

THE BDF REVIEW

THE BDF NATIONAL CONGRESS 2023

THE BALLROOM DANCERS' FEDERATION LTD

THE BDF NATIONAL CONGRESS 2023

FRIDAY 17TH NOVEMBER 2023 THE PAVILION WINTER GARDENS BLACKPOOL

FREE ENTRY FOR ALL

- 9:30 AM DOORS OPEN
- 10:00 - 10:20 DAVID COCKRAM & ROSIE WARD - *'LETS FACE THE MUSIC AND DANCE'*
- 10:20 - 10:40 ADELMO MANDIA & LEAH ROLFE - *'STRONG LEGS - STAND TALL'*
- 10:40 - 11:00 STEPHEN HILLIER MBE - *'THE HISTORY & DEVELOPMENT OF BALLROOM DANCING' PART 1*
- 11:00 - 11:30 COFFEE BREAK
- 11:30 - 11:40 ADDRESS BY CHRISTOPHER HAWKINS - *'PRESIDENT OF THE BDC'*
- 11:40 - 12:00 STEPHEN HILLIER MBE - *'THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF BALLROOM DANCING' PART 2*
- 12:00 - 12:20 DALE BENNETT - *'SIMPLE DIRECTION'*
- 12:20 - 12:40 KYLE TAYLOR & ALISA MARGULIS - *'TANGO - THE MYTHS AND THE FACTS'*
- 12:40 - 13:00 ANTON SBOEV & PATRIZIA RANIS - *'IT TAKES TWO - PARTNERING'*

IF YOU HAVE KNOWLEDGE, LET OTHERS LIGHT THEIR CANDLES IN IT." ~ MARGARET FULLER



Rhythmic Revelations and Historical Insights: Highlights from the 2023 BDF National Congress

Report by Mr. Warren Boyce, representative from the BDF Executive Committee

The 2023 Ballroom Dancers' Federation Ltd National Congress experienced a notable transition, relocating from its accustomed space at the Spanish Hall to the Pavilion of the Blackpool Wintergardens. This shift not only conferred a unique character upon the event but also spotlighted the BDF's magnanimity by hosting a complimentary congress for all participants. The shift to the new venue curated an intimate ambiance, attracting a full house of enthusiastic spectators who unanimously declared it as one of the most outstanding series of lectures in recent memory.

DAVID COCKRAM & ROSIE WARD – LET'S FACE THE MUSIC AND DANCE

The opening presentation by David & Rosie, titled "Let's face the music and dance," offered a unique perspective on the intersection of dance and music. Using technology called stems, they dissected a musical track, highlighting how different layers influenced specific body movements. This innovative approach provided dancers with insights into enhancing musicality by coordinating intentions to various body parts with different musical elements.

1. Isolated Drummer

- **Feet go to the beat:** The pulsating rhythm provided by the isolated drummer serves as the driving force for the dancer. Every step aligns with the heartbeat of the music, creating a dynamic and rhythmic connection.
- **Drive:** The drummer, in this case Bill Hayton, of musical director Ashley Frohlick and the Empress Orchestra in this context, takes centre stage. This beat sets the pace for both the musicians of the orchestra and dancers alike, creating a harmonious synchronization.

2. Bass Layer: Deep, Long, Heavy Movements

- **Legs Responding to Deep Bass:** In response to the deep and resonant bass layer, dancers transition into movements that are characterized by depth and power. Leg movements become intentional, with a focus on releasing weight rather than mere stepping.
- **Depth Release:** Emphasizing the 3-1 release technique, dancers embrace long, full notes to infuse swing fullness into their movements. This goes beyond a simple step pattern, delving into the depth of each movement.

3. Melody: Giving the Dance Its Own Identity

- **Feeling it in the Body:** The melody layer carries the soul of the dance. Dancers are encouraged to feel the melody coursing through their bodies, expressing its character and essence in their movements.
- **Inspired Hold:** The inspired hold between dance partners becomes a crucial element in translating the melody into movement. This connection allows for a seamless flow of expression and interpretation.
- **Lightness with Melody:** Unlike the deep bass layer, the melody calls for a lighter touch. Movements guided by the melody are characterized by a subtle grace.

Understanding and internalizing these three layers of music not only adds a new dimension to the dancer's artistry but also provides a comprehensive approach to musicality. By attuning themselves to the nuances of the isolated drummer, bass layer, and melody, dancers can create a symphony of motion that captivates both the eyes and the ears of their audience.

My heartfelt congratulations go to David and Rosie once again. While their technical explanation alone would have undoubtedly crafted a brilliant lecture, it was the impeccable panache of their delivery, alternating seamlessly with each other, that elevated this experience to the realm of one of the best lectures ever witnessed. Their synchronized explanation of the intricate layers of music and dance showcased profound expertise, yet it was the flawlessly rehearsed alternation between presenters that mesmerized the audience, turning the lecture into a performance art piece. The duo's harmonious transitions added an element of theatricality, leaving an indelible mark and an outstanding opening to the 2023 BDF National Congress.

KYLE TAYLOR – TWO TO TANGO THE MYTHS AND THE FACTS

In the enlightening presentation titled "Two to Tango: The Myths and the Facts," Kyle Taylor skilfully debunked prevalent misconceptions surrounding the Tango according to his experience. Delving into the intricacies of this captivating dance form, he explored concepts such as staccato and legato footwork, shedding light on the nuances that distinguish these techniques. In addition to providing a comprehensive understanding of efficient foot placement, Taylor emphasized the importance of pull power in Tango, revealing insights that proved invaluable for dancers seeking to refine their skills.

Throughout his presentation, Kyle Taylor demonstrated an exceptional mastery of Tango technique, captivating the audience with his precise execution and insightful explanations. His nuanced breakdown of foot placement and personal exploration of rise and fall showcased a deep appreciation for the intricacies of this dance style. Moreover, the seamless coordination with his wonderful partner, Alisa Margulis, added an extra layer of grace and elegance to the demonstration, highlighting the collaborative and symbiotic nature of their dance partnership.

Alisa played a pivotal role in enhancing the overall impact of the presentation. Her contributions, both in dance and collaboration with her partner, were evident in the flawless execution of their Tango routine. Together, Kyle Taylor and Alisa Margulis not only dispelled myths surrounding Tango but also brought the dance to life, leaving the audience with a newfound appreciation for the artistry and technical precision inherent in this captivating form

STEPHEN HILLIER MBE – THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF BALLROOM DANCING

Stephen Hillier's lecture on the history and development of ballroom dancing provided a captivating journey through time. Starting with the Tango in the 19th century and its evolution, Mr. Hillier covered key milestones, influential figures, and the development of dance styles. The presentation included demonstrations of historic dance figures and touched on significant events, such as the introduction of the Foxtrot in 1911 and the resurgence of the Tango.

Hillier's historical narrative featured iconic personalities like Vernon and Irene Castle, showcasing their impact on ballroom dancing. Attendees were treated to a visual representation of historical dances, including the Rotary Waltz and Diagonal Waltz. The presentation ended with a reflection on the evolution of dance, highlighting its enduring traditions and the fusion of different styles.

In the illustrious history of ballroom dancing, the luminary figure of Stephen Hillier MBE shines brightly as a beacon of greatness in the realm of dance historians. His profound contributions to unravelling the intricate threads of dance evolution have solidified his status as one of the most distinguished scholars of the modern era, not simply a former world champion and expert teacher. However, woven into the fabric of this remarkable legacy is the invaluable and continuous contribution of his equally esteemed partner and dancer, Mrs. Jennifer Hillier.

Delving into the wealth of historical narratives, Stephen Hillier not only brought bygone stories to life for some but also served as an enlightening source for the younger generation. The meticulous research and collaborative efforts of Stephen and his wife, Jennifer, culminated in an outstanding lecture that not only educated but also resonated with the audience. While the lecture could be expounded upon in detail, it's important to emphasize that the intention is not to duplicate, as it is noteworthy that they graciously agreed to share their extensive notes on the BDF website. This ensures that the knowledge imparted reaches a broader audience and becomes a lasting resource.

Beyond imparting such contributions, Stephen and Jennifer Hillier showcased their artistry and expertise in captivating dance presentations. Stephen's collaborations with his wife and invited dancers were nothing short of spectacular. Notably, his demonstration with their pupil and previous lecturer, Rosie Ward, was beautiful, and every detail considered to the authenticity of the era including the costuming. A highlight of the event was witnessing Stephen Hillier's masterful instruction in recreating original dance movements and choreographies. Collaborating with David Cockram and Rosie Ward, they breathed life into historical dances, showcasing the beauty and intricacies of ballroom dance across different eras. Stephen and Jennifer exhibited discerning choice by selecting the audience favourites, as David and Rosie had already made a profound impact, eliciting standing ovations.

Conclusion

The 2023 BDF National Congress emerged as one of the most memorable events in recent history. The dynamic presentations by David & Rosie, Kyle & Alisa, and Jennifer & Stephen Hillier MBE provided attendees with valuable insights into musicality, Tango technique, and the rich history of ballroom dancing. The shift to the Pavilion Theatre added a touch of intimacy to the atmosphere, making it a truly immersive experience for all participants.

As we laud Stephen Hillier MBE for his monumental impact on dance historiography, let us also extend our heartfelt appreciation to Jennifer Hillier for her indispensable role in shaping this legacy. Together, they stand as a testament to the power of collaboration, dedication, and a shared love for preserving the timeless beauty of ballroom dancing. The Hilliers' joint contribution ensures that their influence on the narrative of dance history will endure, inspiring future generations to embrace the richness of this art form.

Personal report by Mr. Warren Boyce, representative to report from the BDF Executive Committee