



Royal Scottish Country Dance Society Cape Town Branch

THE DANCING ACHIEVEMENT AWARD (DAA)

In October, the Cape Town Branch is hosting examiners for the DAA, an endeavour supported and approved by the RSCDS Education & Training Committee in Edinburgh.

Prior to making this decision, the Cape Town Branch Committee canvassed local dancers, and 38 expressed interest in undertaking the award at one of the three levels.

Campbell and Gill (Loubser) were mandated to work out details of the teaching schedule, now completed, and the purpose of this notice is to inform dancers (RSCDS members or not) of how the DAA will work and how to convert “interest” to “commitment”.

This is an exciting opportunity to improve local dancing technique and to have it benchmarked against international standards.

The DAA exam can be taken at one of three levels (Intermediate, Advanced and Very Advanced) and dancers can be awarded a pass, a pass with merit or a pass with distinction.

The course will focus on technique while ensuring enjoyment in the process of improvement. By the time of the exam, this close-knit group of dancers will feel like matriculants all over again! Who knows, perhaps a rage at Plett afterwards might be needed. 😊

Nothing like this has previously been attempted in Cape Town and it will probably be a long time before it is again, so all dancers are encouraged to turn that “interest” into “commitment”.

Structure

Preparation for the DAA exams will be undertaken in three stages.

- The first stage will be the Preliminary Course consisting of seven two-hour classes held fortnightly on a Saturday morning, from March to May. This course will be offered in two streams – Standard and Fast Track. Those who are keen to try the Advanced or Very Advanced exams are encouraged to enrol for the Fast Track.

- The second stage, the Preparation Course, consists of six classes held fortnightly from June to mid-August, and is also offered in two streams – Intermediate for those thinking of doing the DAA Intermediate exam and Advanced for those considering either the Advanced or Very Advanced exams.
- Stage three is the DAA Course proper. This is where dancers also commit to doing the examination. Those who have completed the Intermediate stream of the Preparation Course will continue to the Intermediate stream of the DAA Course, culminating in the exam itself. Those who have completed the Advanced stream of the Preparation Course will have the choice of proceeding to the Advanced or Very Advanced streams of the DAA Course. The DAA Course will consist of five classes running from mid-August to the end of October, followed by the exam.

Content

Dancers need to be able to dance a variety of formations, as well as six, nine or ten dances (depending on level) without prompting, while demonstrating excellent teamwork and good technique. Each class will therefore contain a mix of these elements – footwork, phrasing, teamwork, formation practice and eventually putting it all together in superbly-danced prescribed dances!

In addition dancers will be encouraged to put in some homework. Some clubs will also offer revision of course content where appropriate, with each club varying in its approach.

Teaching

Instruction of the classes will be handled by Campbell and Gill Loubser, with Campbell being responsible for the Standard and Intermediate streams, and Gill handling the Fast Track and Advanced streams. They will be supported and assisted by the other class teachers at various stages. We hope to have two teachers at each class if possible. In addition Barbara Braime will have overall responsibility for quality assurance and will monitor the teaching of the classes of the first two courses at regular intervals. The DAA Course (stage three) will be supervised by an international teacher who will be visiting Cape Town courtesy of the International Branch, which has awarded Cape Town the Susi Mayr “Isolated Group” award. At the same time a visiting musician will provide live music (and hopefully a musicians’ workshop). Finally an examiner will be appointed by RSCDS headquarters to assess the exam, along with Barbara, who will not be involved in the final DAA Course.

Streaming:

The decision as to which stream to choose for each course, as well as which exam to take is explained below:

- Preliminary Course: The decision is largely that of the dancer him/herself, although the balance of numbers might dictate an initial reallocation from one stream to the other.
- Preparation Course: Whether to progress to the Intermediate or Advanced stream will be a joint decision between the dancer and the two stream teachers. If a dancer who has done the Standard stream in the Preliminary Course wishes to proceed to the Advanced stream of the Preparation Course, facility will be made for that person to bridge the gap.
- DAA Course: Which of the three levels to take in the DAA Course will be undertaken in the same way, except there will be more weighting given to teachers' views.

If dancers and stream teachers can't agree on the right stream to take, then Barbara Braime will act as mediator.

Cost

The DAA exam can only be taken by RSCDS Branch members, but the three courses are open to all dancers, whether branch members or not. The decision as to whether to take the exam or not need only be finalised by the beginning of the DAA Course (stage three). The RSCDS subscription year starts in July and non-members can join then. The cost of joining will be £20 but we don't know what the exchange rate will be at that stage. The use of second mortgages on houses will be facilitated!

There is also a cost for taking the exam, £20, levied by HQ. We are negotiating with HQ and hope that between them and the Branch, the cost of the exam will be covered. There will be more on this as we progress. While it would be preferable to know precise figures at the outset, it's hoped that the opportunity of doing the courses, even without taking the exam, will be sufficiently attractive.

We have calculated costs for the three courses on the assumption that the majority of people who have expressed interest will sign up for the course, thus enabling us to keep class fees down and comparable to club fees. As is usual, RSCDS Branch members pay a reduced fee. There is no difference in cost between Standard/Intermediate and Fast Track/Advanced courses.

Preliminary Course – R140 (R70 for RSCDS members)

Preparation Course – R150 (R75 for RSCDS members)

DAA Course - R150 (R75 for RSCDS members)

The way forward

All dancers (whether they expressed interest last year or not) are invited to apply on the accompanying form for the Preliminary Course, which starts on Saturday March 12. The Fast Track runs from 09:00 to 11:00, and the Standard Track runs from 11:00 to 13.00. Both tracks will be held in the Claremont Congregational Church Hall.

Because of Easter the dates for the course will be:

- 12 March
- 19 March
- 2 April
- 16 April
- 30 April
- 14 May
- 28 May

These dates could be changed by mutual consent of the course participants. We would recommend that dancers do not miss more than two of the sessions.

Applications should be emailed to Sam Smith at smithsc@iafrica.com or telephoned through to him on 021-712-7868 before February 13. Thereafter names in each track will be confirmed.

From the RSCDS Cape Town Branch Committee