

serTA Sweet Sixteen Weekend – 23-25 September 2022

Saturday Short Talks
Saturday 24th September 2022

Teaching Beyond Unit 5
presented by Mervyn Short

Mervyn began his talk with the statement:-

Today there is very much a focus on Beginners and finding new dancers, which, of course, is very important. Very little, if anything, is done for experienced dancers and Continuing Teaching Development for teachers.

Mervyn went on to say that in his experience, many trainee teachers are able to identify faults in beginners' and intermediates' dancing, but few show the class how those faults can be corrected or give the class time to achieve that correction.

He asked us "does your class know what you mean?" He clarified that question in saying that new dancers, especially those with no musical knowledge, are unlikely to understand the frequently used words bars, covering and phrasing and that they should be given a basic definition of the words, along with analogies and imagery to clarify.

Mervyn speculated that many of us don't teach at a higher level because dancers are getting older, they don't really want to learn technique and more experienced dancers only want to learn new dances. He wondered if teachers now don't have the skills to teach at a higher level, most having little knowledge of anatomy and physiology and the mechanics of body movement and wondered if Continuing Teaching Development should be made mandatory by the RSCDS.

He suggested that teachers are increasingly only teaching dances and not dancing technique and are teaching by ticking the boxes of the required elements for a class without actually teaching those elements effectively. A good teacher must be well prepared with a full lesson plan but with the flexibility to deviate from that plan if faults need to be addressed.

Mervyn finished his talk with the statement

The quality of dancing is declining and it's not just due to aging dancers, it's our responsibility as teachers to ensure our classes receive technique instruction.

We were then given the opportunity to ask questions.

Q. How do you balance the exercises, skills practice etc with a class who only wants to practice certain dances?

A. The teacher should be assertive enough to produce a good lesson. They could teach formations and technique from dances in an upcoming dance programme.

Q. We've been used to instructor style lessons, how do we change this?

A. Better to be a facilitator, including more questions to the class and involving them more, eg What do you think might come next? Can anyone remember how to do this?
Help the class to think for themselves.

Q. You mentioned Warm Ups and Cool Downs, are there any publications to help with these sessions?

A. There's a new RSCDS coming out.
The last serTA workshop in March '22 was run by retired physiotherapist and SCD teacher Lynda Hughes and focused on those areas. There is a full report on the website.
Warm ups and cool downs are not included in the RSCDS Unit teaching course. There should be more understanding of how our bodies work and the importance of warming up and cooling down.

Mervyn recommended a book called *Safe Dance Practice by Edel Quinn, Sonia Rafferty & Charlotte Tomlinson* which, although it isn't specifically about SCD, it is relevant to all types of dancing.