

Directors' Report

RSCDS Toronto Association – 2017 Annual General Meeting

Revised May 13, 2017

The following is a compilation of Board's Vice Chair and Directors' annual reports. Please take a moment to read about the many activities and accomplishments of your RSCDS Toronto Association over this past 2016-17 dance season. A shorter version will be presented at the 2017 Annual General Meeting on Saturday, April 29, 2017.

Vice Chair (Jean Lindsay)

Jean reports that the Yellow Book, which includes the Association's By-Laws, Procedures Manual and Operations Manual, has been posted on the website and can be accessed there by members. The Appendix section continues to be a work in progress with plans to be completed over the summer. Her thanks go to Nancy White, Secretary, for her dedication to this long-term project, as well as others who provided information, guidance and assistance along the way including Deirdre MacCuish-Bark, Maureen Richardson, Keith Bark, Teresa Lockhart and Judy Williams, and Rob Lockhart for posting the documents.

Other Vice-Chair activities have included being the contact with Toronto Police Services regarding our Vulnerable Persons Policy, attending Southern Great Lakes Group meetings, as well as being the Director Designate organizing all bookings with the City to support special classes and practices at the Broadlands Community Centre. Jean also reports that plans are well underway for our 60th Anniversary celebrations scheduled for November 25th 2017.

Membership & Volunteers (Wayne Fraser, Director)

Wayne reports that there has been a modest increase in membership for the 2016-2017 year. Membership stands at 362 and that number represents full members with voting privileges. Junior memberships at 16 (no voting privileges) brings the total to 378. Keep in Touch associate members count 21 and increase the total participating to 399. The organization welcomed 37 new members this year and that number is more or less consistent with the past three years.

The retention rate for new members has been about 60 to 70 percent since 2013. Our members continuing and diligent attention to welcoming new dancers at Association events has been a significant factor in that retention. Other factors include the New Member Packets, The New Members' Tea, extra practices for the Tartan Ball and the Social Group Teachers' support in promoting RSCDS Toronto events and encouraging new members to attend.

Online PayPal memberships were 65 percent for the past year and there has been an increase in members renewing earlier. There is, however, still room for improvement in meeting the September 30th renewal deadline.

The Toronto Association continues to benefit from a committed, hard-working body of volunteers who give generously of their skills and time. The Volunteer Appreciation Dance and the Volunteer Awards both endeavour to celebrate that generosity. This year, Volunteer Awards were presented to Joan Wood, May Ralston and Glenna McDonald for their contributions to their Social Groups and the Association.

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In line with the goal to support a culture of volunteerism two new initiatives were added: a Signature dance, *The Toronto Volunteers*, devised by Deirdre MacCuish Bark, and the launch of the Appreciation Dance Programme devised by the winner of our 2017 Devisor Project, Theresa Malek. Notwithstanding our current efforts to celebrate and attract volunteers, it is still important we continue to pinpoint new ways and means to encourage volunteer participation.

Wayne would like to thank the members of his Membership & Volunteers committee that includes Nancy Duffy, Rosalind Gilbert, Susan Heximer, Margaret Rieger and Jane Robinson.

Communications (Wayne Ellwood, Director)

Wayne reports that our newsletter, *Set & Link*, is published 10 times a year and emailed to all members as well as branches around the world. The newsletter team decides on content, solicits articles from contributors and edits the final copy. This year the editorial group of Carole Bell (editor), Donald Holmes, Judy Williams, Marian White and Rob Lockhart celebrated their 10th anniversary of working together and producing the newsletter. So, congratulations to these volunteers for their hard work and dedication.

Thanks are also extended to Muriel Nicoll, who for a number of years has looked after mailing the print copies of *Set & Link* and Rob Lockhart, who handles the emailed copies and manages our website (dancescottish.ca). Teresa Lockhart has also worked on the "Youth Scene" encouraging young dancers to submit articles. The TA website has become the go-to resource for keeping up-to-date on events and news in the SCD community in the Toronto area, and abroad! It provides listings of classes, workshops and monthly dances as well as feature stories on events and people in our dance community. From April 2016 - March 2017, the website had 97,025 visits and 366,476 page views. Since April 2014, Rob has also posted 221 videos of dances branded dancescottish.ca and RSCDS Toronto. As of March 30 those videos had attracted 128,644 views.

As Communications Director, Wayne frequently writes short articles in *Set & Link* relaying major Board decisions and concerns. Examples this year included an outline of the funding possibilities available from the RSCDS, as well as an article summarizing the Toronto Association's video policy. Only videos showing people dancing competently and clearly having fun are posted. Fewer than five people have requested 'no video' and these wishes are honoured.

Rob also liaises with Reuben Freemantle who runs the Scottish Country Dance Dictionary website. The majority of Toronto videos get embedded there — often as the sole video exemplar of a specific dance, which is especially helpful to the world-wide SCD community, thus spreading the word about RSCDS Toronto. It is now standard to include video links on all Toronto event crib sheets, and also on the programmes listed on the website. These are popular and frequently mentioned by dancers who find them a valuable resource, especially for the Tartan Ball.

Wayne has provided reports to Social Group attendees throughout the year, on major decisions and important issues discussed by the Toronto Board via e-notes sent after the Board's monthly meetings. These e-notes are also posted on the web site for reference. In support of further communications, Wayne also organized a Social Group Liaison meeting in November 2016, which was attended by teachers/leaders of 14 of our 21 associated Social Groups. Issues discussed included succession

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planning for teachers, Board support for smaller dance classes, broadening the Toronto-centric focus and marketing strategies to boost participation and membership.

Program (Louis Racic, Director)

Louis reports that it has been a successful year for Toronto Association programs. However, he notes that attendance at many Association events was lower this year than last. This is part of the ebb and flow of attendance. Last year, attendance numbers were increasing, this year they are not. It has been another season of great music, dancing, fun and fellowship!

Monthly Dances

The Monthly Dance season opened in late September with live music by Don Bartlett and the Scottish Heirs. We had 68 dancers which was 24 less than the year before. Scotch Mist played for the December Dance, where attendance was 142, down 36 from the previous year. Everyone who came had a great evening of music, dance, hospitality and a special visit from Santa.

Don Bartlett and the Scottish Heirs played at the January dance where attendance was 95 dancers 15 less than in 2016. It was a great evening. Scotch Mist played at the March and April monthly dances. The March dance geared toward beginners had 159 dancers in attendance, which is about the same as last year. Thanks to all our members and the 27 beginners who attended the 2017 March Monthly Dance! It was a wonderful fun filled evening. The April Volunteer Appreciation dance had 122 dancers, 21 more than last year. Thanks are extended to Forbes Duncan as Convenor and everyone's continued support of these monthly gatherings.

Tartan Ball

On February 18, 2017, the Association held our 54th Tartan Ball at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel. It was an exciting night with 178 seated for dinner, great food, wine and fabulous music. Our Guest of Honour, John Fraser gave a light and entertaining speech and later joined in on the dance floor (appreciative of some pre-ball tutelage. There were two door prizes this year: Janet Morris won a pair of free tickets to the 55th Tartan Ball along with a room at the Fairmont Royal York; and Kevin Maloney won a bottle of scotch courtesy of VisitScotland. Congratulations to all the winners!

Dancing to the music of Scotch Mist was a pleasure as usual, however the number of dancers participating was lower than last year, and the TA sustained a small loss on this event. Next year will be the 55th Tartan Ball on Feb 17th, 2018, still at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel. Thanks go to Laurie McConachie, Convenor of this, our premiere event of the dance season. She urges us all to put the date of this event on your calendar and be sure join us in 2018.

Dancing in the Park

The weather cooperated for all four evenings of the of Dancing in the Park this past June! The dances were held on the four Tuesdays in June from 7 p.m. to dusk at Edward's Gardens with music provided by Scotch Mist. There was a good turn out from both the membership and first time dancers, which is very encouraging. Thanks are extended to Dave Drewette, Convenor of DITP, one of our most successful outreach programs.

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Although the Association uses the proceeds from our Monthly Dance 50/50 draws toward this event, donations are necessary to cover the high costs of DITP. The City of Toronto does not permit us to charge an entry fee for this event. If you like DITP, please come out to dance at Edwards Gardens and donate what you can.

The Toronto Workshop and Afternoon Dance

The November 2016 Workshop, with an attendance of 113 dancers, had very positive feedback, especially on the new venue of Branksome Hall. This was all the result of the hard work of the committee led by Convenor Mike Morris, the teachers: Linda Henderson, Alicia Manson and Vicky Zeltins and the musicians: Laird Brown, Don Wood, Don Bartlett and Karen Reed.

Louis would like to thank all the volunteers who contributed their time and effort to make Toronto Association events happen. The Association is very fortunate to have such hard-working teams. Please support them and your organization by dancing, volunteering or attending events as often as you can.

Education and Training (Maureen Richardson, Director)

Association Classes

An Introductory Class was offered in the month of September 2016 and held at Eastminster United Church. This class was followed by three Branch Classes, running for ten weeks each from October until December. A Level 1 Class programme was available at both St. Leonard's, taught by Jean Noble, and at Eastminster, taught by Vicky Zeltins. The Level 2 Class was offered at Eastminster, and taught by Teresa Lockhart. The second ten-week session ran from January until March of 2016. A Level 3 Class is being taught by Fiona Philip at Eastminster.

Tony Szeto taught a Level 1 Class in Aurora at the Victoria Hall. Although it was a small group, all continued with the ten weeks from October until December. A number continued with the Winter ten-week session from January until March of 2016. Four of the group have joined social groups.

All classes were enthusiastically attended, and many of the dancers participated in the Monthly Dances, the Toronto Workshop, and the Tartan Ball. The new dancers' experiences have been positive, and a number of them have become members and joined social groups in the Toronto area.

Extension Classes will continue for 8 weeks during April and May at Eastminster. These are followed by four Tuesdays in June of Dancing in the Park, giving new dancers another social experience.

Sincere appreciation goes to Convenor, Glenna MacDonald for coordinating the classes, and to the many volunteers who helped with the registration and weekly sign-in, as well as joining sets on the dance floor to even out numbers.

Dancing Achievement Awards

In May 2016, eight dancers practiced and were tested and awarded an Advanced level Dancing Achievement Award (DAA). Based on this success, Moira Korus and Barbara Taylor coordinated and taught DAA classes at the Intermediate Level this spring. Dancers of a wide range of ages and various skill levels participated in the classes to improve their technique. Over twenty dancers will be adjudicated on April 30th. The DAA Program is now included in the list of Association Classes.

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Youth Events

A number of Youth Events were held during the season with Moira Korus as Convenor. The Family Ceilidh, held in October was led by Teresa Lockhart and was well attended and enjoyed by all. The Youth Ball is scheduled for Saturday May 6th, at Cummer Avenue United Church. Another Youth Workshop is tentatively scheduled for this coming Fall.

Thank you to Moira Korus and Gavin Keachie for being so dedicated to the teaching of youngsters. Classes are offered Saturday mornings at Rosedale Presbyterian Church.

Teachers' Panel

The Teachers' Panel met twice this year to cover off several responsibilities which included selecting Deirdre MacCuish Bark as devisor for the 2018/2019 programmes for the Monthly Dances and the Tartan Ball, and Tony Szeto for the 2018 Dancing in the Park programme. The Panel also reviewed the 2017/2018 programmes devised by David Booz, and suggested names of teachers for next season's Association Classes, and the 2017 November Workshop.

Maureen would like to thank the Teachers' Panel Chair, Teresa Lockhart, for her work on the Panel. Other teachers making up the Panel include May Divers, Deirdre MacCuish-Bark, Paul Maloney, Maureen Richardson, Tony Szeto, and Vicky Zeltins.

Broadlands Sunday Afternoon Dances

Two Special Classes were held at Broadlands this season and were well attended. Teresa Lockhart taught dances with a 'spooky' theme in October, and Maureen Richardson taught dances in keeping with the sociability of SCD. Not as many special classes were offered this year as our scheduled Sunday afternoons at Broadlands were also well used for DAA classes and Tartan Ball practices.

Special Events/ Outreach

Maureen Richardson introduced SCD to a class of Gr. 4 students at a York Region school as part of their Cultural Studies with a focus on Robbie Burns celebrations. She also taught SCD to Gr. 7 students at Bayview Middle School, as part of their curriculum of Cultural Studies and Folk Dance. These classes were enjoyed by the youngsters and fond memories may bring them to SCD in the future.

Marketing (Paul Barber, Director)

Paul reports that his committee worked throughout the year developing ideas and initiatives to attract new dancers to Scottish country dancing. Success in recruiting new dancers depends on a number of factors: personal contact (sometimes even years before) combined with outreach, attention through the media including notices and ads and public events such as Culture Days and Dancing in the Park. The Marketing Committee this past year included Jean Lindsay, Margaret Rieger, Sue Ann Bryce, Rob Lockhart and Andrew Henderson.

Culture Days

This year's Culture Days event was held in September 2016 at Eastminster United Church. The event was a success: well-attended with a program that was well received. Thanks for this event are due especially to Deirdre MacCuish and Keith Bark for planning and delivering the dance programme, as well as Sue Ann Bryce who coordinated everything and piper Deirdre Godsell (who came inside later and

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danced), members of the Demo Pool who helped the new dancers learn their steps and figures, and the many who volunteered at the event and provided food.

Promoting Association Classes

Notices for fall classes were placed in Metroland newspapers (and their website *Inside Toronto*), NOW, Snapd, Kijiji and the St. Andrew's Society website. Notices were also placed on these websites to advertise the Culture Days event. In addition to these opportunities paid ads were placed in the Scottish Banner and the British Canadian. Although response was limited, the print notices in the Metroland newspapers appeared to have the most impact. At Culture Days twenty-nine people signed up to receive more information and at least two indicated an intention to start Association classes.

For 2017, plans are underway to have a significant postcard drop for the fall classes. The committee is also working on developing a welcome package for new dancers.

Promoting Dancing in the Park

The committee undertook several initiatives to promote Dancing in the Park. Notices were placed on the St. Andrew's Society website and in its newsletter. Notices were also placed on the website of the Ontario Folk Dancer, Kijiji, a site called Elocalpost (<https://elocalpost.com/>), and NOW Magazine (both print edition and online). A notice was also placed on the Toronto RSCDS Facebook site, and an email was sent to the Toronto membership list including an encouragement to forward the message to others that might be interested in attending.

Promoting the Oct. 15 Family Ceilidh

Rob Lockhart made small and large posters for this event. Ads and notices were placed in a number of websites including NOW, Snapd, Metroland and the St. Andrew's Society website.

Demonstration Pool

During the dance season from September 2016 to June 2017, the demo pool will have performed 16 paying demos, 14 of those Burns celebrations, and one non-paying demo. The demo fees received to date in 2017 amount to a total of \$2,525. These performances give us the opportunity to promote and introduce people to the joys of Scottish country dancing. The Demo Pool looks forward to an equally busy 2016/17 season as we are invited back to residences where we have performed for over many years, as well as new events and locations.

The demo pool will be performing the new dance "Celebration 2017" during the break at one of the Dancing in the Park evenings and has one other non-paying demo booked for June.

Although the demo pool roster looks fairly large, many dancers are not available for specific events. In addition, the number of dancers in the pool has actually declined over the last couple of years. We rely heavily on a core group of dancers who sign up for a large number of demos. The more dancers we have in the pool, the easier it is for us to fulfil all the requests for demos we receive. A recruitment article for new dancers is planned for the September *Set & Link*.

Paul would like to thank Convenor Stella Henderson for managing the many bookings, and Moira Korus, who pushes the dancers to dance their best and cover beautifully, all while smiling! Thanks too, to all those coordinating the music and programmes for the specific events. As well – a special thanks to all

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those participating in the pool, sometimes travelling considerable distances to locations out of the city, or travelling considerable distances into the city from locations outside!

This concludes the Directors' Report for the 2016/17 Dance Season. Thanks once again to everyone who has convened, taught, devised, sat on committees, lent a hand or simply came out to enjoy Scottish country dancing with everyone!

See you on the dance floor!

Submitted by:

Nancy White, Secretary, RSCDS Toronto Association

April 2017