

NOTES FOR WEEKEND ON COTSWOLD BASICS ... WINDSOR, 9th October '83

- 1. WARM-UPS - Stretches and jumps, starting gently, getting higher.
- 2. POSTURE - feet at angle of 50°, heels together, knees turned out too.
  - Stomach in, back straight, shoulders down, head up.
  - Heels, knees, hips, shoulders in straight line.
  - Weight off heels over balls of feet, ready to dance.
- 3. STEPPING - Springing from one foot to the other - change of foot in mid-air (take weight on arms on chair backs to get feeling).
  - Free leg swings forward from hip so free foot is about 12" in front of weight-bearing foot (and parallel to ground).
  - Weight over back foot - braced knee transmits motion straight
  - Rise and fall of body. Emphasis is up on strong beats. Spring comes from instep and ankle (so no heeled shoes). Practice needed to build up strength to get effect of lightness
  - Movement of foot is forward & back - not driving into ground.
- 4. BACKSTEPS - Weight goes down on strong beat instead of up. Body leans forward
  - Beware of dangling free foot in front.
  - Distinguish between different traditions.
- 5. JUMPS ETC - Knees bend to push off into air and to cushion landing.
  - Keep good posture in air (heels, knees, hips, shoulders in line)
  - Land toes to heels to cushion impact - little sound as possible
  - Capers - same applies. Try doing 4 jumps then 4 plain capers to get same feel for capers as for jumps.
- 6. SIDESTEPS - Both open and closed have feet at angle to each other - don't let back foot rotate to parallel position.
  - Free foot comes smartly up behind weight-bearing leg.
  - Stepping energetic and showy - little turn of body.
- 7. FIGURES - Surge forward on 1st main beat of sequence. It helps to land from the previous jump a few inches behind taking off position so that weight is forward.
  - Think forward and up, back and down.
  - Set big enough (outstretched arms).
  - Lines straight, parallel, pairs working together (e.g. Heys).
  - Agree on policy for starting foot.
  - Dancing together - get up and down movement synchronised. (Heys to link elbows and all dance in a circle - rhythm is felt as well as seen.) Listen to music!
- 8. PERFORMANCE - Aim to look confident (a skill that can be practised and learned!) Heads up, eyes focussed.
  - Get walking on and off sorted out.
  - On show all the time - between dances - announcing dances.
  - No public post mortem.
  - Stick clashing should be vigorous, confident and controlled
  - Impact at head level means movement can be seen (and is safe)
  - Hand clapping - large expansive movements.
- 9. PRACTICES - Attention to music - involving musician, feedback both ways
  - A less energetic practice step is useful to learn figures & get spatial awareness.
  - Practice performing as well - on and off, fooling, dealing with mistakes.
  - Structured learning plan

These notes are mainly drawn from two articles by Roy Dommett in Morris Matters: Cotswold Basics (Vol2 No.1) and Common Faults of Women Morris Dancing (Vol2., No.4)