

News from Canada—Dancing with Style

by Jo Young

“Dancing with Style”—not only a lofty, but certainly obtainable, goal (with a little dance experience and a great teacher!), but also the name of an advanced dance workshop—was held last October in Vancouver, British Columbia. The workshop, designed by Rosemary Lach, a well respected English country dance caller from Victoria, is based on the ideas of the late teacher and choreographer Fried de Metz Herman, and was well received at its premiere in Victoria. Initially our biggest problem was that we were unsure how the workshop would be received on the Canadian mainland: would we have enough participants interested to cover all the costs or would we be left with money owing? Our problem was solved by an Outreach Grant from CDSS, which gave us the courage and financial security to commit to the workshop. As it turned out, not only did we not need to make use of the grant but we were able to make donations to both CDSS, in acknowledgement for their backing, and to our local Vancouver English country dance group—a great result from a great workshop.

Once we decided to go ahead with the workshop, things started well, with registration being keenly taken up resulting in a total of twenty-six attendees, almost twice the number we were originally hoping for. The workshop itself was very well received

as being the advanced level workshop that it was and most people appreciated that dancers with a higher level of experience had been targeted for attendance. The workshop did not provide any new concepts per se, but it certainly provided a wealth of new ways of looking at things as well as some new techniques to improve dance style.

One of the main ideas that dancers liked was that of continual flow during a dance, to be moving whenever possible to smoothly connect each figure

with the next one. Under Rosemary’s instruction everyone enjoyed practising some of the techniques that Fried had developed to assist with this aspect of dancing, such as easing out and spiralling. One dancer, of six years’ experience, said that it was good to be made consciously aware of the need to keep the flow of a dance going and that now she felt she had some techniques that she could apply to help her with this. Another experienced dancer said that even after more than twenty years dancing he was still able to gain new insight into ways to make his dancing smoother, such as taking longer with turning people and making more eye contact with other dancers. More advanced ideas, such as set awareness, were appreciated by the dancers; it certainly gave me a sense of dancing with everyone in my whole line when we all moved together to complete a cross and turn single—it was great. As a caller myself I love being on stage and being able to see the times when all the lines are moving together—I consider it one of the

perks of calling. When asked, after the event, Rosemary said she really enjoyed seeing the improvement in people’s overall dancing style between the first and the last dance. She was also glad that people seemed to have taken pleasure in both the workshop and the changes they had been able to make to their dancing style.

We want to especially thank Rosemary Lach for the workshop and Susan Larkin (violin and recorders) and Jonathan Taylor (cello), the

wonderful musicians who played for us. Also we are grateful to Jane Srivastava for organising the workshop and to all the other local dancers who helped make the event successful. And a big thank you to CDSS for covering our funding for this event; although we are exceedingly glad that we didn’t need to make use of the grant, without it we would not have had the courage to organise the workshop in the first place.



photo courtesy Jo Young

“News from Canada” features news about Canadian events and groups. Ideas for articles should be sent to Rosemary Lach, rosemarylach@yahoo.ca or to Bev Bernbaum, wturnip@sympatico.ca.