Welcome and Happy New Year from the IADMS Education Committee!

The Dance Education Newsletter is published quarterly by the IADMS Education Committee and features information and teaching strategies from the Resources on the IADMS Website. This newsletter is a report from the 24th Annual Meeting and A Day for Teachers, held in Basel, Switzerland in October 2014. This report is presented by Esther Juon Vetch, Education Committee member, and includes a summary of the Annual Meeting as well as her personal experiences and reflections. This report has three sections – the IADMS Annual Meeting, A Day for Teachers, and personal reflections on presenting at IADMS.

The 24th IADMS Annual Meeting – Basel, Switzerland

The IADMS delegates assembled at the Basel Casino. In German, ‘casino’ means a ‘meeting place’. Delegates were piped in by a group of musicians from the Basel Fasnacht. There are many different bands all over Basel and collectively their music is known as “Guggenmusik”. Google it and you will see how proud and enthusiastic the city is of the famous “Fasnacht” in February each year.

The 24th Annual Meeting was opened by the President of IADMS, Janet Karin, OAM. Janet is an esteemed dancer, teacher, and researcher from Australia and an inspiring President for the organization. She encouraged us to open our eyes and ears, and update our knowledge to ensure that what we have learned in the past is still current, and she noted the need for us all to be aware of current research.

The Opening Panel was composed of Richard Wherlock, Artistic Director of the Basel Ballet, Christian Spuck, Artistic Director of the Zurich Ballet, Kathleen McNurney, Artistic Director of the Luzern Ballet, and Amanda Bennett, Artistic Director of the Prix-de-Lausanne and Director of the Ballet School of the Basel Theatre. It was moderated by Peter Lewton-Brain, DO, Monaco. Peter’s questions to the panel focused on issues that dancers have which might drive new research.

The consensus of the panel was that currently, dancers are better educated and informed about their bodies and health. The panel emphasised that it is important for dancers to report a small injury immediately and not wait until the injury has become a major issue. It is reassuring that the dance community at large, is committed to the health and welfare of dancers.
The first Clinical Symposia presentation was titled ‘Technical Errors and Dance Injuries: Reviewing the Clinical Connections’. It was presented by Dr Luana Poggini of the Accademia Nationale di Danza (Rome, Italy). She discussed the statistic “only twenty-eight percent of dance injuries are caused by accidents and seventy-two percent are caused by overuse or incorrect placement”. Dr. Poggini demonstrated, with explicit photos, that dancers with faulty alignment are more likely to suffer injury.

The take home message after this discussion was that physicians with an interest in dance injury should be encouraged to learn more about dance and how a dancer moves. Often injuries can be prevented, or at least more quickly rehabilitated, by observing how the dancer habitually moves. This might also require an understanding of the demands that dance training puts upon the students and a discussion of these demands with teachers. By introducing anatomically sound teaching methods, teachers and dance physicians and students will all benefit.

After the opening sessions, the Annual Meeting spread out to four events which ran consecutively. The hardest problem for me was to decide which event to attend! Movement Sessions or presentations? What to choose? Here were the options for the first session of the first morning:

- **A Nutrition Education Program**: a practical approach to improve the health of the adolescent dancer. Presented by Christina Patsalidou, MFA, BSc, University of Nicosia, Nicosia, Cyprus (Presentation)
- **Prevention of Ankle Injuries**: evaluation of the dynamic stability of the dominating leg in female ballet dancers. Presented by Olga Korbolewska MSc, Warsaw, Poland (Presentation)
- **Sensory Gymnastic for Dancers**: Presented by Annemari Autere, Ballet Body Logic, Compagnie Ariel, Villfranch sur Mer, France (Movement Session)
- **Improvisation as Training for Contemporary Dancers**: Presented by Agathe Dumont, PhD; Centre National de Dance Contemporaine d'Angers & Mariam Faquir, Freelance dancer, Paris France (Movement Session)

I attended the Sensory Gymnastic for Dancers which was brilliant. Originally, I had connected with Annemari Autere through the teacher’s discussion on ‘LinkedIn’. Annemari’s workshop highlighted the importance of understanding the contribution of fascia in movement. In the workshop we viewed a film clip which explained the composition of fascia and how it moves under the skin. Subsequently we explored finding it on each other’s bodies, and we were able to feel how it moves very slowly. It was exciting to explore moving in sympathy with our own fascia, and we discovered that we had to slow down our movements a great deal. We were able to feel how slow movements penetrate deeper into the muscles, and as a result we experience an increased range of movement. This presentation confirmed to me that working slowly and quietly is the key to finding and training movement range. Annemari also presented a very interesting poster including anatomical information on turn out. She provided the information simply and with humor in a way that anyone can understand and enjoy.

The highlights of the Annual Meeting for me were:
- Turn out (how to teach? How to cue?) (Annemari Autere)
- Alignment supervision to prevent injuries (Luana Poggini)
- Working with fascia, (Annemari Autere)
- Vitamin D deficiency and its consequences, (Roger Wolman)
- The importance of breath, Pelvic floor and how to get the dancers to engage it. (Judith-Elisa Kaufmann)
I wish more teachers were able to attend these IADMS Annual Meetings. When attending the Annual Meeting, teachers are able to connect with other teachers, and to be informed by the latest research in dance medicine and science. The experience is inspiring and we teachers return to our dancers with new and valuable knowledge and ideas. The additional benefit of the Annual Meeting is the ability to network with new colleagues and friends who are interested in the same subject matter.

A Day for Teachers

IADMS’ A Day for Teachers’ is also a part of the Annual Meeting. A Day for Teachers is geared for dance teachers specifically and the meeting had a very interesting and different approach, compared to the Annual Meeting. Every session was interactive, and instead of being limited to lectures, presentations, and movement sessions, participants were able to discover new knowledge through guided discussions in groups. This approach gave us all a second chance to review what we knew and to develop ideas for implementing new knowledge.

The first workshop was ‘Motivation - how do we motivate our dancers and keep them inspired to learn?’ Presented by Janet Karin, she used clear images of motivational theory and gave insight into how teachers need to facilitate the development of the dancer to reach her/his full potential.

We divided into groups to discuss several questions. The first question was why we started to dance and our circumstances at the time. As a result of this session I reflected on:
- the need to be aware of the background of our dancers and how their background will influence their behavior, and
- the importance of creating a safe environment and having time to watch and listen to each dancer.

The second session was an interactive workshop about posture, placement and alignment, presented by Alexander McKinven. We worked in four groups and each group was directed to draw the spine in four different shapes. The other three groups drew respectively, the pelvis tucked under, in neutral, and anteriorly tilted. My group drew the spine with scoliosis. We discussed recognition of the condition and the possibilities of correcting it. This highlighted to me, the difficulty in recognising scoliosis without sufficient training and also the importance of spotting the condition early so it can be examined by a health professional. Sometime the unevenness of the spine may result from an adolescent growth spurt and in time it will rebalance itself. However, if it is scoliosis, diagnosing it early will make it easier for the dancer and teacher to work with this condition.

Having the spine placed correctly with the pelvis in neutral is of paramount importance. Although dance teachers are not medically trained we should develop the knowledge to notice when the spine of a student is not growing erectly, and we must refer the dancer to a health professional sooner rather than later.

The most memorable session for me was “Eat. Learn. Perform.” led by Derrick Brown. This session gave information on nutritional information to fuel dancers.
for their best performance level. The session emphasized the dietary requirements for the dancer to build healthy bone and muscle as well as support the development of the brain.

Once again we divided into four groups. One group discussed their favorite food, the other three concentrated on breakfast, lunch, and dinner. On a personal note this is a marked contrast to my experience as a dance student when it was almost a sin to eat. Instead of having a list of what I was not allowed to eat, now I could get a list of what a dancer needs to eat! For more information go to www.iadms.org and then onto ‘Resources: Nutrition Fact Sheet: Fuelling the Dancer’.

As a studio teacher, one of my biggest challenges is to keep up to date and to be able to adapt to all the new demands made on me. The way I was taught, and the way I need to teach now are very different and I must continually update my knowledge. It is vital that I have the latest knowledge and information, so that I can stay creative and find new ways of training and sharing information with my dancers. It is, after all, the dancers who in the first place, have inspired the research carried out by the IADMS community. As teachers we need to complete the circle, by bringing the research back to the dancers.

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My personal experience presenting at IADMS

I was also fortunate to have the opportunity to present at the IADMS Annual Meeting. This is an excellent opportunity to share current research and information with other practitioners in the dance industry. The abstracts are submitted to the Program Committee who make the final choice for presentation. I submitted a proposal with my colleague, Ruth Swinney, and it was accepted for presentation at the IADMS Annual Meeting in Basel. We gave a presentation and workshop on the use of rigid strapping tape inside pointe shoes instead of padding. It was a tremendous honor for us to share our work with some of the world’s dance teachers, health professionals, physiotherapists, podiatrists, and surgeons who all work with dancers.

I was born in Switzerland and began my dance training with Armin Wild in Zurich at the Zurich Opera House. In 1972 there was no comprehensive full time ballet training available in Switzerland so I travelled to London to train in Classical Ballet where I trained part time at the Rambert Ballet School whilst waiting to join the RAD Teachers’ course. Unfortunately, while participating in a ballet class at the Dance Centre in Covent Garden, I had a fall and severely injured my back. This injury changed my life, and it is the reason that I am such a passionate member of IADMS.

After so many years abroad it was wonderful to return to Basel in Switzerland last October. IADMS Annual Meetings attract dancers, teachers, researchers, doctors, physiotherapists, podiatrists, osteopaths, Pilates and Gyrotonic instructors. Everyone attending the Annual Meeting is prepared to share their knowledge, challenge, ask questions, appreciate,
support and participate. They all attend as individuals, and it is through the networking that one can discover more about current research.

Esther Juon Veitch, January 2015
IADMS Education Committee member