

2024 DANCING WITH PAUL

What could go wrong? I agreed to stand in for Fiona's two classes as teacher while she took off on a holiday with her girlfriend from her childhood. I foolishly thought this would be a cinch. I had a list of dances Fiona had covered before, plus the music and equipment to support the classes, even down to the dance order for each of the five classes I would cover. As I waved good-bye to Fiona and her friend, little did I know of the trouble I'd got myself into. I mean these ladies in each class were as I believed "veterans of cultural dance who would probably lead me" and not really need me at all.



Well, despite the smiles on their faces, I was lured into the middle, because they didn't 'quite' know "Bergers Et Barons". What was I to do? I thought I knew it, but how could I be sure. The other class members all seemed to know different step versions of the same dance. Maybe they came from different villages to the one Fiona had taught me. I was almost stumped, till I took out my trusty iPhone and looked up the YouTube versions.

Saving it to a playlist group in my YouTube account. Now that was more familiar territory.



This soon became the pattern for all the dances I covered in the 5 classes.

So, each class, despite the smiles on their faces, I knew otherwise. I would be challenged to reintroduce and review each dance. PLUS, I would have to demonstrate each dance in the middle of the circle. No just tagging along for the ride.

By the end of all 5 classes my esteem for Fiona's Folk Dance teaching skill had increased immeasurably.

So, my take away, for this whole experience: Never take lightly the duty of a volunteer to cover leadership. Instead over-prepare, if possible, including

having backups. Also mmm, it is a must, to video-record all of what my dear wife has proposed as the itinerary for each class. Preferably Fiona teaching each dance.



Case in point, the novelty dance "Good Old Days" does have several YouTube circle dance variations derived from the UK. None of which are what Fiona had in mind for me to revise. She had shown me before she left, a set of hand movements, that her local group had been taught many years ago. None of which I could remember, plus all I could find on YouTube were the UK circle dances. Of course, once she showed "Good Old Days" again on her return, the penny dropped. What was I thinking? I thought, when I first revised it with my class, they had only dim recollections and that I would need to re-teach it. Not true. It was the wrong dance.

Best thing about this whole experience is the smiles on the faces of all the girls in every class. Plus, no one missed out on dance exercise or social connection because Fiona was away.



Lastly, I felt good about myself, because I trouble shot my way out of a difficulty, that I had created for myself. In other words, I dug myself out of my own And, the icing on the cake, Fiona came back to me; all smiles too, as she had had a marvellous time on a cruise with her buddy.

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