2024. **Teaching Children** has been suggested as the subject, and Marie requested suggestions from anyone who has experience of doing this.

Further suggestions were **Walking Dancing** - how to help those who can no longer dance the steps well but wish to continue dancing; **Adult Learners** - inclusive dancing for mentally and physically challenged people; **Putting together a Dance Programme** - balance in a programme, ie not too many dances with the same formations or too much setting, particularly towards the end of the evening; and ask a musician to look through the programme before it is finalised.

Suggestions were also requested for suitable halls around the perimeter of the M25 if members wished to move away from the main areas where Workshops have been held.

Hilary Maidstone

