

star dancers!



Linedancer magazine loves to hear about your story wherever in the world you may be. So we were delighted to be contacted by *Astrid Roenhorst* from Astartancers in Holland who had a rather nice story to share.



Hi, my name is Astrid and live in Nijmegen, a town on the East side of Holland, on the river de Waal, near the German border.

I started my club Astardancers back in February 2005 and it proved very successful. As an instructor, I try to do things a little differently in terms of style. I believe strongly in expression and performance which is not something you see that often at home. I have always believed in Line dancing bringing people together and I hope that my story will encourage others to link with Line dance communities wherever they may be.

It was back in December 2006, when my husband Evert received a phone call that would start something quite wonderful. We were asked whether we would like to come and be part of a Line dance festival (HSLD) in Sweden. And because it was Christmas, it felt like an early present, we just could not say no!

So after many e-mails and phone calls, by the time it was time to go we had a really nice rapport already built up with our host in Sweden whose name is Kenneth. He is the main inspiration behind the HSLD, which is a wonderful festival. HSLD stands for Horse Show Line Dance and it is held in a forest, so dancers dance in the purest of air and are surrounded by trees and all things bucolic!

Our travelling was just fabulous and we crossed Germany and Denmark, getting eventually to the historic Swedish city of Helsingborg. As we got more and more inland, we were stunned by the views, an horizon of lakes reaching the sky and woods with hidden elks and wolves. Then we got to the festival and it was just

wonderful. No crowded hall and stifling heat of overheated dance floors. Just nature all around us and the great feeling of freedom. During the weekend, groups from all over Sweden and other countries danced together. Every hour or so, an instructor would introduce his or her own playlist and this way of working together turned out to be absolutely fantastic, we thought. It afforded every dance club taking part a bit of a showcase. And every dance and music genre was represented too.

For me it was the first time I had been invited to give a workshop abroad. In Holland I've built up my experience, teaching several groups and providing demos and workshops many times. Would I be able to do the same here, in a different country with dancers known for their restraint and discretion? In Holland for instance, people when they dance use all parts of their bodies but in Sweden people have much more reserve. However, I felt very lucky to be supported by my own dance team and my husband.

Felling quite nervous, we finally got onto the dance floor. Suddenly, we realised other dancers were just standing, not because they were ignoring us but because they were watching us. They were very excited by our performance and wanted to learn our routine. And I have to say that I had never had a workshop so easy. One of the dances I taught was Zjozzy's Funk. Back then, this now internationally known dance was a bit of a scoop. Our differences just vanished and fell away. Dance had become our universal language and the whole crowd was speaking not with their mouths but through their united steps. I will never forget that! We went home

hearts full of memories and with bulging pockets full of paper slips with names and addresses of our new friends.

And I am glad to say that we still have those friends. Many e-mails and telephone conversations later we have arranged for the Swedish dancers to come and visit our part of Holland at Whitsun. This will be a long weekend of dancing, visiting typical Dutch attractions, and of course meeting each other again and having the greatest of times. Swedish instructors like Thomas Malmgren, who choreographed "Hey Boy" and Dutch instructors like Wil Bos, well known from "Rebel Amor" will teach each other their hottest dances.

As for me it will be with renewed pride that I will introduce "MY" dancers and my country to those new acquaintances. And we are all looking forward to once again having the opportunity to exchange dances, live-experiences, laughs and sample some good beer.

As for the future, we hope to eventually make these visits an annual tradition and why not a great social Line dance event where dancers from different countries meet each other and share their main love of Line dance. And wherever you are, feel free to join us. See you on a dance floor soon!

Astrid

