

San Francisco Scottish Country Dancers – Annual Class Meeting
May 18, 2008
Home of Bruce and Patti

Attendees: Tim, Sylvain, Michael, Linnea, Trina, Sid, Miriam, Donna, Elizabeth, Gary, Claire, Peter, Bruce, Joyce, Marius, Patti, Susie, Julie, Kathryn

Executive summary:

- All is well financially, and the book is making money
- The Publicity Committee would love new members
- We may form a demonstration team to advertise ourselves
- We'll probably need more musicians soon
- Things are going fine for events, adjudication, summer classes, etc.
- A new committee will work on electronic communications
- Susie will teach a new beginner class in South San Francisco starting in January
- A group to coordinate intra-year decisions was organized
- New teacher assignments for next year were proposed

After a potluck lunch, the meeting was called to order by Linnea, who introduced the Talking Stick and gave an overview of the meeting agenda.

Finance Committee report

- Michael summarized the work of the Finance Committee over the past year. The committee met at the end of Summer 2007 to put together a budget for the class year beginning September 1, 2007. The goal was to put together a balanced budget based on the past year's income and expenses. After some tweaks over the course of the year, the current budget calls for the class to lose about \$500 per year on a total budget of about \$10,000. This excludes the Measures of Pleasures book, because the class does not expect this to be a recurring source of income. Through April 15, the class is basically on budget for the year. If the book is added in, the class is ahead of budget and on course to break even for the year. About 70% of the class's expenses are rent, with the rest going to teachers, musicians, parties, publicity, and miscellaneous costs. About 85% of income comes from class fees (both series and drop-in), with the rest coming from special parties and donations.
- Michael circulated the policies and procedures put together by the Finance Committee. Of particular note is the policy that expenses under \$50 (such as for punch) can be reimbursed by submitting receipts to the class treasurer (Sid); expenses over \$50 must be cleared by the Finance Committee in advance. Patti is the designated contact person for the committee.
- Susie emphasized that class members should definitely submit their receipts for things like punch to Sid for reimbursement rather than feeling like they should bear the cost themselves.
- Sid explained that if class members want to make donations for things like punch, they should ask Sid for a receipt for the donation in order to make it a deductible charitable contribution. The same applies to cash donations to the class.

- Patti suggested that there be a link included to the Finance Committee policies in the class newsletter or from the class web site.
- Trina summarized the finances of the Measures of Pleasure book, explaining that we have already recouped the full costs of the book and are in the profit phase. We have netted approximately \$250 from the book so far.

Publicity Committee report

- Elizabeth circulated the committee report that Eileen had prepared, and Susie discussed its contents. The current committee members are Susie, Eileen and Joyce. The committee desperately wants new members. Susie wants to focus just on putting together flyers and some posters and for other committee members to work on finding places to put flyers, finding papers and web sites to advertise in, etc. The committee has a budget that it is trying to stick to, and free advertising is therefore the best.
- The group discussed evidence of the effectiveness of various forms of publicity. It appears, based on informal polling in the room and on the results of the Bay Area National Dance Week party survey, that word of mouth and flyers have been effective, while newspaper advertisements (such as in the Noe Valley Voice) have not.
- Several publicity ideas were floated:
 - Announcing the search for publicity committee members in class and in the weekly email
 - Encouraging people to keep posting flyers (because they work)
 - Putting up a MySpace page for the class (Bruce and Patti may lead this)
 - Having some class members print their own flyers in color if they have color printers (Miriam suggested doing this for the flyers that she posts)
 - Putting the flyer on the class web site
 - Using the RSCDS flyer from their web site, which has space to put in our class's information
 - Setting up a demonstration team to perform at street fairs
- Susie pointed out that she has PDF versions of past flyers that she would be happy to make available in electronic format to those who wanted to print their own.
- The idea of a demonstration team prompted much discussion
 - It was agreed that a demonstration team would likely be an effective outreach tool
 - Getting a booth and tent as the Berkeley class does at the Solano Stroll costs money; some street fairs are probably free.
 - Getting a demonstration team together takes organization – someone to find the venue, set the date, get in touch with the venue coordinator, bring the dancers and teacher together, set up rehearsals, etc.
 - Bruce explained that teaching a group for a demonstration would be easy enough for the teachers – the hard part is organizing the event
 - One possible idea that was discussed was doing demonstrations in schools
 - It was agreed that it is important for the demonstration team to not look TOO professional – include some men not in kilts, look approachable, be social and fun. The goal is to make people think, “That looks like fun – I

- could do that!” rather than, “Wow, those dancers are great. I could never be that good.”
- It was pointed out that the people in the class who would be the most natural choices to lead a demonstration team (mainly the teachers) are already stretched the most thinly with other class activities. Having someone else organize the demonstrations might be better.
 - Putting together a demonstration video and posting it online could be another effective tool.
 - One popular idea was to have a “guerilla demonstration team,” which could perform in public transit areas in the days leading up to a beginner event in an effort to attract new people. Patti agreed to organize such a group for some events at the end of August and the beginning of September. Everyone in attendance agreed that they would be interested in participating.
 - The class repertoire list was discussed as being a natural source for demonstration team dances. Bruce explained that this list of twelve dances was really put together to showcase all of the main figures; not all of the dances “show” very well. Doing other popular, fun-looking dances that are not on the repertoire list would also be fine for these demonstrations.
 - Linnea pointed out that there were a lot of good publicity ideas generated here, and that they should be taken to the Publicity Committee. Susie explained that the committee is happy to have people join for a single project or a temporary basis. Participation is encouraged!

Class manager report

- Linnea said she had nothing major to report, but that she would like someone else to take over the task of buying birthday cards for class members and being reimbursed by the class. Claire volunteered to take over this task
- Patti made a motion to make it class policy that the class manager should not have to pay to attend class. The motion was duly seconded and passed unanimously with one abstention (Linnea, of course).
- Linnea pointed out that the Finance Committee had discussed the series versus drop-in rates, and that some regular dancers might choose to pay via drop-in if they will be absent for, say, three dances in a series because it is slightly cheaper. It is class policy to encourage regular dancers to pay for the series even if they might miss a few classes, just as a way of supporting the class, treating the excess fee as a donation. However, this is entirely a personal choice for each dancer.

Music report

- Kathryn has recently announced that she is expecting a baby at the end of October, so her availability will naturally be less as time goes by. David should be back for the Solstice Party in June, and may be gone again for various periods of time.
- Patti and Bruce observed that we might very well need more musicians. Sylvain has been practicing and may be available to help this summer. The 12-person

group that plays in Berkeley on Mondays was also discussed – it is a very different feel from the Thursday music in San Francisco, with players of varying skill levels. The music for that group must be organized in advance and sent to all musicians so that they have time to practice, while the Thursday San Francisco class musicians play on the fly from common books, familiar tunes, and good sight-reading. We may either try to recruit musicians from the Monday group who could play in the Thursday style, or perhaps recruit from the San Francisco Scottish Fiddlers. The summer could be a useful period for trying out new musicians to see if a different style could work for our class if need be.

Class survey

- Sylvain circulated the summary of results from the class survey. There were 25 respondents. One interesting point was that the respondents very much favored introducing each new dance with eight bars of music to give dancers an idea of what type of dance was coming up.
- There was some discussion of editing a few questions for clarity, such as #8.
- The lack of questions about music was discussed. Patti mentioned that she would like to see some questions about the music in class on next year's survey.
- Bruce mentioned that 90% of the time when he teaches, the pattern of dances in an evening is: a simple fast dance, a strathspey, a complex fast dance, a strathspey, and a simple fast dance.

Events

- The Bay Area National Dance Week (BANDW) event was more of a ceilidh, less of a traditional lesson. Elizabeth would like feedback on this.
- Susie felt that requiring regular dancers to pay for this party was unfair; several class members, led by Sid, disagreed. Trina explained that the Finance Committee had decided that the class needed the regular dancers to pay in order to make the budget work. We do still pay musicians, rent, etc. for this event.
- Miriam and others pointed out that classes in other parts of the world don't require out-of-town visitors to pay for their first class, but that it appears that we do require visitors to pay for their first class in San Francisco. It appears that this policy is erratically applied in San Francisco, but the intention of the class is to NOT charge out-of-town visitors for their first class here. This could possibly be clarified on the sign-in sheet. The Finance Committee will address this at their next meeting.
- Bruce discussed the ceilidh dancing at the BANDW event and at the beginning of weekly classes. He feels that it makes the room feel fun and is welcoming to strangers and to beginning dancers, since it doesn't require knowledge of steps. He would like feedback on how best to use ceilidh dancing in the future.

Publication Committee report

- Trina already gave the class a financial update on the book in the Finance Committee portion of the meeting – it has done well and is making money.
- Tim discussed the completion of the Measures of Pleasure book and thanked the many people involved in the effort.

- The group discussed the possibility of republishing old books if there's demand – we could ask the bookstore managers if there is any demand for the old Solstice Party book (published around 2000-2001).
- One possibility that was discussed was scanning a copy of the Solstice Party book (Patti volunteered for this), posting it on the class web site as a downloadable PDF, and including a PayPal link for the class with a suggested donation of \$10. Linnea agreed that this could be added to the class web site.
 - Trina moved that the Publication Committee be re-formed to deal with this question; the motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Summer class

- Tim reported that the class members had suggested 12 teachers for summer classes. He has contacted eleven of them, five of who have already said yes (Fred DeMarse, Patti Cobb, Linda Henderson, Lori Howard and Sandee Schultz). He's still waiting to hear from the other six and has other leads if needed.

Adjudication team

- Susie is interested in coaching the adjudication team this summer; Trina has agreed to handle the logistics of getting people signed up for the team by May 30.
- Tim recapped last year's adjudication, which went well and was fun for all.

Electronic communications

- Elizabeth is retiring from sending out the weekly newsletter and is looking for a successor. It was agreed that the weekly email is valued by many in the class (including teachers) and should continue in some form.
- Julie suggested putting together a blog. After much discussion of various options, it was decided that Linnea and Julie would form an Electronic Communications Committee (open to new members – contact Linnea or Julie if interested) to put together a new communications system. This will likely involve some type of web site (such as the class web site) that does not require members to sign up, which will be updated weekly with the type of information that is currently in the weekly email. An email will be sent out each week to class members, consisting of links to the new information from the web site. This committee will talk to Bruce and Patti about the MySpace possibility.

New beginner class

- Susie discussed her desire to start a class for beginners at the Caledonian Club Hall in South San Francisco. She plans to begin the class in January. It will be held on Wednesday nights. The Finance Committee has already signed off on the idea, as the cost is very low (\$619 per year for the Caledonian Club's additional insurance requirement; Susie will teach for free and the music will be recorded) and it is unlikely to lose money. Patti will help out with teaching up to one-third of the time.
- The group discussed whether this would be a sub-class of the San Francisco class (a lead-in to ultimately joining the main class) or an independent group.
- A motion to make this new class a sub-class of the San Francisco class, with the support of our class, was made, seconded, and passed unanimously.

- The Branch Committee does need to sign off on this new class. Susie will work on getting a formal proposal to the Branch Committee, and she plans to attend their June meeting to discuss the proposal. The group expects that the Branch Committee should have no problem with this new sub-class.

Executive committee

- Susie had pointed out, in connection with her suggestion of creating the new beginner class, that there isn't a way for the class to make decisions about this type of issue between annual meetings and that it would be useful to have some structure in place to address these issues as they come up, rather than waiting until May.
- The group agreed that the existing committee structure was working well, but that it could be streamlined to facilitate these types of decisions.
- Bruce made the following motion: On an ad-hoc basis, a representative from each class committee (currently just Finance and Publicity), plus a representative from the teachers and the class manager could assemble (in person or via email) as needed to address questions that need a class decision. Susie seconded the motion. Patti proposed an amendment that would require that the class as a whole be notified (likely via the weekly email) of any issues that were being presented to this group and given a week to comment before the group made a decision. The motion, as amended, passed unanimously.

Dance Scottish Week

- Donna brought the group information about "Dance Scottish Week," which the RSCDS is holding from September 12-20. We can send in events to them to be listed as part of the festivities.
- The group agreed that our beginner class should be considered part of the event, even though it's a little early. We can have a second week that's very open to new dancers, so that beginners from the first week can bring their friends. The second week can consist of easy, showy dances that would be good for the "guerilla demonstration team," which will be doing events around that time and can do more for Dance Scottish Week.
- Linnea moved that we incorporate our September beginner party (or parties) into Dance Scottish Week. Patti seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Flyers

- Susie circulated the nearly-finished Solstice Party flyer, which is using artwork that was previously used for the 1995 flyer.
- The Publicity Committee has not yet decided on a new fall flyer, but Susie has a generic flyer without dates that is currently available.

Teachers

- Sylvain circulated the teacher surveys and explained the breakout of statistics for those dancers who identified the teacher as their primary teacher and the total statistics of all dancers who evaluated the teacher. The feedback on the survey was generally quite positive.

- Patti said that she is happy to fill in next year as needed and to assist with the beginner class occasionally after January. She has no desire to be a regular teacher next year, given her other time commitments.
- Susie is happy to coach the adjudication team this summer and will be teaching her new beginner class in South San Francisco starting in January. She will be happy to help with beginners in the main class in the fall and to substitute as needed.
- Trina is willing to help out a time or two with adjudication. She is interested in teaching more with the experienced class in the fall. She has found that working in tandem with Tim with the beginners this year has gone well.
- Tim is available for “whatever.” He felt that he learned a lot by going through an entire year as a teacher for the beginner class, getting the experience of organizing lessons and learning about all of the preparation required for teaching on a regular basis. Next year, he would like to teach perhaps half to two-thirds of the year, with the rest of the time simply dancing.
- Bruce wants to take the summer off but is available to fill in if needed and to help a bit with the adjudication team, perhaps as a mock adjudicator. He expects to continue in the fall as he has in the past. He wrestles with how best to recruit beginners, and wants to make sure we have more overlap between the two classes in the future. He feels that using a ceilidh dance as a warm-up has been effective but is seeking more feedback on this. He likes to plan a month of classes at a time, and therefore doesn’t want to switch to teaching beginners here and there, as it would disrupt this planning. However, he is open to the possibility of trying something different from what he has been doing recently.
- Overall, the class and the teachers agreed that it has been difficult to balance the desire to give beginners some continuity and the desire to have teachers switch between classes to give the teachers and the two groups of dancers experience with one another.
- At this point, the teachers left the room and the class discussed desired teaching arrangements for the next year.
 - It was agreed that we want to make sure that the beginners get to dance with the experienced class more frequently, making more of an effort to include them at the end of class.
 - The class has an interest in doing everything possible to retain new dancers when they come. It was decided that having multiple teachers is probably not too problematic for new dancers, though any switches of teachers between the classes would be for at least a month at a time, rather than week to week.
 - Ultimately, the group arrived at a recommendation for the teachers for the next year, which was motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved (see below).
- The teachers were brought back into the room and presented with the class’s recommendations, which they agreed to:
 - Each class will have a lead teacher, who is free to bring in other teachers to help as they see fit.

- Teachers who aren't teaching a class at any given time are available as substitutes as needed.
- Susie will coach the adjudication team in the summer.
- The beginner class will be taught by Tim from September through December, by Bruce from January through March, and by Trina from April through June.
- The experienced class will be taught by Bruce from September through December, by Tim from January through March, and by Bruce from April through June.
- Susie will teach her new beginner class starting in January.
- All time periods above are approximate, with the intention of dividing the non-summer year into three parts (given that there are holidays and other special events going on throughout the year).

The meeting was then adjourned.