



Swing Riot Dunedin Incorporated Annual Report April 2023 - March 2024

“A year of change and growth with feelings of momentum, stretch, and connection”

First Thing’s First

To follow in the footsteps, (or sit in the chairprint?) of Kieran Ford, Chairperson 2018-2023 is not entirely simple! Kieran’s accumulated knowledge and experience made, and continues to make, him invaluable to our society and dance community. I must express here great appreciation of Kieran who continues to support Swing Riot, and myself as incoming Chairperson, to the best of his ability despite having stepped down from the hot seat (Chair). I am of course also grateful for the rest of the Executive Committee, for their efforts and spirited work. Additional thanks to Emma Christie for her Committee work which continued even with a newborn - though in early February, understandably stretched for time and energy, Emma stepped down from her Committee roles.

As a quick personal note for this, my first Annual Report as Chair, I’ll just say that despite involvement in teaching, Committee discussions and our 2023 International Dance Day participation, my not managing to attend the 2023 Dunedin Swing Festival due to both infant and illness does feel like a sizeable gap in my experience of the year Swing Riot has had. As such I won’t overly speak to the festival below.

Aside from that, I’ll figure out how this Chair thing works eventually, or the society will vote me out.

Enough about me. Let’s get on with it!

Weekly Classes, Taster Classes, and the return of Intermediate Classes

Weekly Tuesday evening “drop-in” or open level classes at Stuart Hall, Knox Church continued through the end of November 2023 and resumed in February 2024! Aside from dedicating October to the swing out, classes rotated week-by-week between 8-count, 6-count, and Charleston, with the occasional solo class, blues class, or teachers’ choice class thrown in the mix. With the consistently held weekly class, we’ve seen class attendance grow from the Covid-induced low numbers, to the point where we’ve begun to re-introduce the Intermediate

level class (currently monthly). Community momentum is increasing and the dancer retention is encouraging - also it's been a delight to build more social connection within the community through open invites to post-class refreshments at Zanzibar. We may, however, soon find ourselves limited by the availability of our current teachers in terms of being able to offer more classes and more dancing - a good problem to have assuming a solution is found. But onwards and upwards!

We have also participated in a string of free taster classes being offered at Toitū Otago Settlers Museum with both beginner Lindy Hop and beginner Blues offerings. Public interest and response to these is has been positive and we aim to continue to participate in bringing these taster classes to the public.

Ōtepoti Blues Sessions

In early October, more exciting Swing Riot dance offerings came in the form of the Ōtepoti Blues Sessions - a day of three blues dance workshops also held at Stuart Hall, Knox Church, plus an evening event at Rewind (former premises of Dog With Two Tails) with a taster class, and social dancing to the live music of King Leo. The entire event was well received and even turned a profit (despite pre-determining that it would be well worthwhile to run even if it were to make a loss financially). "Volume 2" will definitely be coming up in the future!

The Christmas Quacker

Our 2023 end of year event was held in early December at The Duck in Macandrew Bay with fine fare, fine tunes from Catgut and Steel, and cheerful dancing. Auld Lang Syne was sung and The Duck was happy to have us. It was fantastic to see some of the newer members of our dance community coming out and embracing some social dancing and each others' company generally.

Public Relations

Over the last few years, the impact of Covid-19 has led our "public activities" to decrease somewhat. Our performance group remains on a hiatus, hopefully to return before long to street festivals near you. We did assemble a small performance group on St. Clair's esplanade to participate in International Dance Day 2023, with Dance Ōtepoti organizing pop-up, publicly visible dance events around the city on 29 April. It also established a new connection with Dance Ōtepoti who look to promote dance within the city.

Growth strategy work continues: shiny Swing Riot business cards were designed and printed for surgical promotion, and Swing Riot fliers sporting free class "rip-tabs" have been appearing on University of Otago noticeboards. Approaches have been made to schools where feeding into dance curricula or student ball preparations may provide more opportunities to introduce swing dance locally. Promotional budget has also been allocated, all in the name of visibility and building on the momentum of the last year-plus to continue to grow the scene.

Dunedin Swing Festival 2023 and, wait look over there! There on the horizon!

It's the Dunedin Swing Festival 2024!!!



Well, I truly wish I saw more of DSF 2023!

But from what I can gather, it was a successful and impressive event with the festival exploring exciting new venues such as Tūhura Otago Museum, and Vault 21's upstairs White Room alongside trusty venues such as the Sargood Centre. Covid-19 still reminded us that it hasn't gone away with teachers getting struck down, and many (teachers and attendees alike) choosing to mask up, either for their own protection or to protect those around them. Festival attendees also looked after one another by taking rapid antigen tests before attending events. A caring community at work and two years in a row of the DSF ending up in the black financially - much success! Big congratulations to the Festival Committee!

All eyes now are on the Dunedin Swing Festival 2024 - (the big 10th Annual!) which is being programmed by our now legendary Festival Committee to be the most exciting swing dance event of the year in all of Aotearoa with incredible big name teachers, and more events and activities than ever before between May 30 and June 3. It's looking so good that I'm somewhat worried international dancers will flock to Dunedin and sell the whole thing out!

Jon runs to double check when registrations open

Your Executive Committee

This year your Committee were:

Jon Bakos (Chair), Emma Christie (Secretary, Small Events), Morgan Lieshout (Treasurer), Sibby Dillon (Large Events, Communications & Marketing) Kieran Ford (Teaching), Lorraine Johnston, Julie Buchanan, Nigel McDonald, Anna Bryan, Clare Roxburgh.

Next year's report will be better, whoever ends up writing it.

Ngā mihi nui

Jon
Chair 2023-24