

improving your skills

Martha Ogasawara, one of Line dance true ambassadors, recently organised a successful event within her Japanese club. Here's her exclusive report.

The Nagoya Crazy Feet Line dance club hosted a two day seminar on June 13th-14th. The theme of the seminar was "improving your skills". The event was held at a very nice facility near Nagoya, Japan where we were able to rent seminar rooms, get our meals supplied, and stay the night all under one roof.

There are many workshops available where you can go and learn new dances. And of course such workshops are wonderful. But the focus of this seminar was quite different. Everyone attending came to learn some kind of new skill, be it as a dancer or an instructor.

There were three different courses offered, and there was a disclaimer on the flyer (jokingly) warning about each course. Course A was geared towards dancers who wanted to become better dancers, not just learn more dances. It was taught by Toshiko Kawamoto, the first Asian dancer to become a Superstar level dancer. The first day, everyone had to relearn how to walk. They worked on walking/moving in the various dance rhythms, and by the end of the afternoon, they were so confused they had lost the ability to walk normally. But things got sorted out the next day, and there was a marked improvement in everyone's posture and the way they moved. Course A was billed as being "physically exhausting", and

by the end of the second day everyone felt sore after using all those muscles they didn't even know they had. Several of my students attended this course. They came back very enthusiastic about practicing what they had learned and it is rubbing off in a good way on the other students in my class.

Course B was for fledgling instructors and was billed as being "mentally exhausting". It was co-taught by Michiyo Goto and Chikako Koide, and the attendees were all instructors who were just getting started. There were lots of handouts provided covering a wide variety of topics, and everyone was given an assignment of teaching a dance to the other students. Most of them had never worn a wireless microphone headset before, and having the mike turned on made them so nervous that they forgot everything they'd prepared. (Instructors, remember that feeling?!) But again, there was a marked improvement between the first day and the second, and everyone went home feeling, if not totally confident, then at least like they had the tools at hand to become instructors.

Course C was for experienced instructors and was led by myself. It was billed as being "emotionally exhausting" (participants were told to bring bath towels for their tears and balm for their wounds). Each of the participants has their own home line dance class, and this was a chance for them to

network with other instructors and brush up their skills. They took turns teaching each other a dance they had selected, and then each critiqued each other on their teaches. The atmosphere was very friendly, and the critiques were to the point without being threatening. Giving critiques was as much part of the learning experience as receiving them. Another topic covered was how to review dances more efficiently. Judging by the amount of laughter coming from the seminar room, it would seem that the bath towels weren't needed after all.

The number of participants in each course was purposely limited so that there would be plenty of one-on-one time for all of the attendees. The camaraderie that comes from a seminar like this is more intense than your usual dance event. "Good rivalry" in the best sense of the word is born, since no one wants to be the only one who hasn't improved the next time they see each other. Participants came from all over Japan, and some lasting friendships were formed.

Putting on a seminar like this takes a lot of work to get ready for, so we don't hold it annually. This was our eighth seminar so far, and as always was very stimulating both for the students and the instructors, so judging by the positive responses we have received, it seems likely that we will do it again. But not until everyone has recuperated!



from this...



to this...



TO THIS!

