

The Last Line



This month our “last line” goes to **Martha Ogasawara**. As many of you know, Martha has worked tirelessly to bring together cultures in Line dance. She is American but has lived in Japan for a long time and here she raises a point that is certainly a universal concern...

I'd like to say a few words about the quality of Line dancing. There are many good Line dance videos available on YouTube. But I am often dismayed at how robot-like many of the dancers look. I think that in the rush to keep up with learning all of the great new dances that are continually coming out, we may have sacrificed “good dancing” along the way. So what makes a good dancer? Someone who knows the steps to a lot of dances? Or someone who really expresses the feeling of the music? Which are your eyes drawn to when you're watching the dance floor?

A waltz should be danced differently than a west coast swing rhythm, a cha cha should look totally different than a nightclub. But unfortunately I don't think that enough attention is being paid to the technique that is necessary to do that. I know that many social dancers say things like “I don't care about technique. I'm just dancing to have fun.” But is just doing the steps without really listening to the music more enjoyable? Isn't it more fun to dance a dance well and bring out the musical nuances in the song?

I like learning new dances as much as anyone. But I've taken a conscious effort to choose quality over quantity. Thanks to the internet, we are constantly exposed to all of the up and coming new Line dances. I too feel the urge to learn this one and that one. But there's just no way you can do them all. So instead, I try and carefully pick the ones to teach at class, and we spend some time getting to really know each dance. I encourage my dancers, even the beginners, to really listen to the music, and try and express the mood of the dance. To do that, you have to dance it many times and pay attention to more than just the steps. I think it's worth it, since I believe it makes for a better quality Line dance experience all around.

I realise that for many people Line dance is predominantly a social pastime, but surely that should not stop anyone from striving to be the very best dancer they can be. I know that my dancers and I always get the feeling of a job well done if we master a dance well...and that is a feeling that can only add to the already long list of the benefits of Line dancing.