

The KoLDA International Line Dance Festival

Roving Linedancer magazine reporter *Martha Ogasawara* recently attended the second annual International Line Dance Festival held in Seoul, Korea. Here's her exclusive report from this terrific event.



The festival was put on by the Korean Line Dance Association (KoLDA) and this year's guest instructors were Roy Verdonk from the Netherlands and Toshiko Kawamoto from Japan.

There were more than 150 dancers attending the event, which is admirable for just their second year! Among the attendees was a group of 15 dancers from Japan led by yours truly. We were there both to support Toshiko and as part of our continuing friendly relations with the KoLDA dancers.

The first day of workshops on July 10th was held at the studio of Wansoon Yook. Wansoon Yook is not only the president of KoLDA and responsible for first getting Line dancing started in Korea, but also a well-known name in the modern dance world.

The workshops were geared towards advanced dancers, and we were really put through our paces. Roy and Toshiko took turns teaching the workshops, and their teaching styles complimented each other nicely.

Despite the language barrier (the workshops were taught in English, which at this event was no one's first language), Roy managed to get the steps across in his usual bantering style and soon had the dancers laughing along with him.

Toshiko was very nervous at first, since this was her first overseas guest instructor appearance, but won the dancers over with her beautiful style of dancing.

One of the interesting things about this event is that most of the attendees are instructors. Line dancing is still fairly new to Korea, but a concerted effort is being made to spread it from the ground up by networking with dance and P.E. instructors. Jung Soon Ma, the event director and secretary-general of KoLDA, is a university professor, and has formidable contacts in the dance education world. She and other core staff travel the country on weekends doing instructor training workshops, and an amazing 540 instructor qualification certificates were issued just last year.

Line dancing is starting to be incorporated into school P.E. curriculums, and there will be a Line dance competition targeted at elementary through university age students this fall.

Although the vast majority of attendees were female (there were just a handful of male dancers), the age was significantly younger than at most other events I have attended. You could tell that most of the attendees had some dance training, and it was interesting to try and guess by their dance style whether they were aerobics instructors, P.E. teachers or Dance Sport instructors, etc..





They are very serious about their dancing, which is not to say that they don't enjoy themselves, and you could see many people writing notes on their step sheet booklets during the workshops. Perhaps the most exciting aspect from an instructor's point of view is the dancers' sponge-like ability to not only learn dances quickly, but to pick up styling and technique.

Because many of them don't speak much English, they learned very visually, and immediately incorporated arms and other styling into their dancing. It was most impressive!

July 11th and 12th, the workshops were held in the auditorium at the Ehwa Girls High School, the most elite high school in Seoul, a beautiful large facility that was thankfully air-conditioned. Lunches and dinner on Saturday were provided, and Saturday evening there were demonstrations and open dancing. All in all, it was a very successful second event.



It will be exciting to see where the vision of the Line dance leaders in Korea will take them. I predict that Line dancing will explode in a major way in the near future there, and they are working hard to see that it stays headed in the right direction.

In the meantime, the Line dance exchange between Korea and Japan continues. A group from Korea will come and attend our club's event at the end of November, and we will go to their event again next summer. Friendships born through dancing tend to be long-lasting.

