

serTA Virtual Presentation

Digital Music for SCD

21st March 2021

Part 2 of 2

The presentation was led by Peter Loveland, and there were contributions from John Fletcher, Mervyn Short and Gerry Elliott. Part 1 contains Peter Loveland's presentation, three further contributions are summarised below

2. John Fletcher, St John's Scottish Country Dancing Club, Wokingham

How to use digital equipment

John described his club's arrangements for music and equipment, with 2 teachers using club-owned equipment and CDs while 2 others used their own equipment. The club uses a variable speed CD player. For music, there was an internal list of CDs by organised by dance and genre which meant that choice of music was made without being able to hear the tracks.

A project to convert the Club's CDs to digital format was set up during the first lockdown. Two people were involved in the conversion work, based on an agreed set of standards. Details of these are available from John on request. An android tablet was bought for Club use as a music player, which allows teachers to take the music home for use in planning weekly classes.

John then described how he uses digital music :

- Music is stored I itunes. He noted that he has to manually amend the genre definition in this system because it was not standardised, so changing the definition from 8x32 J to J 8x32 to improve searching and retrieval.
- He uses a Numark player that plays both CDs and USBs with a Yamaha Stagepas 300 sound system
- Music for a class is compiled from itunes, then the folder is copied to a USB stick and sorted into a running order by putting a sequential number at the start of each track name.

To finish, John demonstrated the use of pitch and tempo controls on the Numark player as well as the cueing of tracks.

Questions to John were:

- a. Can the playlist be played from the tablet to a public address system? Yes, St John's club does that with their tablet via Bluetooth
- b. How old is the player devise? 2013
- c. Why use a player? Prefers to use physical box because it does what you want immediately.

3. Gerry Elliott, Berkhamsted Strathspey and Reel Club

Using digital music at Berkhamsted

As with John Fletcher, Gerry's club had a CD Collection that needed to be accessed by 10 people, teachers and MCs, for classes and social events. The club changed from using a Portogram to a Windows lap-top using itunes to store the tracks. At the same time, the club purchased a PA system which is connected to the lap-top and allows the use of headphones and a radio mike as needed.

Key points covered by Gerry include

- When ripping CDs, converting to digital format, it may not be possible to get the album cover at the time, but this can be added later.
- ABRSM Speed Shifter for desk-top and mobiles is used on lap-top to slow tracks without affecting pitch.
- There is a spreadsheet to manage clubs CDs, which is searchable.
- Gerry himself is apple-based and uses a mac book, remote controller and PA system
- For small groups, the playlist can be copied to an iphone and linked to a Bluetooth speaker

Questions

- a. How do you cover permission to rip CD to other media? Main issue is use of the music: the Club has purchased the CD format and only uses music on lap-top for non-commercial club purposes.
- b. Use of itunes Match? Match allows syncing of itunes on all devices owned but itunes does not have a full collection of suitable music for Scottish dancing.

4. Mervyn Short, Berks/Hants/Surrey RSCDS Branch

Cueing tracks for teaching

Mervyn uses a Numark player like John Fletcher's but an earlier model, from 2012. He has developed his use of the track cueing system on the Numark to select sections of tracks to use for teaching purposes. Typically, he will split a 32 bar tune into 4 x 8 bar sections, one assigned to each cue. So he will have bars 1-8 on the first cue, bars 9-16 on the second cue and so forth. He demonstrated this, allowing him to stop the selected track after the required 8 bar section. The benefit of this is the facility to use the correct part of the tune for the relevant part of the dance being taught, reinforcing association of movement with music to help the class.

Players with cueing systems currently available include:

- Numark NDX 400 (3 cues)
- Gemini MK-J600 (4 cues) £215

5. General discussion

- DJay app has a cueing system
- Teaching tracks for RSCDS books 49-52 and Teaching Certificate units 2 and 3 are available on the RSCDS website at: <https://www.rscds.org/learn/music-resources/teaching-tracks>
- Numark machines now only offer 3 cues and not 4.
- Teaching tracks are available on Muriel Johnstone's "Ready And.." CD
- Ipod used with a blue tooth speaker works well in the average club hall

- An Apple watch can be used as remote connected to phone with blue-tooth speaker, allowing pause and play from playlist.
- Acer netbook, blue tooth speaker and remote can be used together.
- It is possible to use a musician playing online for class teaching. Musician needs to say “Ready and..” to prevent delay between instruction and music starting
- Noted that most teachers prefer solo musician for teaching while class participants prefer recorded band, possibly due to familiarity with band sound