



From top, Artem Chigvintsev, Robin Windsor and Jared Murillo, but who else will be joining "Strictly" this year?

Main photograph © Nicola Rayner. Insets, courtesy of BBC

Strictly returns!

Contestants for this year's

"Strictly Come Dancing" will be revealed in a special launch show, broadcast on September 11, three weeks before the series starts. The celebrities and dancers will be filmed arriving on a red carpet outside the BBC Television Centre.

Inside the studio, for the first time ever, viewers will see the celebrities being paired with their

professional partners on the new "Strictly" set. The identity of partners will be kept secret until they meet on the "Strictly" floor, giving the audience the chance to see every reaction. The BBC's Mark Linsey called the "red carpet event" the ideal way to launch "a series that features more excitement and glamour than ever before". The launch show will also feature a group

dance, a first glimpse of the celebrities' dance talents.

Meanwhile, Matthew Cutler and Lilia Kopylova follow Brian Fortuna in quitting the show. In this year's format changes, they were among the dancers asked to perform in the professional troupe, instead of partnering celebrities. Ian Waite and Darren Bennett have been confirmed as part of the professional troupe, while four new recruits – one male and three female – will be announced later this year. Though Bruce Forsyth will continue to present the main Saturday show, he will no longer appear in the results show.

Artem Chigvintsev, one of the three new male dancers already announced for this series, has had to return to the US to reapply for a UK work visa. Problems arose when Chigvintsev's run in the West End show *Burn The Floor* overlapped with the start of his "Strictly" work. Due to visa restrictions, Chigvintsev was only available for 20 hours for that overlap week. The BBC cancelled his appointment so that he could fulfil his obligations to *Burn The Floor*. Now that his visa for the show has finished, Chigvintsev has returned to the US to apply for a new visa for "Strictly", and is expected back in time for the start of the series.



Photograph © Kat Hannon

Sad news for attendees of Stardust Ball at Fulham Town Hall, as Hammersmith and Fulham Council is planning to sell the building in a reaction to Government cuts. "It's scandalous that the council is validating its decision by claiming the hall's underused," says Stardust Ball's Mark Kendal. "It's underused because they do nothing to promote it, refuse to invest in repairs and charge above top commercial rate for hire, but

its size and aesthetics make it potentially the perfect ballroom venue. It's obscene to sell this crown jewel property in a fire sale and deprive residents of a fantastic amenity."

Stardust Ball continues in Putney (www.stardustball.co.uk), but the loss of Fulham Town Hall would be a major blow to the dance community. If you agree, join the "Save Fulham Town Hall" Facebook group.

Marianka Swain

Arlene the author

Arlene Phillips is writing a series of children's books set in the world of dance. The heroine of the Alana Dancing Star series is named after Arlene's own eldest daughter. Written for an audience of seven and over, each book shows Alana taking on a new dance style. "It's not just ballet, as most dance books tend to



be," Arlene explains. "I will go over all genres of dance." In the first, *Samba Spectacular*, Alana's search for a dress for her dancing school show takes her to a magic costume shop – and she finds herself dancing in Brazil's famous Carnival. Published by Faber and Faber, the first two books are released in October.

Quickstep through the news

Revisit an era when the Royal Opera House was one of the most popular dance venues in the capital with a tea dance at the Paul Hamlyn Hall. The next dance takes place on October 10 and dancers are invited to sway to the strains of the Royal Opera House Dance Band. Tickets are £10, booking in advance is recommended (020 7304 4000).

A Latin gala extravaganza takes place on October 9, courtesy of DanceMyWay, at Baden-Powell House 65–67 Queen's Gate London SW7 5JS. Tickets also include access to the after-show party. To book, contact Monika@dancemyway.co.uk or call 0786 686 1287.

Haven Holidays, who host dance events and festivals, have launched a new website. Visit www.havengroups.co.uk/events

Dance to London's Rhythm is searching for East London's next big dance act. The winners will receive a professionally filmed session with Elizabeth Honan, who has choreographed for Cheryl Cole and JLS. Upload videos of you or your group performing to www.dlrlondon.co.uk/Dance-to-London-s-Rhythm. The top five will be invited to an audition day on October 2.