

SIDMOUTH 1993

FROM DANCE TO PERFORMANCE WORKSHOP Monday 2.8.93

Notes taken regarding participants likes and dislikes about dance performances in general.

Re: DANCE AND DANCERS

LIKES:

Dancers enjoying and showing enthusiasm for what they are doing - this was commented on by many of the groups although it was pointed out that 'stage smiles' were not necessarily the answer.

Energetic dancing which shows competence and confidence and some originality particularly when performing for an audience of dancers.

Structure of a performance should be considered to show variety and balance and a continuous performance. Entrances and exits should alter to suit the dance. Starting and finishing dances should be carefully chosen and spots should not go on too long - "Leave them wanting more!"

Performance can be improved by theatrical, dramatic, unusual or "surprise" elements. Contrasts in movement within dances is worthwhile as well as in different dances.

Integrity and the belief that what you are doing (and how you are doing it) is good and worthwhile. NEVER apologise to your audience, even by implication, for what you are doing.

Dances which are adapted from others learned in workshops or observed in the field but are not slavish copies.

DISLIKES:

Monotonous or "flat" dancing.

Dancing on and off - beware of leaving your audience with nothing to applaud. Not all dances lend themselves to dancing on and off - give it some consideration.

Incompetence.

Lack of planning a performance - the sound man and the lighting experts could be your best friends in an important arena setting or large venue - GET THEM ON YOUR SIDE!

The "this is how it should be done" syndrome - why should any dance be done in a particular way

"Introversion" - dance for your audience, not yourselves. The best place to watch many dances is from the middle of the set - as this is not always a good idea(!) try for some alternative.

Internal strife within the side, in jokes which are not shared with the audience.

Styles of dancing becoming over-danced (recent examples included Border and Appalachian).

Over-ambitious dancing which looks "effortful".

Re: AUDIENCE RAPPORT

LIKES:

Sides who assess their audience and perform accordingly. Humour, for example, which works for other dancers may not work for Joe Public.

Audience participation. Includes involving members of audience in dancing, fools and other characters talking to members of the audience. The position of the set or the position of the audience can be adjusted according to the venue.

Entertaining and audible "front person".

Eye contact between side, musicians and audience.

Professionalism - from the moment you are contacted and asked to perform until the whole event has finished. Eg, ensuring that the dancing surface etc is suitable for your style of dance.

Good use of extraneous characters.

General good communication with the audience, no matter whether it is two men and a dog outside the local pub or thousands at the Sidmouth arena!

DISLIKES:

Unfilled gaps between dances. The audience may wander off if they do not realise that your performance has not actually finished and that you are about to return to do another dance. One suggestion was that the audience should, at an appropriate moment, be given some idea of the duration of the stand. Announcers can fill these gaps as can the musician(s).

"Shambling" on and off, muttering and (pet hate of typist) failure to get set organised beforehand.

audience cannot hear.
Dancers blocking audience when they are not actually dancing.

Poor announcements which mean nothing to the audience.

Microphones - to be debated at a later date.

Failed humour. Although good humour enhances a performance a great deal and is perhaps not seen often enough.

Re: MUSIC/MUSICIANS

LIKES:

Good dancer/musician communication. There's nothing worse than reaching the end of a dance and then commenting on how fast it was!!

Large bands - where appropriate - as long as they are a band and not a collection of odd musicians. However they do not always suit the dance and a single musician or singer who is sympathetic and understands a dance style may be infinitely better for them.

Musicians in kit which complements that of the dancers and who are obviously part of the team.

DISLIKES:

Musicians who block the audience. Often the musician or musicians stand in the optimum place for watching the dance. Always take this into consideration when planning a stand and make use of any natural advantages that the venue has.

"Bird watching" musicians. They should be watching the dancers and varying the music accordingly.

Music which is too fast.

Flat, uninspired music.

Re: KIT

LIKES:

Bright or noticeable kit which is obviously different from everyday clothes.

Dancers and musicians who are well kitted and obviously a team.

Clean and well cared for kit. This should apply to all members of the side.

DISLIKES:

Tatty or "naff" kit. (Although perhaps this is at least in part a matter of individual taste.)

Inappropriate kit for the style of dance.

Some members of the side wearing hats and some not.

Adjusting kit in public.

In relation to the above, various other points were discussed.

Dancing out with other teams was identified as a problem area when it comes to performance. One suggestion was that if your side puts on a performance it may be better to do a stand of, eg, 10 minutes per side rather than alternating dances. Communication between announcers could also be useful! Sides can dance in different parts of the same venue if their needs are incompatible.

Single tradition sides are not able to put variety into their performances in the same way, but by carefully looking at their repertoire and putting dances into order, this can be overcome. Jigs can be usefully employed.