



South East Region Teachers Association

Getting the best out of your dancers

Sue Porter

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Reporter: Pat Davoll

Photo: Stephen Webb

The latest SERTA workshop on 'Getting the best out of your dancers' was held in Hemel Hempstead on 28th September. It was led by Sue Porter from Oban, Convenor of the Education and Training Committee, and Barbara Manning was our musician. Using discussion and practical dancing, Sue covered a lot of ground, from welcoming new dancers to low impact adjustments for less mobile dancers. During the day, Sue used dances from the new Graded book 3. This includes many more strathspeys, and dances to introduce more complex formations in otherwise simple dances. The book and accompanying CD are now available and recommended!



Good class preparation, a positive manner, enthusiasm and humour and appropriate dress were covered. Lesson planning should consider the music, the venue and the class make up. Consider the

musician, and give them ample time to prepare, or if using CDs, select them in advance. The class size, standard(s), expectations and fitness should be considered. And personal good practice matters, in classes and at social functions.

Sue used round the room exercises to mix partners and sets. She also showed how to build a dance by progressively introducing the next eight bars for each new couple. Good coaching identifies who does what, just in advance of the phrase. Step practice in groups is more welcoming for newcomers.

The afternoon began by looking at how teachers can adjust steps and formations for dancers who may be less mobile, or get dizzy, or who lack the stamina to sustain a high performance level throughout a dance. But Sue did remind us that this is not to be the norm for all dancers! We tried this low impact dance style in comparison with high impact dancing and I certainly appreciated the difference in effort required.

Sue then discussed helping new dancers prepare for their first dance, covering dress code for various types of dances and etiquette of the dance. Recaps should be succinct and it is helpful to finish with a quick reminder of the first 8 bars.

Many dancers are encouraged by participating in the various SCD courses and tests and Sue brought us up to date on recent changes to course requirements.

It was an informative and enjoyable day. We all want to get the best from our classes, and Sue and Barbara certainly got the most from us. With discussions, a good choice of dances and practical dancing, I'm sure we all went home with ideas for classes at every level.

Our thanks to Sue and to Barbara who provided excellent music. Thanks also to the Berkhamsted group for arranging the hall and providing tea, coffee and excellent cakes.

Pat Davoll

