

Invitation to the Dance



On Christmas Day 2010 one present was large and rectangular. As I removed the wrapping paper I could see a box, and one with which I was familiar. What was going on? I opened the box only to find another one, which I also recognised. This process continued until the final box, which was small and shallow, just the right size for an envelope which was addressed to me.

To my amazement and delight, inside was a voucher for a dance lesson with my favourite dancer – Ian Waite. I had always been a big fan of Strictly Come Dancing – the colour, the costumes, the glamour, the clever musical arrangements, the skill of the professional dancers. I could go on!

Once, I had idly said at home, that if I could dance with one of the male professionals on the Strictly show, it would be Ian Waite – tall, versatile and amusing – the perfect dance partner! My own partner Dennis, who is very good at presents, obviously stored this away and after doing some research, discovered that it was indeed possible.

On the day, we made our way up to London, to South Kensington, where the dance studio turned out to be a very large room on the first floor of an elegant town house. Ian was waiting for us and greeted us warmly. He was very relaxed and friendly and after some initial

questions about what dancing I had done before, set about the lesson. About a million years ago, I had learned the basic steps of the main dances at school, when ballroom dancing was still considered to be a useful social skill. We started with the waltz, which was a relief because it is one of the slower ones with a simple rhythm. We (eventually) danced around the room to music. Not too bad I thought. I could count and even dance in time, but my posture and the accuracy of my foot placement needed work, not surprisingly.

Next came the foxtrot, which was new to me and after quite a bit of practice and demonstration from Ian, we tried that one to music too. This was more of a challenge, but I was learning all the time and my teacher was patient and good humoured. To correct my posture at one point Ian told me to “look at the parrot Jan”, which I had to imagine was perched on his shoulder.

The last dance we did was the jive, which was a far cry from the twisting whirling chaos of the dance I remembered from my teenage years. The boys we danced with then weren't much better than us, the main objective being to impress the right one and not to fall over! The jive done by dance professionals is slick, quick and great fun.

I think perhaps I got a bit better during the lesson. It was certainly an experience I will remember for a long time.

After the lesson Dennis took some photos of Ian and I, so that I could prove to unbelievers that I really had danced with my favourite dancer.



Jan Rees

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