



# STEPPING OUT

In this month's column, **Marianka Swain** delves into the world of same-sex dancewear design and looks forward to the Pink Jukebox Trophy

**“T**he key thing is to create something that catches a judge's eye, but doesn't take away from the movement,” explains dancewear designer Stuart Targett ([www.stuarttargettdesign.com](http://www.stuarttargettdesign.com)). Fellow designer George Tzoulas ([gtzoulas@hotmail.com](mailto:gtzoulas@hotmail.com)) agrees: “It should enhance the dancing, but not upstage it. It's all about balance.”

The idea of balance is a recurring one, with George noting he enjoys “achieving the right masculine/feminine balance for each couple. I don't like identical outfits, as you don't see two people – just a bunch of fabric. You have to create a picture – emphasise their frame in ballroom, so maybe cover the leader's arms to give them a stronger baseline in hold.”

Desiree Edwards ([www.desiredesignsdesiree.co.uk](http://www.desiredesignsdesiree.co.uk)), who is interested in designing for same-sex couples, shares this philosophy: “I would want to have a common theme, but use slight differences, such as skirt length, sleeve style, colour and texture, to reflect the couple's dynamic.”

The personalities of the dancers are significant to Stuart:

“I don't just adapt the mainstream male/female look. Sometimes, couples want to emphasise their leader/follower roles more strongly, or they're more versatile; it should reflect their relationship. I love it when they come with ideas, even if it's just a magazine cutting or a piece of fringing – it helps me create something they're really passionate about wearing.”

However, the process can also involve some negotiation, notes George: “I take into account their preferences, such as certain necklines, but I also guide them, suggesting colours that match their skin tone. And I consider their budget – you don't need thousands of stones to make something look great; often, it's about finding the right cut.”

Stuart, who also designs for theatre and opera, draws on his historical knowledge, such as using corsets as a base for waistcoats to flatter the figure, and enjoys “recycling – like Michelle Enright's dress [which featured on the cover of the April 2010 *Dance Today*], which she brought to me. I took the skirt off

and put on a swing skirt with a slit, contrasting cuffs and collar and appliqué, which transformed it from junior to gorgeous.”

George, whose mother was a dressmaker, understands the power of great design: “If you're confident in how you look, it makes a huge difference – dancing is a performing art. When I get to know my clients, they inspire me to create, and when they're dancing, they radiate those inner personalities to everyone watching. It's an honour to assist in that.”

You'll see plenty of wonderful dancewear creations on display at the annual Pink Jukebox Trophy ([www.pinkjukebox.co.uk/2005%20Trophy](http://www.pinkjukebox.co.uk/2005%20Trophy)) at London's Rivoli Ballroom, which takes place on February 19; deadline for entries is February 1. We'll bring you a full report in the March issue. ●



Stuart Barrett (in the red coat) and Thomas Michael Voss dancing at the Gay Games in Cologne 2010