

# University challenge

Defending champions Tudor Balan and Janet Gooi (Manchester) were beaten into second place in the Advanced Latin



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For dancers used to practising in union halls with floors sticky from club nights, the Winter Gardens is a big step up – literally when it comes to travelling across the floor. Dominant clubs Oxford and Cambridge rose to the challenge, with the former narrowly triumphing in the team match and overall standings.

Rachelle, who has competed with both, comments: “Oxbridge students are very motivated, and success breeds success – they have a tradition of being in the top three to uphold! They also attract lots of foreign students, some of whom have a strong dance background, and many people stay on for postgraduate degrees, which gives the team continuity.”

However, the competition was far from predictable. In the advanced ballroom, Nottingham’s Graham Dixon and Robyn Price knocked defending champions Arman Sahovic and Maria Naumchenko (Imperial) off the top spot. Graham and Robyn’s musicality shone through, although Arman and Maria had impressive dynamism.

Other standouts were Daniel Silva and Sarah Farrell (Oxford), who jazzed up their quickstep with a tap jump, and statuesque Oliver Zeldin and Haibo E’s (Oxford) committed characterisation.

Arman and Maria got their revenge in the advanced Latin by unseating defending champions Tudor Balan and Janet Gooi (Manchester). The latter were arguably more versatile performers, with Janet working the crowd magnificently, but Arman and

While most students enjoyed a Saturday morning snooze, 1,100 of them processed down deserted Blackpool streets at 8:30am on March 5. Rival university teams eyed their branded-hoodie-wearing competitors, travelling in packs to their final destination: the Winter Gardens.

Reaffirming its position as the biggest event on the student

dancesport calendar, the 49th Inter Varsity Dance Competition (IVDC), expertly run by host club Featherwaits, attracted dancers from more than 30 universities. “The student dance scene grows every year, and it’s great to see new clubs getting involved,” observes EADA’s Rachelle Stretch, who has organised IVDC twice. “There are now about 13,000 students dancing in IVDA-affiliated societies.”

Maria’s razor-sharp technique made them worthy winners.

Warwick’s James Watson and Georgia Smith won the Non-Acrobatic Rock and Roll contest, a feast of wit, character and polka dots, while Cambridge took the top four places in the stunt-filled Acrobatic version, with Adrian Potter and Amy Welmers triumphing.

Inspiring them to further feats of daring (and possibly higher insurance) were demonstration couple Steve Turok and Laura Cope with their gravity-defying display. A second demonstration came from British National Professional and International Rising Star Professional finalists Gunnar Gunnarsson and Amy Bennett, whose assured Latin performance included a slick, sexy cha cha cha and a lyrical rumba with unusual lifts.

The most diverse event was the freestyle Offbeat. Winning troupe Birmingham performed backflips, hip hop, contemporary and even the haka in their circus-themed piece, fighting off strong competition from Warwick’s too-cool-for-school kids and the technically assured *A Chorus Line* tribute from Leeds.

Rachelle, who has created a competition guide for the IVDA and EADA websites, would love to see more current students and ex-students competing, “which

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## IVDC 2011 WINNERS

**Advanced ballroom:** Graham Dixon and Robyn Price (Nottingham)

**Intermediate ballroom:** Marc Van Huizen and Sarah Walker (Warwick)

**Novice ballroom:** Dimitris Denisjonok and Nina Jiang (Nottingham)

**Beginners waltz and quickstep:** Artem Kadikov and Belinda Ball (Oxford)

**Advanced Latin:** Arman Sahovic and Maria Naumchenko (Imperial)

**Intermediate Latin:** Patrick Moreno and Man Luo (Bristol)

**Novice Latin:** Steven Griffiths and Aimee Cridland (Cardiff)

**Beginners jive:** Kevin Hau and Alice Bowen (Southampton)

**Beginners cha cha:** Youyi Hwang and Sandra Thomas (Cambridge)

**Ex-student novice ballroom:** Pakorn Aiewsakun and Siegfried Ip (Imperial)

**Ex-student ballroom five-dance:** Tadas Zgiris and Sarah Smith (Bath)

**Ex-student novice Latin:** Mike Chen and Helen Mckenzie (Cardiff)

**Ex-student Latin five-dance:** Alex Hobbs and Tamara Thompson (Leicester)

**Non-acrobatic rock and roll:** James Watson and Georgia Smith (Warwick)

**Acrobatic rock and roll:** Adrian Potter and Amy Welmers (Cambridge)

**Team Division 1:** Oxford A

**Team Division 2:** Royal Holloway A

**Offbeat:** Birmingham

is why the role of EADA-IVDA liaison officer was created; it can be daunting to move onto the open circuit, losing the safety net of a team and dealing with the pressures of work. However, some have had great success, such as Fai Assakul, who started

dancing at Cambridge and went on to place fifth at the UK Closed Professional Latin Championships in 2004.”

Whether future stars or those briefly swapping the lecture hall for the ballroom, the assembled students gave one another tremendous support, screaming for their clubs and packing the Empress Ballroom floor for the disco, united by their shared passion for this rather special extra-curricular activity. ●

**MARIANKA SWAIN**