

# CHALLENGE for Martha



**Laurent:** Hi Martha! You told me recently you were still on cloud nine after receiving your Crystal Boot in Blackpool! Have you come down yet?

Martha: I have to tell you that this award has earned me a lot of wonderful comments, cards and emails. I was so touched by all the tributes from friends all around the world. Someone even sent me some Dom Perignon!

**Laurent:** Martha, I know you work hard for the Line dance community. Tell me why this is so?

Martha: It is simple really. We all know that Line dancing is a multi-cultural based activity and I'm often amazed when I stop to think about all the different countries that we generally interact with.

**Laurent:** Yes, it is the same here. As I write feature after feature it never

ceases to astonish me.

Martha: Well when you think about it the sharing is done every time you dance via the international array of choreography and music we have to choose from. On any given day of class we do dances by choreographers from multiple countries and think nothing of it.

**Laurent:** Yes I agree. It is a strong world link and one we often take for granted...

Martha: Those of us who have danced for a while do but people new to Line dancing are surprised to hear what an international activity it truly is.

**Laurent:** You recently had a chance of sharing this very thing with a group did you not?

Martha: Yes I did... I was asked to introduce Line dance to a group who

could really appreciate it.

**Laurent:** Intriguing...

Martha: Yep! I was asked by the Cross Cultural Exchange Association (CCEA) in Nagoya, Japan to do a presentation of Line dancing to their members. Their association is 30 years old and is made up of 80 members, all women of various ages. Half of the members are Japanese (there is a waiting list to get in) and half are women from various other countries who are living in the Nagoya area.

**Laurent:** What a challenge! What kind of women does the association have in its midst?

Martha: It is very varied. They have lawyers, university professors, hotel owners, doctors and many other prestigious professions represented in their membership and their purpose is just

Martha Ogasawara lives in Japan and in this year's Crystal Boot ceremony was the recipient of the very special Hall of Fame award for her dedication to Line dance and also her instrumental role in introducing it to Japan and Asia in general. Here she speaks to Laurent about crossing cultural boundaries and all thanks to Line dance.



what their name implies, to share cross cultural fellowship.

**Laurent: Do they meet often?**

Martha: They have a general meeting the first Friday morning of each month, covering various topics, and this month was an introduction to Line dancing.

**Laurent: OK..So what did you do?**

Martha: One of their American members, Amy Gerfen, gave an introduction on the history of Line dancing. Then I took over and taught everyone a very easy Beginner Line dance called EZ-PZ Lollipop to an oldies song. Even though almost everyone was a first-timer, they picked it up very quickly and we tried the same dance again to an upbeat Country song.

**Laurent: Were they surprised at what they had achieved?**

Martha: Yes, they were very enthusiastic and surprised but they got a bigger shock still with our next dance as we then moved on to Born 2B Gaga to Lady Gaga's Born This Way.

**Laurent: I guess that was NOT what they thought Line dance to be!**

Martha: To be honest when I first demoed a few walls of the dance, I could see that people were worried about whether they could really get it or not but they learnt it with no problems and after about 15 minutes were getting into the music.

**Laurent: They had a good teacher I guess...**

Martha: You are way too kind. For our finale, I taught them Cheeseburger. This is not a Line dance but is done in groups of four holding hands. We move around the room counter-clockwise and it is most

fun when everyone doesn't quite have it perfectly. We danced it to Cotton-Eyed Joe by the Rednex and ended on a high note with lots of laughter.

**Laurent: How do you think the ladies felt at the end of it all?**

Martha: I think they realised the potential of fun that Line dance has and appreciated the way that Line dance is so adaptable not just to music and ability but cultures as well.

**Laurent: All in all a successful day then...**

Martha: Yes a very successful day and one, I think, will have opened eyes and made a large group of women appreciate a hobby they barely knew to something they were quite amazed by! Hopefully some may continue with it...I will let you know!