

ESDS Committee Annual Report for 2016

1. Weekly Classes

- As in earlier years, ESDS Thursday night classes ran for six terms in 2016 spread over 45 weeks of the year. There was the usual mix of Beginners, Improvers and Intermediate classes with the occasional joint Improvers/Intermediate class. In total 118 separate classes were taught.
- Numbers attending classes were the highest on record (i.e. since before 2013). This was particularly significant in the period prior to the summer break when numbers were 40% up on the same period in 2015. This increase was not so marked in the Autumn, but was still about 10%.
- End of term band nights, first introduced in 2015, continued in 2016 for every term bar one. These are aimed at providing a low-cost opportunity to dance to live music. Since July they have been free of charge.

2. Weekend Workshops

- In 2014 ESDS initiated weekend workshops for 'Post-Beginners' and Improvers. These continued in 2016 with two of each type of workshop taking place. As usual these were offered free of charge to those who had collected enough stamps on their 'coffee cards'.
- In response to popular request, a series of four workshops were held in May and June with a particular emphasis on technique.

3. Performance Group

- In late 2015 ESDS was approached by Capability Scotland to see if we could provide a group to do a performance at its 1940s-themed fundraising 'Blitz Ball' in October 2016. Having said 'yes', the challenge became one of pulling together a group to do the performance. Led by Cathy Harrison, the group started rehearsing in June and, after over a dozen practice sessions, received a great response from everyone present at the event which took place in Edinburgh City Chambers. The group continued to rehearse other routines and did performances at both the Winter Swing Weekend and ESDS Christmas Party Nights. Other than Cathy and Michael Joyce, members included Graeme Hill, Gavin Russell, Alex Fairhead, George Young, Cicely Giles, Valerie McIntosh, Miglė Petruškevičiūtė, Anna Vanosi, Eva Martinez Moya and Fiona Whitelock.

4. Spirit of the Savoy Weekend (20th-22nd May)

- This was the first of our two big weekend events in 2016 celebrating 20 years of ESDS with dances and classes from internationally acclaimed teachers. Inspired by the success of the 'History Day' in 2014, Nick Harrison organised this with an emphasis on history and the legacy of the Savoy Ballroom. The principal teachers were all involved in the 1980s Lindy Hop revival. One of the driving forces behind the Herräng Dance Camp, Lennart Westerlund, not only taught classes but gave talks on Lindy Hop history. He was joined by eWa Burak, one of the dancers from the early days of The Rhythm Hot Shots. Julie Oram, co-founder of 'Jitterbugs' in London and partnered by François Clement came together with Russell Sargeant and Carolene Hinds to represent the roots of the UK Lindy Hop revival. It was a particular delight to have Russell and Carolene present as they were the teachers who inspired the first Edinburgh Lindyhoppers in 1996 and exhibited an extraordinary commitment to ESDS in its first decade. Approximately 100 people took part in the workshops and listened to the talks with another 25 taking part in the dances. The Saturday night saw a memorable Savoy Ballroom-inspired 'Battle of the Bands' with Iain Ewing and the Chevaliers taking on Dave Batchelor's King Louis and the Primas.

5. Winter Swing Weekend (25th-27th November)

- To celebrate 20 years of ESDS it was decided that the big annual Winter Swing Weekend would be even bigger in 2016. Three teaching couples with impeccable Lindy Hop credentials were booked to make welcome returns to Edinburgh. Unfortunately, due to injury, Jenny Thomas and Scott Cupit were forced to pull out a few weeks before the event. The Winter Swing Weekend organisers, Cathy Harrison and Michael Joyce, spent an anxious couple of weeks seeking replacements but were delighted to persuade Catrine Ljunggren, a founder member of The Rhythm Hot Shots and Calle Johansson to come from Sweden to Edinburgh at very short notice. They joined Michael Jagger and Evita Arce who came from New York on their third visit to the Winter Swing Weekend and Anne-Hélène and Bernard Cavasa from Toulouse. Anne-Hélène and Bernard first came to an ESDS event in 2005 and were returning for the fourth time.

- For each of the three dances there was a live band. Ali Affleck and Vieux Carré kicked things off on the Friday night with Iain Ewing and the Chevaliers inspiring a Saturday night party. The weekend was rounded off with the superb Swing 2016.
- Despite airline strikes and more injuries affecting the teachers, the weekend was a huge success. It was sold out well in advance with 136 people taking part in the full weekend and a further 28 coming along to the social dances.

6. Teachers

- Other than the Spirit of the Savoy and Winter Swing Weekends, all ESDS-run classes and workshops are taught by local teachers who volunteer to give their time free of charge in order to spread the joy of Lindy Hop.
- The commitment to do this is considerable. There were 136 individual ESDS classes/workshops in 2016 with most of them taught by a small corps of teachers. They are listed below together with the number of classes or workshops they taught in 2016.
 - Cathy Harrison – 57
 - Michael Joyce – 57
 - Rhona Davies – 44
 - Nick Harrison – 37
 - Moira Wright – 17
 - Jamie Davies – 9
 - Katie Brooks – 7
- In order to encourage others to try and hopefully take up teaching, it was agreed in June that Scott Cupit and/or Jenny Thomas be invited to Edinburgh in order to do a day-long ‘teach the teacher’ exercise. Jenny was unavailable but Scott ran a well-attended workshop on 3rd September. This boosted the initiative to get others teaching. Alex Fairhead, Jane Bonsall, Glyka Penna, Eva Martinez Moya, Miglė Petruškevičiūtė, Jake Thwaites and Katie Smith were all involved in teaching at least one ESDS class in 2016.
- At the beginning of August, Cathy Harrison advised the members of the ESDS Committee that she would be standing down from teaching for ESDS and involvement in the ESDS Committee from the end of 2016. She would continue in her organising role for the 2016 Winter Swing Weekend and the directing the Performance Group.
- Cathy has been the shining and leading light of the ESDS teaching team for many years now. ESDS will miss the wonderful energy, personality and style that she has brought, not only to Thursday nights at Stockbridge House, but to the organisation of events such as the Winter Swing Weekends, not to mention the choreographing and directing of the Performance Group. She leaves an enormous gap which will be difficult to fill. All of ESDS sends her our very best wishes and enormous thanks.

7. Organisational Change

- For twenty years ESDS has been run on a completely informal basis with a group of volunteers meeting on an irregular basis. From the beginning of 2014 more regular meetings have been held with a core group of ESDS members organising and running ESDS classes and events.
- Whilst there have always been concerns over the consequences of the informality, it was not until the summer of 2016 that these issues became clearer. Specifically the lack of any formal ESDS ‘identity’ meant that there was too much ambiguity surrounding the status of ESDS both in terms of its finances and its ability to insure itself.
- It was agreed that ESDS would be transitioned to being an ‘unincorporated association’ with an identifiable membership and a committee with office bearers elected by the membership.
- A constitution was drafted taking into account insurance company guidance and was formally adopted on 19th December 2016. Amongst other things this constitution obliges ESDS members to establish a committee with posts on the committee and the key office bearing roles populated by persons elected at a formal meeting of the members.
- Insurance renewal in early January 2017 has driven the need to propose to the 2017 Annual General Meeting some amendments to the constitution to recognise the status of ‘temporary members’. Also, the opportunity has been taken to propose an amendment to enshrine the vision and values that have applied to ESDS in the past and which must be carried forward into the future.

8. Committee Members

- As well as Cathy Harrison who stepped down from the committee at the end of 2016, Michael Joyce, Wendy Gardiner and Moira Wright are all not seeking election to the new committee. A big thank you goes to them for all of their many years of involvement.

Michael Joyce
ESDS Committee Member
25th January 2017