Preparation for Performance for Highland Dancers

Sho Botham
Preparation for Performance for Highland Dancers
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for performance</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Training Skills</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk the self-talk</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affirmations</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental simulation of movement</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breathing and Relaxation</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less is more</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breathing</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent exhaling</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tense and release relaxation technique</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive muscle relaxation - PMR</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balls and bands</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foot exercises on the ball</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extras for feet</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible exercise band</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not the end, just the beginning</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions for further reading</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preparation for performance

If you want to have an edge on your fellow Highland dancing competitors then this book is for you. There are skills that you can learn and use to help you consistently deliver your best dance performance.

These are not technical dance skills. They are mental training skills that help you cope with the demands of competitive performance. They have been adapted from ones that the top athletes and sportspeople use in their preparations for performance.

When several dancers of an equally high standard are competing against each other, the one with the best chance of winning is likely to have the edge mentally. She will be able to cope with the pressures of competition, remain focused throughout her performances and believe in her ability to win. She won’t be the one thinking about the ‘what ifs’. She won’t be asking herself ‘what if I kick the swords today’ or ‘what if I slip on the platform’.

One of the ways that you can reduce the chance of this happening is to become more aware of how your muscles feel.
Being able to feel if your muscles are too tense is the first step in being able to reduce the tension that is preventing progress. If you can’t feel the tension then you won’t know that you need to reduce it. The mind body awareness methods in this book will help you to develop your ability to feel muscle tension when you dance as well as when you are resting.

This book introduces some key preparation for performance skills for Highland dancers and is divided into the following three sections:-

- **Mental training skills**

- **Breathing and relaxation techniques**

- **Practical exercises using balls and bands.**
Mental training skills

This section introduces three mental training techniques that with practise, can help you to improve your focus, confidence and control.
Talk the self-talk

What do you think about and say to yourself when you are preparing to dance?

Do you accentuate the positive or the negative? Do you focus on how well prepared you are to perform – reminding yourself that you have practised well and you are ready to dance? Or is your mind full of everything that you cannot change today before you dance?

Do you get onto the platform thinking “I know I’ll kick my swords today” or “I know my backsteps are no good” or “that judge doesn’t like my dancing”. If you do, then you won’t be surprised when you, kick your swords, mess up your backsteps and don’t get placed. After all you have talked yourself into these things. What you want to talk to yourself about are the positive things about your performance and you can do this by practicing positive self-talk.

First of all you need to recognise the negative self-statements you focus on so that you can do something about changing them into positive ones. Doing the following activity will help you to do this.

Write down the usual type of negative self-statements that you have experienced relating to dance or performing. Then write a positive alternative statement in the second column that is meaningful for you and will motivate you to achieve a positive attitude and behaviour. An example is given to help you.
Practise positive self-talk regularly and you will find the skill gets better and better. Create your own positive self-talk statements that you can use in your preparations for performance and during performance. Adopt an “I can do” attitude and see what a difference it makes to your performance.

Enjoy your performance. Tell yourself how good you feel when you are dancing and don’t sweat about technique that you want to work on next week. Just as dancing takes time to learn and perfect, mental skills need to be worked at. The improved performance is well worth the effort.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I expect she will win again”</td>
<td>“I know I can dance well today”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Negative thoughts and self-talk – negatively affect your performance

Positive thoughts and self-talk – positively affect your performance
Affirmations

Affirmations are regular positive statements. You can write affirmations down and read them often or say them to yourself regularly.

If you are a tennis fan you might have noticed that some of the top tennis players have affirmations written down that they refer to each time they have a short break. When you are creating affirmations, they should be positive, specific and in the present.

Here are some suggestions to get you started:

- *I am dancing well today*
- *I feel strong today*
- *I can win today*

You can write your own affirmations below. Refer to them regularly and repeat them to yourself several times each day.

My Affirmations
Mental simulation of movement

I have always been a fan of dancing in my head. Right from when I was a young dance student I was encouraged to use imagery to help with getting the feel of a step or movement.

One way that I use imagery is when I imagine that I am dancing movements, steps or dances exactly as if I am performing them for real. The images in my mind are very vivid. And I totally feel as if I am dancing, I can hear the music, I can feel the effort, I can feel the joy of each achievement.

I use this method to help me learn new movements or choreography as well as for working on things I already know. Sport psychologist, Professor David Collins has called this type of imagery, mental simulation of movement or MSM.

Imagine that you are dancing a step. If you can do this you are beginning to use MSM. You can develop your imagery skills by using them regularly. As I said earlier it is just like dancing in your head.

Everything that you feel, see, hear and do when you dance is there in your mental rehearsal.

You are aiming to develop your mental rehearsal skills so that you can use them as an effective preparation for performing.

Your dance teacher may give you some images to help you to visualise and feel your performance. And you will want to create your own images that are meaningful to you.
The following activity is a good way to begin exploring imagery.

Imagery activity

- Sit comfortably, breathe slowly and close your eyes
- Try to picture the studio or venue where you dance
- Try to see everything and everybody in the room
- Try to hear the music you dance to
- Try to feel your feet in your dance shoes
- Continue exploring your images until your focus starts to go
- Breathe slowly and open your eyes
Breathing and relaxation

This section introduces you to a variety of breathing and relaxation techniques.
Less is more

As I mentioned earlier you can try too hard. The result of putting in excess effort can be tense or even rigid muscles. When your muscles are full of excess tension it is a bit like trying to dance with big heavy boots on.

Your muscles struggle to do their best because for them it is like trying to swim against the tide. They cannot move freely and rhythmically so your performance suffers. This is where breathing and relaxation skills can help. They can help you to recognise and release muscle tension.
Breathing

I remember being a guest teacher at a summer school for Highland dancers in California in the 1970’s.

I was asked to work with the students to improve their technique and performance. My first session was the sword dance. When I observed the students dancing I immediately realised that the best thing I could help them with was their breathing.

Some dancers were out of breath before they got to the end of the first step of the sword dance. Others were breathing in and forgetting to breathe out. And some were collapsing their back every time they landed in a pas de basque which was exhausting for them and of course did nothing for their posture.

So in agreement with the students I taught some breathing exercises and by the end of the first session they were all breathing and dancing differently. They felt better when they danced and this showed in their performance. Word soon got round the other students and teachers and I was asked to change all of my sessions throughout the week to focus on breathing for Highland dancing.

Students and teachers were keen to attend and even I was amazed by the improvement in performance by the end of the week.

This tale reminds me that one of the best pieces of advice I was given during my dance training was to breathe out.

We were taught to be aware of the ‘out breath’ and of the need to breathe out fully to make room for fresh new air to fill our lungs. I knew I found it helpful at the time but I never imagined just how useful it would be throughout my life. I have used the ‘out breath’ all through my dance career – in class, performance and choreography as well as in teaching. But it has not only been valuable in dance, I teach people who don’t dance about the ‘out breath’ and it’s usefulness in improving breathing generally as well as helping with the sorts of aches and pains relating to muscular tension and stress.

You can practise breath work on its own, as an integral part of the relaxation techniques and also as you do the ball and band exercises given.
Excellent exhaling

The breathing exercises below help you to become more aware of using the ‘out breath’.

You should feel that you are naturally breathing more deeply after doing them and be more aware of the breathing muscles and areas around your chest and back. When you first start practicing ‘out breath’ work, you might find yourself yawning or wanting to stretch as if you have just wakened up.

This is normal and the good thing is that this gets your breathing muscles working. If at first you find yourself accidentally focusing on the ‘in breath’ which can often happen, you might find you experience a little light-headedness or dizziness because your oxygen levels get a bit high. Working on the ‘out breath’ can alleviate these symptoms because it helps the oxygen levels in the body to return to normal.

If you experience these sorts of symptoms when you dance or exercise it is advisable to ask your doctor or health professional just to make sure that there isn’t anything else causing them.

Focus on the ‘out breath’

Breathe naturally and focus on how you are breathing. Think about the length of time your ‘in breaths’ and ‘out breaths’ take. Begin to focus on the ‘out breath’ making it a little longer than the ‘in breath’. Imagine that you are trying to empty your lungs before taking your next ‘in breath’. This should be a gentle process and not forced.

Breathing through your nose

You can also do the above exercise breathing through your nose all the time. This slows your breathing down and has a calming effect. So it can be useful to do any time your performance nerves are making you feel particularly anxious.

Making ‘sss’ sounds

Focus on making a ‘sss’ sound on the ‘out breath’. Make the ‘sss’ sound all the time you are breathing out and let the ‘in breath’ follow naturally. With practise you will be able to breathe out for longer.
This exercise is good for relieving tense muscles and is often used in warm up exercises in, for example, Modern and Jazz Dance.

**Making ‘haa’ sounds**

Opening your mouth and making soft `haa’ sounds each time you breathe out is a good way of releasing tension in the jaw, neck and shoulder muscles. Imagine you are breathing on a mirror and misting it up. This exercise was a favourite of an old Tai Chi Master I met in the Far East and I like it too. Think about how your neck and shoulders feel after doing this exercise for a few minutes. Turn your head to 2nd position. Does it turn more freely?

**Breathing and jumping**

Your goal is to be able to improve your breathing when you are dancing so the next step is to focus on the `out breath’ as you jump in 1st position. Aim for a steady, rhythmical, `in breath’ and `out breath’ as you jump. Try breathing in over four jumps and then breathing out over the next four. Imagine that your lungs are empty by the end of your `out breath’.

Once you have mastered breathing and jumping then try it using a step out of a dance. The first and last steps of the Fling are good ones to use initially. Again you can use the four count breath in and out.

There is no rule about exactly how long each breath should be so see how you feel. You can always adjust the timing of your breathing so that it is right for you.

Once you have mastered synchronising your breathing with individual steps you can experiment with a whole dance. It can take some time for you to feel that your breathing and dancing are working in perfect harmony but it is worth the effort. Imagine yourself getting to the end of the Seann Triubhas feeling fresh and not out of breath.

Being able to focus on the `out breath’ will be very useful when you practise relaxation skills. There are two techniques given. The first one increases your ability to recognise varying degrees of muscle tension before relaxing and releasing it. The second one you can use in your pre-performance preparations to ensure your muscles are free from excess tension and ready for action.
Tense and release relaxation technique

The tense and release technique develops awareness of varying levels of tension in your muscles in different areas of your body.

It helps you to recognise and feel the difference between light, medium and strong muscle tension. This is important so you can feel when excess muscle tension starts and relax it before it becomes a problem. You will also be better able to feel the amount of tension you are using to engage your muscles when you dance.

Highland dancers often tighten the muscles in the arms and shoulders as a way of keeping them steady when they dance. But this can actually make it more difficult to maintain steady arms because of the increased tension it encourages. This affects posture and alignment.

The following checklist takes you through a full body tense and release relaxation session. Lie down on your back. You can put a cushion under your knees to support them. Let your legs find their natural position.

This is usually rolling outwards from the hips. We will start from the feet and work upwards to the head but you can start at the head and work towards the feet if you prefer.

Checklist

You are going to explore three degrees of muscle tension, strong, medium and light or minimal. Strong is when you tense your muscles as much as you can. Medium is when you use half the amount of available tension and minimal is the lightest amount of tension when you are hardly using any tension at all. Remember to breathe and focus on the `out breath’ throughout the whole process.

Before you start take a moment to get comfortable. Let the floor support you. Sigh to begin releasing any tension. Become aware of the rhythm of your breathing.
Begin to focus on the `out breath’. If you wish you can close your eyes. When you are ready begin with:-

### Lower legs and feet

- Tense your lower legs and feet by pointing your right toes as strongly as you can. Feel the tension then let it go.
- Repeat on the right side again but only use half the amount of tension this time. Feel the tension and then relax.
- Repeat once more on the right side but only use minimal tension this time. Feel this amount of tension and then relax.

Repeat all on your left side and remember to focus on the `out breath’.

### Upper legs

- Tense your right thigh and buttock as strongly as you can. Feel the tension and then relax.
- Repeat this process again for medium tension and also minimal tension. Remember to focus on what each level of tension feels like and then relax it.

Repeat all on your left side and think about your breathing.

### Arms

- Tense your right arm and clench your fist as strongly as you can. Notice how the tension feels then relax.
- Repeat this process twice more. Once with medium tension and finally with minimal tension.

Repeat all on your left side. Remember to breathe.

### Abdomen

- Tense your abdominal muscles by drawing them downwards towards the floor as strongly as you can. Feel the tension then relax.
- Repeat the process with medium and minimal tension. Remember to relax each time. Focus on the `out breath’.

### Neck and shoulders

- Tense your neck and shoulder muscles by lifting up your shoulders towards your ears as strongly as you can (shrugging).

Feel the tension then relax.

- Repeat with medium and then with minimal tension. Remember to relax each time. Take a moment to focus fully on your breathing and enjoy it.
Face

- Tighten your jaw and screw up all the muscles in your face as strongly as you can. Feel the tension and then relax.

- Repeat for medium and then minimal tension.

Think about your breathing still focusing on the ‘out breath’ and enjoy feeling relaxed. When you are ready, stretch your feet gently away from you, open your eyes if they have been closed and roll onto your side. Slowly get up when you are ready.

You can practice using all three levels of tension initially and as you become more aware of how each level feels you may want to do the tension and release relaxation checklist using just one or two levels, for example, using medium and minimal or just minimal. If you find it difficult to get to sleep the night before a competition then try doing a relaxation session to see if it helps.

Do you want to improve your quality of sleep? Try doing a relaxation session in bed before you go to sleep.

The next relaxation method is:-

Progressive muscle relaxation – PMR

Progressive muscle relaxation or PMR, is the technique that the top athletes use before competition to ensure their muscles are not too tense.

It can also act as an aid to coping with performance nerves and help to improve performance. Practise PMR regularly so you are able to access the benefits of it when you need it most, for example in your preparations before an important performance at a competition.
A PMR session might only take a few moments or it can be quite lengthy. You can adjust it to suit the time you have available.

As with most skills it takes practice. The better you become at PMR the more benefit you will be able to get from each session.

The following is a quick checklist for a short PMR session working through the main muscle groups. Choose somewhere quiet for your session. If you wish you can put on some relaxing background music.

Lie down in your chosen comfortable position, relax your body, letting the floor support you. Sigh to begin release of tension. Focus on your slow, rhythmic breathing and on the out breath. If you wish you can close your eyes.

- Right lower leg and foot – tense muscles by pointing your toes, hold the tension for 5 or 6 seconds then relax. Feel the muscular tension and the relaxation. Repeat the tense and release before repeating on left leg and foot twice.

- Right thigh and buttocks – tense and relax (for 5 or 6 seconds) twice then repeat twice for left side.

- Tense and relax your right arm twice and then the left (clench your fist when you do this)

- Tense and relax your abdominal muscles twice

- Tense and relax the muscles of your neck and shoulders twice by lifting your shoulders up to your ears and then relaxing them (shrugging)

- Tense and relax the muscles of your face by tensing the jaw and frowning – do this twice.

Do a brief mental check for any remaining tension throughout the body – focus on relaxing and breathing

Enjoy feeling your muscles relaxed. When you are ready slowly start to move and stretch gently, opening your eyes if they were closed. Continue to focus on your breathing as you gently roll onto one side and slowly sit up.

You should now feel relaxed, refreshed and ready for action.
Balls and bands

This section introduces you to some simple but effective exercises that give you results that you can feel and see.
Small massage and rolling balls and flexible exercise bands are wonderful accessories for every dancer. They don't take up much room so you can take them with you and use them wherever you are. There are endless ways that you can use balls and bands to release tension, re-align the body, strengthen and stretch. So I have chosen a few that are particularly useful for Highland dancers to get you started.

**Spikey ball**

The spikey ball is great as a convenient little massager. It stimulates the circulation and can help to relieve tension. If you have an injury, ask your medical or health professional for advice before attempting to massage the site with a spikey ball. You can also use a spikey ball for many of the exercises given as long as it feels comfortable.

**Rolling ball**

You can use a rolling ball to relax on, sit on, lie on, lean on and roll on. It can help to relieve muscle and soft tissue tension, reduce stress or anxiety and free up joints for ease of movement. The rolling ball uses your own body weight draped or moving on the ball combined with good breathing to get results.

**Flexible exercise band**

A flexible exercise band is designed to provide resistance. Bands come in different degrees of resistance and these are denoted by different colours, for example, red for medium and blue for heavy. As each manufacturer has its own colour system band colours may not always be the same. You can use them for strengthening and flexibility exercises.

None of exercises here require you to use force. They encourage the body to release tension and free up joints gently.

Highland dancing is very demanding for the feet. There is constant hopping and springing. And also you have to be able to take the weight onto different parts of the feet, for example, the half point. All of this requires your feet to be strong, flexible and ideally not full of tension.

Foot exercises using balls and bands can help you to achieve this. When you do foot exercises on a ball the positive reactions don’t just stop at the feet. The benefits can be felt right up to the shoulders and beyond. Check out how your shoulders feel after doing one or two exercises for the feet on a ball.

**Think R words - Relax, Release, Revitalise and Re-energise**
Foot exercises on the ball

Feel your foot on the ball. Seated – place your instep on the ball and let it relax on the ball. Breathe and let the foot sink into the ball.

What can you feel? Focus on the ‘out breath’ and let the weight of your foot relax into the ball. Spend maybe 1 or 2 minutes doing this before moving onto:-

Foot rolling

Seated – roll the full length of your foot on the ball from heel to toes and from toes to heel. Feel each part of your foot making contact with the ball as it rolls back and forth.

Imagine your foot moving slowly and rhythmically like a paintbrush brushing the ball with paint. Try varying the pressure of your foot on the ball and feel any differences. Do this exercise for 2 to 3 minutes and remember to breathe. Foot rolling on the ball using a spikey ball is a great way to ease out your feet after dancing.
**Ankle flexing**

Seated – Flex your ankle and place your heel on the ball. It will sink into the ball. Release your foot letting your toes drop down to the floor. Your heel will still be on the ball. Do this a few times. Remember to breathe.

Move your toes slowly from side to side remembering to breathe. Do this a few times.

**On your toes**

Seated – lift your knee and point your toes on top of the ball. Roll the ball a little way forward and back moving it with your toes. Then release your foot over the ball. Do this a few times, remembering to breathe.

You can also do this exercise using the toes to make the ball move in small circles in either direction before releasing your foot over the ball. If your instep cramps during the toe movements then stop and let your foot release over the ball. The risk of cramping reduces as the muscles in your feet become more toned and flexible.

Work through these exercises with one foot and then change the ball over to the other foot and begin again. Check periodically how your

**Side to side**

Seated – Start with your ankle flexed and your heel on the ball as for ‘ankle flexing’ exercise.
foot, leg and hip feels. You will probably notice a difference in the side that has done the exercises when you compare it with the side that has still to do them. I find that my foot has a better connection with the floor after doing these exercises. It feels as if it is sinking into the floor.

**Extras for feet**

**Mexican waves**

Seated – you can do this one with both feet at the same time or singly if you prefer. With your foot/feet flat on the floor, lift the toes and starting with the little toe/s lower them, one at a time, to the floor. Do this a few times to get your toes moving independently. Remember to breathe as you do your toe Mexican waves.

**Peppermint foot dip**

One or two peppermint tea bags added to the water before soaking your feet can be very refreshing. Peppermint tea can stain so be sure to rinse your feet thoroughly before drying them to avoid giving a green tinge to your towels or bath mat. *If you have an existing condition that affects your feet such as diabetes then seek medical advice as foot soaks might not be suitable for you.*

**Flexible exercise band**

**Foot and ankle strengthening**

Sit and place the band around the ball of one foot. Hold an end of the band in each hand and keep some tension in it. Flex your foot to begin. Point your foot, working through the ball and then the toes. Flex the foot to return to your starting position. Do 10 reps on each side. Remember to breathe.

**Ankle turning with the band**

Start as you did for ‘foot and ankle strengthening’. Slowly circle the ankle inwards 10 times and then outwards 10 times. Maintain some tension in the band and keep breathing throughout. Swap the band over and do the same number of reps on the other side.
Double feet with the band

Sit with legs in front of you parallel and loop the band around both feet. Hold the band in both hands and slowly circle both ankles inwards 10 times and then outwards 10 times.

Hamstring stretch

Lie down on your back with knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Bend one knee up and loop band under the ball of your foot. Hold band in both hands and slowly start to straighten your leg upwards towards the ceiling. Keep your tailbone anchored on the floor. You should feel a comfortable stretch in your hamstring muscles at the back of your thigh. There is no need to force it.

To reduce the stretch release the knee, to increase the stretch flex your foot. Hold the stretch for 20-30 seconds and then bend the knee and return your foot to the floor. Swap the band over to the other foot and do the stretch again. Remember to breathe.

Lots of Highland dancers experience tension in their shoulders after dancing. This next exercise is especially good for easing out the shoulders before and after dancing.

Before you try this exercise take a moment to place your arms in 2nd position and focus on how your shoulders feel. Note any tension or tightness.

Shoulder and back release

Lie down on your back. Sigh to release tension and rest for a few moments, sinking into the floor.

Place a ball between your shoulder blades and let your body sink into the ball. Remember to breathe.

You may need to move the ball slightly until you are able to rest on the ball and relax. Spend a minute or so breathing and letting your body sink into the ball. Feel any areas of tension releasing.

Remove the ball and feel your body sinking into the floor. How do your shoulders feel? If you have several tight areas in and around your shoulders then you can do this exercise again moving the ball to a tense area and repeat as before. As you get used to lying on a ball you will probably want to spend longer doing this exercise.
After doing the shoulder and back release try placing 2nd position of the arms again. Think about how your shoulders feel now? Do they feel different? Do you notice any other changes?

Relaxing on a ball like this is a wonderful way to release a lot of the tension that can be carried in and around the shoulders.

Ball and band exercises can be used as part of your warm up and cool down.

Not the end, just the beginning …

Now that you have taken the first step into preparation for performance you can put your new skills into practise.

Remember, excellence in Highland dancing takes time to develop and so do the skills you have explored in this book. With regular practise they will help you to enhance your preparations and performances. Over time you can learn and use more of these types of skills to help you to be the best performer you can possibly be.
Suggestions for further reading

Botham S (2007) Preparation for Performance article in Linedancer Magazine Issue 131 Southport Champion Media Group


Preparation for Performance for Highland Dancers

Workshops for dancers or teachers with Sho Botham

Telephone coaching and skills training can also be made available for some of the topics covered in this book.

Professional development and training opportunities for dance teachers.

decodanz
Archer House, Britland Estate,
Northbourne Road, Eastbourne,
East Sussex BN22 8PW, UK

www.decodanz.co.uk
email: info@decodanz.co.uk
Tel: +44 (0)1323 638833

Balls and bands can be purchased from decodanz.

www.decodanz.co.uk
Sho Botham is a dance and health education consultant. Her extensive experience in the dance profession as a dancer, choreographer, researcher and educator is complimented with a MA in Health Education from the University of Brighton.

She designs and delivers dance teacher training and professional development via her business decodanz based in Eastbourne, East Sussex. She also collaborates with dance teaching examining bodies and dance organisations on various projects.

Sho has a good understanding of the world of Highland dancing as she was a Highland Champion herself before embarking on her professional dance career. She was also a SOBHD adjudicator. Sho was trained in Scotland by her mother the late Jean Marino.

Sho is on the Council of Management of the United Kingdom Alliance of Professional Teachers of Dancing (UKA), a member of the International Association for Dance Medicine & Science and writes regularly about dance and health related issues. She is a regular presenter at conferences worldwide. She is currently a PhD student researching ethics and dance at the University of Brighton's Chelsea School.
In Preparation for Performance for Highland Dancers, dance and health education consultant Sho Botham introduces non dance technique skills for Highland dancers as an effective aid to enhancing performance.

The book’s three main sections cover:- basic mental training skills adapted from ones used by top athletes; breathing and relaxation techniques and practical exercises using balls and bands.

This is a book written for Highland dancers by someone who understands Highland dancing as a dancer, teacher and adjudicator.