

Welcome to our Winter 2007 Cuban edition

Welcome to our Winter Newsletter – just what you need as the colder nights draw in.

Snuggle up with a beverage of your choice and see what's happening in the School – where has Lesley Ann been over the summer? We've given you a big clue... Check out the pictures of our 2007 award winners and read up on some hot Salsa and Senior syncopation...

In this newsletter you'll find...

- Lesley Ann's bit...
- Winners of Achievement Awards 2007
- Senior Syncopation
- Get spicy with the Salsa!
- Hollywood calling Cuba
- School Soap Box...
- School Stuff



Lesley Ann's bit...



Welcome back everyone, probably, like me, you feel that the long, salubrious holidays are now in the distant past, but luckily in the School we have so much to look forward to, working for our new Production "The Music Box", that the anticipation and excitement has overshadowed the post holiday blues!

As always my summer adventure was inspirational, blending a dance and music course with Cuban culture – cars, Che and cha, cha cha! I'm not a car fanatic and when it was suggested to me to take photographs of Cuban classic cards I was not enthralled by the idea. But arriving on the outskirts of Havana, shimmering in the heat haze, I saw a green and gold Cadillac gliding towards me. I was amazed to feel a curious excitement in spite of my fatigue. As it sailed along side my taxi it was overflowing with family members of all shapes and sizes and, on closer inspection, was rusty and dilapidated with bits falling off but maintaining a dignity and classy veneer of a bygone era of film stars; an age of glamour and pre-revolution opulence.

Little did I know that my first experience of their cars was to echo the state of Havana itself! Furthermore, I was not prepared for the passion, which that first car evoked, sparking my obsession for taking photographs of classic cars constantly on my travels.



No two cars were the same, like us they had different personalities, colours, shapes and sizes. Even in the remotest village market I unearthed a ramshackle specimen nesting in a hedge, next to a horse and cart. With its faded paintwork and once sumptuous leather seats, it echoed a Marilyn Monroe style of glamour now long forgotten.

Similarly, Havana, one of the oldest cities in the Western Hemisphere, has been left to limp along in a continual state of decay after the 1982 Revolution. The Cubans rely on ration books to obtain food, whereas tourists are treated to exotic, rich menus. I stayed with an ordinary family and experienced their struggle, feeling guilty about eating lobster when my hosts could not and, if they dared, they had to bury the evidence outside the village!



No matter what troubles the Cubans have the whole island pulses with rhythm. There is no other place like it where everyone lives through music. Around every corner, down all the streets, the beat seduces people. Sounds ebbing and flowing from Africa, Spain and the Caribbean blend in Cuba's unique song forms, creating dance styles, which have captivated the world. Part of my mission was to learn some of these dances and pass them on to my pupils.

In Santiago de Cuba I had my first lesson in Salsa from the Dance Master at Santiago University. I was a little nervous, afraid that I might not pick up the steps so easily, but my fears were allayed as my own natural flair for the dance came through and I was able to partner him to performance level.

I was flattered when I was then asked to teach Dance at the University; however, there is a show here to produce!

In Trinidad de Cuba, although there was a hurricane threat, I danced my way through hot humid afternoons of lessons with a couple who had begun their careers in the famous Tropicana Club in Havana. Again I was timid about my dance background, purely for egotistical reasons, but within the first few steps they knew I was a cancer and guided me through many dance forms and even awarded me a medal at the end of my course.

The music lessons were great fun with professional performers who taught us drumming and singing, culminating in making a CD – again all amidst the threat of an imminent hurricane. The island was well equipped for the impending assault but our group left early the day it was due to land.

As we made our way back to Havana in our ramshackle bus we heard from our friends back in Trinidad that they had bolted the doors and battened down the hatches as part of the storm did hit the town, luckily the main force of the storm passed the island.



Che Guevara's ghost haunts the island everywhere. As I wandered through decaying streets and alleyways, where the occasional stray dead dog lay decomposing, I found paintings of Che. The people love him, but many have secretly stopped supporting Fidel Castro as the country has been held back from joining the global technological revolution; the shops are empty and there are no new fashions just warehouses full of second hand bargains.

Amidst the daily struggle for survival the dance, music and rich culture carries the people through their troubles, perhaps that is why we find the Buena Vista Social club music so exciting. I was privileged to meet the sole surviving member of the group on Santiago de Cuba in a club which he visits most nights, where people dance until the early hours and everyone is expected to get up and show off their salsa moves!

My trip culminated back in Havana with a visit to Cuba's famous **Tropicana** nightclub where some of the greatest singers of our time, like Nat King Cole and Frank Sinatra crooned. Today, over 200 dancers perform on Cuba's most famous stage in a 1950s style cabaret.

I have to confess that I was disappointed in the show, as I had witnessed the most amazing dancing from the peoples' own roots and culture. The glamorous, yet stilted, representation on stage was a mere pastiche of what I had experienced - lacking passion and soul! The costumes, however, were brilliant and I wished Val and Christine could have seen the truly magical array of materials and colours so beautifully presented with great film star flair – truly inspiring!



My adventure has given me much to think about for our future shows and I am sure you may find in our forthcoming production some Cuban influences. Watch out too for the ghost pirates of the Caribbean, it may be a little frightening for younger children but is an exciting element of the show.

Thank you again for all your wonderful support and it leaves me only to wish one of our senior dancers, Sarah, a speedy recovery from illness – hurry up and get better for the next show!

Lesley Ann Eden

2007 Award Winners

Tue Class 1: Lola Clayton – outstanding progress



Tue Class 2: Nina Butterworth – outstanding new pupil



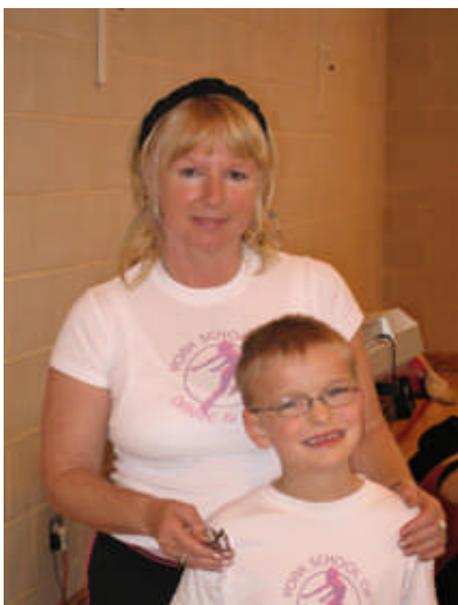
Thurs class 1: Nicholl Lynch – outstanding progress



Sat class 1: Lucy Williams & Georgie Kynaston-Blake – outstanding progress



Drama: Edward Mitten - outstanding new pupil



Sat class 2: Erin Burbridge – outstanding progress



Academy: Tia Hancy – outstanding performance



Well done everyone!

Senior Syncopation

The Senior Performers' class on a Tuesday evening means two hours of hard work and inclusion in the annual School shows, so who are the Seniors?

The Senior Performers' class is an invitation class made up of around 10 dancers who range from those moving on from the Intermediate Dance and Academy students right through to some of the mums of the younger children in the school. They all, however, have one thing in common: dedication, enthusiasm and the sheer enjoyment of dancing together at the highest possible level.

"Hi, my name is Mairianna and I have been dancing with Lesley Ann for the past nineteen years, since I was seven years old, so quite a long time! I've seen lots of faces come and go and I've had breaks from classes when I've gone away to university and gone travelling, but I've always come back because I love it so much.

I'm in the Senior class on a Tuesday night and I really look forward to it every week. It's a great opportunity to forget about the stresses of work and to be physically, as well as mentally challenged. I've tried other classes and joined various gyms but they're just not the same and not as much fun.



We do so many different styles of dance so it is something new and exciting every term. I also like the fact that we are always working towards a show and there is a really good team spirit between the girls as we aim to get the dances perfect before the performance.

*From left to right
Standing: Lyndsey Taylor,
Rachel Templeman, Tia Hancy,
Jacky Frere.*

*Seated: Erin Burbridge ,
Mairianna MacKinnon.*

*Lying down: Sally Miller,
Frances Holyroyd*

The shows themselves I love, I still get nervous and it's always a bit stressful in the lead up to them but it's always a great atmosphere back stage and you really feel you've achieved something when it's all done and dusted.

I'm really excited about the next show in February but I will also be a bit sad as a few days later I set off to go travelling round the world so will be taking another break. I'll really miss the classes but I'm sure I'll be back!"

M.M.

The group recently welcomed Erin and Rachel to their ranks but have sadly lost Kate Mallender to a back injury and Wendy Davies, who (along with juniors Hattie and George) will be dancing in Australia next year and all very much missed. Good luck girls and get well soon Sarah Herbert - we look forward to seeing you back dancing after your illness really soon!

Spicy Salsa!

The name "Salsa" is the Spanish word for sauce, connoting (in American Spanish) a spicy flavour and "mixture" of ingredients.



Salsa refers to a fusion of informal dance styles having roots in the Caribbean (especially Cuba and Puerto Rico), Latin America and North America. Danced to Salsa music there is a strong African influence in the music and the dance.

Salsa is usually a partner dance, although there are recognised solo steps and some forms are danced in groups of couples, with frequent exchanges of partner. Improvisation and social dancing are important elements of Salsa and it appears as a performance dance too.

Source: Wikipedia

... But it ain't all Salsa, as Cuban ballet star Carlos Acosta proves...

Cuban star in a class of his own ...



It seems that someone in Hollywood may have plans to turn Cuban ballet star Carlos Acosta's life into a film.

It's not surprising. The story has everything: an exotic location (Havana); a textbook scenario of bad boy making good (furthered by the heart warming touch love of Acosta's father); a happy ever after ending of stardom on the international stage. The movie producers may also have taken courage from the unexpected success of the recent *Ballets Russes* feature film.

Ballet may be having a bit of a Hollywood moment

But two problems stand between the planning talks and the film's actual creation. The first is America's willingness to shoot a movie that paints such an aspirational picture of its historic enemy Cuba. What Fidel Castro did for ballet in his native country is astonishing. Not only did he fund a national school and company in Havana but he ordered a network of training centres to be set up around the company so that any child, however disadvantaged, might have an opportunity to dance. Aside from its health service, ballet has been one of the most dazzling achievements of tiny communist Cuba, and Acosta has been its international showcase. Source: Guardian Online

School Soap Box

Anything on your mind or have you discovered something you would like to share? Let us know via our website or speak to Jacky Frere (Senior Performer) and we'll share it with everyone.

Know your Friends!

Welcome to all the Friends of the school and thank you so much for your support.

Thanks to all our Friends for all their continued support as they make newsletters and the annual Achievement Awards possible



Still looking... We're on the hunt for a second hand PA system to support the school's work. If you have, or know of one, please get in touch. See details below.

Thank you to all our Friends – aunts, uncles, grandparents, godparents, carers, mums, dads and industry professionals...

Join Us

Become a Friend - for just £20 a year you'll get our regular newsletter and be an important part of supporting and recognising the efforts of the pupils and furthering the work of the school.

Contact Jacky Tel: (01904) 622 326 or email us via our website at www.yorkdanceanddrama.org.uk

If you would like this magazine emailed to you as a PDF please let us know via the website and we'll arrange that for you.





Contacts & Classes

School Principal: **Lesley Ann Eden** *Kidscape Champion*
Tel: 07971 230 716 *B.Ed. Dance Drama*
B.Ed. Music
M.A. Choreography

Secretary: Val Hart
 Tel: 01347 824 719

Classes*: Park Grove Community School, Park Grove, York.

Tuesday	4.15 – 5.00pm	Beginner Dance
	5.00 – 6.30pm	Intermediate Dance
	6.45 – 8.45pm	Senior Performers
Thursday	5.00 – 6.00pm	Beginner Youth Dance 10-13yrs
	6.00 – 7.00pm	Adult beginners - Tap
	7.00 – 8.00pm	Adult beginners – Jazz
Saturday	9.15 – 10.15am	Elementary Dance
	10.15 – 11.15am	Drama Group
	11.15 – 12.30pm	Intermediate Dance
	11.00 – 1.30pm	Academy

**Check term dates with Lesley Ann Eden or Val Hart.*

Fees:

Beginner/elementary/drama:	£ 5.50 per class
Intermediate:	£ 9.00 per class
Adult:	£ 6.00 per class
Senior Performer:	£10.00 per class
Academy:	By Invitation

Discounts are available for children/adults attending more than one class.

Our show this year "The Music Box" will be performed at York's Grand Opera House on Sunday 3rd February 2008 - one evening performance only.

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