



STEPPING OUT

It's competition time this month as **Marianka Swain** reports on the Vienna Dance Contest and the UK Fun Competition

Vienna Dance Contest (www.viennadancecontest.at) organiser Roswitha Wetschka is still reeling from their record year: "We were worried numbers might be down, but they exceeded our wildest expectations. We had 105 competitors from 11 countries, plus more than 250 enthusiastic spectators."

The contest is now in its sixth year "and it keeps getting bigger and better! We try to combine friendliness with efficiency, so the social side is very important, but we also have experienced professionals running the competition.

"In Austria, you normally separate social and competitive events, but we're proud to offer a combination – you can come to the contest and keep that great atmosphere going for the ball. This year, Guyz in Sync performed and were a huge hit – one new Austrian fan asked: 'Can we keep them?'"

Roswitha notes the location is an added bonus: "You can have a holiday as well. Our hosts generously double as tour guides – some even add



Top and above, dancers at the Vienna Dance Contest

aspects of gay and lesbian history to their itineraries.

"From the first-night drinks to the farewell brunch, we make people feel welcome and give them the chance to make new friends. The local studios and organisations offer invaluable

support and take great pride in making this international event the best it can possibly be."

Next year's competition takes place on September 29.

Closer to home, the annual UK Fun Competition (www.funcompetition.co.uk) took place on October 1 at London's Rivoli Ballroom, allowing competition newcomers to test the water.

"It was wonderful to see new faces from all over the UK and even from France," says organiser Vernon Kemp. "One couple said afterwards it was fabulous to have a go – they never thought they'd compete, but they thoroughly enjoyed it. Our brilliant regulars offered very vocal support – every time a new couple came onto the floor, they got a big cheer!

"You can sense an atmosphere just walking into a venue, so the inclusiveness of the Fun Competition is vital – there's

no judgment based on age, gender, orientation, size, race, anything. Nor do you have to be locked into a partnership – people can meet on the day and enter last minute, so it retains the spirit of social dancing. And it's great to see dancers who don't compete regularly any more come back to take part in the sequence dance rounds.

"As always, we finished up with a fantastic Jacky's Jukebox social night and showdance winners Tori and Yvonne Settle reprised their routine to great acclaim. Newcomers can enjoy the supportive starting point of the Fun Competition, but also get inspiration for what they could achieve in the future." ●