

Back to Fundamentals - Johan MacLean

Working in pairs, there was a brief discussion of what the fundamentals were. Suggestions included music and rhythm, partner, eye contact, phrasing, handing, posture and fun.

After a brief warm-up, Johan explained that she was going to focus on body alignment and posture. Working in pairs, one person stood with feet parallel, slightly apart with knees over ankles and shoulders and hips level. We had to be aware of posture and alignment, pulling in the abdominal muscles and standing tall. Partners had to check that all was well. Then it was time for more exercises in pairs, pushing against partner and lunging to make the legs work too, always thinking of alignment and posture.

Time for a dance – *Alyth Burn* – a 4 x 48 bar jig from Book 22. After a few bars of skip change of step, Johan reminded us to be aware of rhythm and the hop – “the hop is the spring of youth”! Watching the younger teachers present (always a great pleasure) we realised what was meant by the spring of youth. The oldies among us DO try, honestly, but youth was a long time ago. Then another dance.

This time a strathspey from Book 38, *Mr Robert H Mackay*. This was followed by another reminder to think about our footwork and the importance of feet in 2nd position and trying to remember how to put the foot down carefully, working through the toe on to the ball and rolling down to the heel, not just “plonking” it down. All these little helpful, encouraging hints were filtered in gradually rather than making a big issue; something always worth remembering when teaching a class.

Before finishing off with cool down exercises in waltz time, there was time for one more dance, a 32 bar reel, *Portree Bay*.

This was an excellent session with many teaching points to take back to our classes to slip in to our lessons. It was ably and sympathetically accompanied by today’s musician, Luke Brady.

Helen Bain
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