

serTA Sweet Sixteen Weekend – 23-25 September 2022

Report on the Jimmie Hill serTA Workshop

Saturday 24th September 2022



It was a pleasure and treat attending such a varied and thought provoking serTA workshop given by Jimmie Hill. The workshop consisted of a mix of some historical background information on the development of Scottish dancing, dancing older dances & interpreting the terminology used at the time; all interspersed with some advisory Do's and Don'ts. The most memorable being: *'Never Ever do anything to draw attention to yourself!'*

The historical information gave us insight into how Scottish Country Dancing has developed and become standardised with less variety in the way dances are danced and fewer localised interpretations. The founders of the RSCDS wanted a permanent record of traditional Scottish dances. It has subsequently been discovered that lack of access to information at the time unintentionally hindered the correct recording of some traditional dances and music.

Before the writing down and recording of dances became the norm, the top couple made up the dance as they went along! As long as the dance finished with a progression the dance was a success! Down the middle and back to 2nd place was the most common form of progression or occasionally down the middle & back with a cast to 2nd place. A world away from the today's stressful cramming of dances but this advice from Jimmie will stand us all in good stead. *'If in doubt go the natural way.'*

Top Teaching Tip. *'Don't focus too much on footwork, make sure people go home wanting to come back'.*

Pas de Basque

Before the 1800s there was no record of the pas de basque being a part of Scottish dancing. The pas de basque setting step evolved but the jeté was not originally a part of this step until it was championed by Miss Jean Milligan. Thus, the jeté became an official appendage to create the setting step that we all know today.

When teaching pas de basque emphasise the **DOWN** beat beat. It is more aesthetically pleasing to see all heads bobbing up and down at the same time so aim for this result rather than the spending too much time on the jeté. Teaching the rhythm of the step is the more important. The accurate foot positions come after a dancer has got the rhythm.

The Three Couple Allemande.

We were encouraged to think critically about how to interpret the instructions given in The Manual and not become too dogmatic. Jimmie championed a more flowing, curvy approach giving a less jerky and staccato feel to the formation. To dance the whole 8 bars as one flowing movement: 1st couple



dance down and out in a curve; curving in to face the women's side and continue dancing into the centre, lady going under the man's arm on bar 6. Back on 7 & 8.

Do not: - Stop at bar 4 and all face down and on bar 5 all face in resulting in the woman being flung into the centre with the man barely dancing in.

When bars 5 and 6 and one flowing movement, all three couples come into the centre ready to retire on 7 and 8. A tendency to have a very slight pause on bar 5 has crept in and this means that it is more difficult to come into the centre on bar 6.

(Teaching Candidates: do as your tutor tells you!)

Other teaching tips:

- Remember elbows down when circling, it's the best way to support each other.
- Consider teaching the whole dance in 32 bars, not in 8 bar segments. This way dancers can discover problems for themselves. Then try again.
- Take feedback from the class.
- Anticipation is a key skill to not only become a successful dancer but also a successful teacher. The teacher needs to be able to think ahead and coach the next 2 bars.
- Scottish dancing is a team sport so good team work is the recipe for success.
- Use the Manual as a useful guide but do not become too dogmatic.

At the end of the morning Jimmie was thanked by Gerry Elliott who summed up the morning by saying:- *'We have been given permission to be ourselves, permission to enjoy dancing!'*

Ewan Galloway our musician had given us excellent music throughout the morning, playing strathspeys slowly and then quickly for example to allow us to trial different ways of dancing. He was also thanked for his super playing.

The following dances were danced throughout the morning:-

1. Miss Hadden's Reel, Bk 25
2. From Scotia's Shores We're noo Awa, RSCDS Leaflets
3. The Gathering, MMM
4. Queen City Salute, Bk 37
5. The Traveller's Jig, Farewell My Fancy, by Bob Campbell (TAC)
6. Salute to Miss Milligan, Drewry Canadian Book

