



Guth na Dannsairian Voice of the Dancers

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

On behalf of the Executive I would like to wish all a Prosperous, Healthy New Year.

Just a few reminders: Feb. 2 is our closed competition followed on Sunday with a workshop.

At the competition, the Muriel Boyle Awards will be handed out. The SHDA has added a trophy for this award as we felt a permanent reminder of Muriel was important as well as having past winners noted.

Spring Tune-Up will run this year with more information coming soon from Catherine Wood, our Workshop Co-coordinator.

The Saskatchewan Provincial Championships will be in Saskatoon again this year on the first weekend in May.

All dancers are required to participate in three dance outs this year. So far we have had a good turn out for these events. Dance-outs are a great way to promote highland dancing and the Scottish culture.

At the request of the membership, the executive has been looking into other areas for fundraising other than working bingos. The Scottish Pavilion at Folkfest has proven to be a strong fundraiser. The membership has indicated that they would prefer to work one or two events through the course of the dance year as fundraising commitment and we are trying hard to make that an obtainable goal. We will keep the membership posted on this issue; feel free to put forth any ideas you may have on this matter.

Sherry Hudson, President, SHDA



WORKSHOPS

February Workshop, Sunday, February 3 at the Albert Community Center. A great opportunity to work with competition judges and improve your dancing skills! Also, watch for details on the ever popular Spring Tune Up during Easter break. A chance to polish your dancing, learn new and exciting things and meet up with dancing friends.

For more information, please contact Cathryn Wood— thewoodsies@sasktel.net.

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Dates to Remember:

January 25—Robbie Burns Day

January 20—SHDA Bingo

January 28—SHDA Executive Meeting

February 2—Saskatoon Closed Competition

February 3—Saskatoon Workshop

February 3—SHDA Bingo

March 14—SHDA newsletter deadline

ROBERT BURNS' DAY—Scotland's Most Celebrated Birthday

From humble beginnings as a farmer's son, Robert Burns raised himself up to become Scotland's most celebrated poet. Although he only lived 37 short years, the works of Robert Burns are immortalized to this day. Scotsmen all across the globe still gather to celebrate his birthday on January 25.

The tradition of the annual supper began a few years after the poet's death in 1796 by a group of friends. The authentic ceremony of the evening has remained the same over the years. A traditional supper begins with the chairman's address and the Selkirk Grace. A piper leads in the presentation of the haggis, at which time Burns' Address to a Haggis is recited, the haggis cut and the toast to the haggis made. A supper of cock-a-leekie soup, haggis, neeps and tatties, and Tyspy Laird is eaten which is then followed by speeches and toasts. The evening continues with the songs and poems of Robbie Burns, with the finishing touch being a resounding performance of Auld Lang Syne.



*How many Scotsmen does it
take to change a light bulb?
Och! It's no that dark!*

Here is a recipe for a traditional Robbie Burns' supper:

Cock-a-Leekie Soup (recipe from rampantscotland.com)

Ingredients:

1 boiling fowl, about 4lb, including legs and wings
1lb leeks (about 12) cleaned and cut into 1 -inch pieces
4 pints stock or water
1oz long grained rice
4oz cooked, stoned prunes
One teaspoon brown sugar
Salt and pepper
Garni of bay leaf, parsley, thyme
Some recipes also have 3 chopped rashers of streaky bacon

Method:

Put the fowl and bacon in a large saucepan and cover with water. Bring to the boil and remove any scum. Add three-quarters of the leeks, (green as well as white sections), herbs (tied together in a bundle), salt and pepper and return to the boil. Simmer gently for 2-3 hours, adding more water if necessary.

Remove the bird. Some thrifty chefs use the bird as another course, others cut the meat into small pieces and add them back to the soup (certainly it should have some pieces of chicken in it when served). Add the rice and drained prunes and the remaining leeks and simmer for another 30 minutes. Check for flavour and serve with a little chopped parsley.

Serves 6/8 people.

MURIEL BOYLE MEMORIAL AWARDS

The Muriel Boyle Memorial Awards will be presented at the SHDA closed competition on February 2. These awards are open to all SHDA dancers in three categories—pre-Premier, junior Premier and senior Premier—who have not received the award in the past three years. For those who will be eligible to apply for the award next year, go to the SHDA website for information on the requirements in preparation for next year.

BINGO UPDATE

To provide our membership with the benefits resulting from their hard work at such fundraising activities as Folkfest and bingos, it was decided at the October Saskatoon Highland Dancing Association executive meeting to offer each fundraising dancer one free pair of highland dance shoes (slipper or jig) up to a maximum of \$100. If the shoes cost less than \$100, SHDA pays that amount. If the shoes cost more than \$100, SHDA will pay up to \$100 and you pay the rest. Once each dancer has completed his/her bingo requirements for the 2007-08 season, I will issue a gift certificate for one pair of dance shoes to be redeemed at Ceilidh Surprise. Mary Sutton has agreed to accept these certificates, and we anticipate most of the shoes will be obtained at the Saskatoon competitions over the year. So Look for the certificate once you have completed your bingos and hold out on the new dance shoe purchase until then. I will email you once you are eligible.

The first two bingo shifts for 2008 are on

Sunday, January 20th

4:30 to 9:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m.

Sunday, February 3rd

4:30 to 9:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m.

All at the City Center Bingo 310 22nd Street W

You can email or call me if you would like to work the bingos and let me know which shifts you would like to work.

Christine Hanna, SHDA Bingo Coordinator, phone 249-0326, email the.hannas@sasktel.net

What's the difference between a tightrope and a Scotsman ? A tightrope sometimes gives.

DANCE OUTS

There were several dance out opportunities for the dancers in November and December, including the popular Festival of Trees on December 1st. There is one confirmed dance out scheduled for the Robbie Burns Night supper on January 26.

The dance outs give all dancers a chance to show off their skills, from beginners to experienced premier dancers. Even if you have fulfilled your dance out requirement, there is no limit on the number of performances anyone wishes to participate in—in fact, more is greatly encouraged!

A Dancer's Guide to Practising, Precision and Perfection-Heather Bonyng

Practicing can be difficult even for the most dedicated and skilled of dancers. As a dancer myself, I often struggled with building up the motivation to get myself to practice. The times I did practice, I will admit, I was not necessarily focused or structured on the task at hand.

As a highland dance teacher, it's been the same struggle all over again. However, now the challenge is figuring out how to motivate all of these young eyes that are looking to me for guidance?

Well, I can't say that what I have come up with is a long lost secret like discovering the 'Fountain of Youth' or the 'Holy Grail.' What I can say that with my increasing "wisdom" is that these are some tips I have found that have worked the best for me and for my students throughout the years!

Start off with short, focused practices

When I was young, I was often turned off from practicing dancing because I believed it was expected of me to spend at least half an hour at a time in my studio going over EVERYTHING! My practicing usually consisted of five to ten minutes of warm up, running through one dance but stopping in the middle of every step to catch my breath, more stretching, a water break, running upstairs to tell my mom something random about absolutely nothing, then a few more minutes of stretching, and finishing off by going over one more thing.

Now, I have found that rather than practicing for half hour time slots, a five to ten minute slot can be just as effective. Take five minutes and decide that for those five minutes to work on nothing but getting that perfect pas de basques, or sensational split highcut. If a dancers dedicate themselves to one specific correction a day, they will be less likely to feel overwhelmed by the whole process! As time goes on, and as they move up in competing they will increase their practice time and practice abilities because they will see the results of what committed practicing can do! This is a skill they will learn to carry through to all aspects of their life more than just dancing.

Work practice into your life, don't work your life around practicing

There is no common excuse that I hear from my dancers for the reason they did not practice that week; rather I hear a whole slew of excuses with one common theme – life was too busy! Now I'm not saying that you shouldn't try to set aside a specific time for your dancer to practice, routine is important and effective; unfortunately it's not always feasible.

If life gets in the way, and it just doesn't seem workable to have your dancer practise at their regular scheduled time, encourage them to make an alternate time in the midst of your busy schedules. Practice shuffles during a commercial break, work on hop brush beat beats in line at the grocery store, or take five minutes at Grandma's house to show off a fling. As much as life gets in the way, there is always a fracture in time where you can take a moment to practice!

Cue cards create consistency

A dancing journal is a great idea for dancers to keep track of their weekly corrections, but often it gets shoved into their dancing bag and is either forgotten about or becomes a fun place to doodle between dance classes with friends.

In addition to a journal, encourage your dancer to make cue cards for each of their dances with five to eight of their most important corrections. This medium is highly effective because it creates a summary of all the improvements their teacher has given them over the weeks of dancing, and becomes a highly effective tool for them to use to practise and review at competitions.

Now that I've given you my three "secrets" to success in Highland Dancing, I will reveal to you the biggest one of all....

Goals give purpose

Okay, this is not a big secret or surprise! Like anything, creating goals gives a sense of purpose, aspiration, and success.

At the beginning of each dance year, sit down with your dancers and ask them what they would like to accomplish with their dancing. Make sure to create both long and short term goals, as achieving short term goals makes the long term goal not seem so unattainable and far away. Most importantly, write your dancers' goals down in a place they can see them everyday (don't go to that journal that's shoved away in the dance bag)! Affix them to a bathroom or bedroom mirror so they are reminded each and every day of what they are to work towards.

Constructing objectives and targets reminds them of what they are working toward. This, in turn, may help them work even harder to achieve it. The result - an overwhelming sense of accomplishment when all their hard work finally pays off!

COMPETITIONS

Mmmm, competitions report ~ what can I say that hasn't been said before and will grab the readers attention so much that they will be enthralled with the article and vow to make a New Year's Resolution to do more with the competitions committee? After all the competitions committee is the funnest. Yes, that's right folks ~ the funnest; not the most fun but the funnest. We get to choose the dances, the locations, the colour and content of the programs, judge's hotel, the pipers, the food, the awards, the competition times, the volunteer jobs, draw prizes and the 'goodie bags' for the Primary dancers. Wow, now that does sound like fun. If you want to be a part of this dynamic and influential group then contact any of the committee members. The committee members can be identified by their huge grins of satisfaction at any of our upcoming competitions.

Speaking of 'upcoming competitions' we have our annual Closed Competition being held on February 2nd at the Manhattan Ballroom. What does 'Closed' mean you ask? Closed means we don't let in dancers from other provinces as we want to hog the good awards for our Saskatchewan dancers only. At this competition there are a bazillion different trophies awarded all named after prestigious people from the Highland world both past and present. No, there isn't an award named after me (insert chuckle here). Our February competition also boasts the cakewalk competition which is always so much fun to watch. Who can forget Cailey and Kenzie's motorcycle routine? I have never seen judges enjoy a dance more. This dance offers pairs the opportunity to get creative and have fun with a traditional dance.

We are also hosting the Provincial Championships again this year on May 2nd for our Premier dancers at Tommy Douglas (greatest Canadian of all time) Collegiate and that will be followed with a Closed Competition for all levels of dancing. The Premier dancers compete to be Saskatchewan Representatives at the Canadian Highland Dancing Championships ~ which this year will be held in Victoria, B.C. Once the 'Reps' (the cool term used) have been selected they are introduced in the Parade of Champions for all to view. It is a huge honor for dancers to march in this parade and represent the province of Saskatchewan. The younger dancers get an opportunity to see top level dancing and to witness what they can aspire to achieve.

On May 31st we are hosting an Open Competition at Centennial Collegiate Gymnasium. Last year saw bus loads of dancers from Alberta join us. They were a fun crew to host and we hope they make the trek again this year. Most of the Albertans are transplants and view this weekend as an opportunity to visit relatives, but let's not get into politics here.

So, does it sound like an exciting year of dance coming up??? Just you wait till 2010 when Saskatoon hosts the country and others for 5 days of the best Highland Dancing you will ever see at the Canadian Championships and 4 other dance events.

Keep July 7 -11th, 2010 clear on your calendars because we are going to host a wonderful event ~ a memorable event and you get to be part of the memory making experience.

Yours In Highland,

MJ Sherven



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SHDA WEBSITE

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Angus called in to see his friend Donald to find he was stripping the wallpaper from the walls. Rather obviously, he remarked "You're decorating, I see." to which Donald replied "Naw. I'm moving house."

Here is a dessert recipe that has become a favourite with my family. If anyone has more Scottish recipes to share, please submit them for the next newsletter—Vicki Strelloff, Newsletter Editor

Caramel Shortbread Squares

INGREDIENTS

- 2/3 cup butter, softened**
- 1/4 cup white sugar**
- 1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour**
- 1/2 cup butter**
- 1/2 cup packed light brown sugar**
- 2 tablespoons light corn syrup**
- 1/2 cup sweetened condensed milk**

- 1 1/4 cups milk chocolate chips**

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 C).
2. In a medium bowl, mix together 2/3 cup butter, white sugar, and flour until evenly crumbly. Press into a 9 inch square baking pan. Bake for 20 minutes.
3. In a 2 quart saucepan, combine 1/2 cup butter, brown sugar, corn syrup, and sweetened condensed milk. Bring to a boil. Continue to boil for 5 minutes. Remove from heat and beat vigorously with a wooden spoon for about 3 minutes. Pour over baked crust (warm or cool). Cool until it begins to firm.

Place chocolate in a microwave-safe bowl. Heat for 1 minute, then stir and continue to heat and stir at 20 second intervals until chocolate is melted and smooth. Pour chocolate over the caramel layer and spread evenly to cover completely. Chill. Cut into 1 inch squares. These need to be small because they are so rich.

AN LÀRACH-LÌN SPLOREER (The Website Explorer)

sohda.org.uk—Scottish Official Highland Dancing Association

highlandisland.com—for buying Highland dance supplies & gifts

robbieburns.org—for everything you want to know about the Scottish bard

visitourscotland.co.uk—Scottish travel information

members.shaw.ca/wshd—Wilson's School of Highland Dance website

members.shaw.ca/hlbonynge—Heather's School of Highland dance website



Don't forget to check our own website **shda.ca** to keep up with what's happening.