



South East Region Teachers Association

The Age Gap

Ken Martlew, a talk at Teachers' workshop,

RSCDS AGM

November 2012

The talk transcribed below was given to the Teacher's Workshop at the RSCDS AGM, Perth, 2nd Nov. 2012, on behalf of SERTA (South-East Region Teacher's Association).

I think the topic is very important to debate at the present time, having major implications for the future of the RSCDS.

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The Age Gap Slide 1

Exploring the gap between RSCDS technique as taught and the reality on most dance floors.

It's not Politically Correct even to mention Age, so I may be locked up after this talk!

However, I think it is important to explore some of the issues it raises, and my apologies in advance if I offend anyone.

There is a lot of ground to cover, and we touch on several subjects that could each fill the available time on their own:

Ken Martlew (South East Region Teachers Association – “SERTA”) – wearing 4 hats:

Slide 2

- RSCDS Teacher & Tutor
- Musician

I have had the privilege of working with at least 50 different SCD teachers, and 8 different tutors, in recent years

- Retired doctor (GP) with a particular interest in osteopathy and orthopaedics

Over the years I have many times been called to attend dancers with injuries

- Married to physiotherapist / RSCDS and ex-ballet teacher

She has specialised mainly with problems of the elderly

The growing gap between SCD as taught and practised Slide 3

- Mainly, but not entirely, due to ageing population of dancers
- Does not apply everywhere

I hope there are some present who don't know what I am talking about.

I have visited some centres– for example Lyons, Ukraine, Moscow – which have a high proportion of super young dancers.

However:

- They are young now, but may grow old one day!

RSCDS History Slide 4

Let's have a look at how it started:

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And of course

- Rhythm, teamwork, covering, etc.

Exams Slide 6

These concepts were crystalised in exams:

- Teaching Certificate

And more recently

- Dancing Proficiency Assessment
- Children's Medal Tests

Typical dance in London today Slide 7 – videos

I have sat watching dances in and around London , and reckon that at any one time I am lucky if I can see more than 6 people out of over a hundred present who are maintaining reasonably correct steps. Here are some random video clips from typical dances in London this year (taken by Stephen Webb). [laughter at the sight of some extremely non-RSCDS footwork]

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Changed pattern in many clubs Slide 8

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- “Can’t” – Could once, but now old / infirm,
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Age & SCD Slide 10

- Average age of SCD increasing

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- RSCDS Health Strategy Pack – 8th World Conference on Active Aging 9/10/12

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- Fitness, Fun & Friendship

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But the young take more risks, and may tear muscles and tendons.

Dance programmes Slide 14

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This means

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But nothing is specified about what to put in or leave out

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- “No-one is looking at your feet, the steps are not important”

So why bother to teach the technique at all if you are told it doesn't matter??

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We might think about what we could do to bridge this gap:

- Collectively
- Individually

Options Slide 17

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Are we being fair to existing dancers inviting in "no-hopers"?

- Turn a blind eye to failing

Keep calm and carry on.

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Be prepared to compromise our technique formally in a graded way – so

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- Injury prevention – a) Accident b) sudden injury c) overuse injury
- Posture
- Exam criteria
- Programme management – Beginners Pathway

We will look at each of these in turn:-

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- Osteoarthritis of major joints.

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Ban Musicians! – A Health & safety investigation would surely ban them! “They kept us dancing long after pain would have stopped us”!

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Demonstrate a book on a pole

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The Manual (Blue Book) Slide 25

- Incorporate grading concepts discussed above?

Pathway for New Dancers Slide 26

Very few places cater for the next step from the Beginner's Class

- Dances for Less Experienced Dancers

Beginners need to experience a real dance by attending one graded to their standard.

The gap from elderly beginner to the average public dance is huge

- Traffic Light system

This incorporates dances of mixed difficulty, colour-coded so there is something for everyone:

Beginners, Beginners with good partner, Experts only

- Regional Repertoire

New Zealand – There is a national repertoire, 6 dances from it to be on every programme

Summary Slide 27

- Today's RSCDS dancers much older than in 1923 when our SCD established
- Changing form of SCD – emphasis on complicated dances, not technique
- Possible compromises in graded teaching
- Pathways for beginners
- The elderly beginner
- Health issues – injury, posture, training
- RSCDS Health Strategy impact

This is a promising initiative, especially for the elderly – BUT [– has it been suitably researched,] and are we set up to receive them?

[There was limited time for questions. I quote an important one:

Q You spent 20 minutes describing compromises in SCD for the disabled. Aren't you describing "Reeling".

A The difference is that Reeling aims no higher. I was proposing that, like my Yoga teacher, in SCD we teach "This is the Gold standard: if you can't achieve that, these are different levels of difficulty you can aim for instead". A disability may only affect one aspect of technique, and good compromise may be possible. The Manual might include some of these compromise guidelines.]

Ken Martlew
Hemel Hempstead, March 2013

**Transcript of talk given at the RSCDS Teachers' Workshop before
the AGM in Aberdeen, 2nd Nov 2012**

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- Dances for Less Experienced Dancers

Beginners need to experience a real dance by attending one graded to their standard.

The gap from elderly beginner to the average public dance is huge

- Traffic Light system

This incorporates dances of mixed difficulty, colour-coded so there is something for everyone:

Beginners, Beginners with good partner, Experts only

- Regional Repertoire

New Zealand – There is a national repertoire, 6 dances from it to be on every programme

Summary Slide 27

- Today's RSCDS dancers much older than in 1923 when our SCD established
- Changing form of SCD – emphasis on complicated dances, not technique
- Possible compromises in graded teaching
- Pathways for beginners
- The elderly beginner
- Health issues – injury, posture, training
- RSCDS Health Strategy impact

This is a promising initiative, especially for the elderly – BUT [– has it been suitably researched,] and are we set up to receive them?

[There was limited time for questions. I quote an important one:

Q You spent 20 minutes describing compromises in SCD for the disabled. Aren't you describing "Reeling".

A The difference is that Reeling aims no higher. I was proposing that, like my Yoga teacher, in SCD we teach "This is the Gold standard: if you can't achieve that, these are different levels of difficulty you can aim for instead". A disability may only affect one aspect of technique, and good compromise may be possible. The Manual might include some of these compromise guidelines.]

Ken Martlew

Hemel Hempstead, March 2013

**Transcript of talk given at the RSCDS Teachers' Workshop before
the AGM in Aberdeen, 2nd Nov 2012**