



# STEPPING OUT

This month, **Marianka Swain** reports on the Vienna Dance Contest and Pink Dancers Anniversary Ball

**R**oswitha Wetschka faced an unusual obstacle when planning the seventh annual Vienna Dance Contest: it coincided with her wife's due date. "The biggest problem was delegating all my last-minute tasks – it takes longer to write them down than do them!" she notes. "But my team did an incredible job, and next year (September 28, 2013!) the three of us will definitely be there."

This year's contest, on September 29, featured 72 dancers from seven nations, "including, for the first time at any same-sex competition, a male couple from Slovenia. We made sure they weren't filmed, as anonymity was very important to them – homophobia is still a major problem there – but we're thrilled they came."

Hungarians Reka Fuleki and Beatrix Rencsisovszki dominated, winning both the women's A ballroom and Latin, but Austrians Thomas Marter and Richard Folie narrowly beat them to the Viennese waltz title and also took the men's A ballroom. The latter are from Linz, "and they brought an amazing group of vocal fans!

It's great to see the Austrian scene developing. The hosts are so proud of this competition, as a great ballroom event and as a symbol of the gay and lesbian community," says Roswitha.



The weekend included a tour of Vienna, "covering both major landmarks and the secret life of the city – cafés that served as covert gay and lesbian meeting places a century ago, accompanied by tales of who was in love with who, including a few baronesses! And everyone

had the chance to unwind at the Pink Dance Night, featuring a sensational performance from German formation team the Swinging Sisters."

There's formation team partying closer to home at the Pink Dancers' Anniversary Ball on November 17 at London's Carisbrooke Hall. The group's founder, Ralf Schiller, was the first person to teach same-sex ballroom back in 1989 and the Pink Dancers grew out of his trailblazing classes.

"We've had 56 members over the years and we've invited them all back for a special performance in Ralf's honour," explains ball organiser Jacky Logan. "We're also playing clips from past performances, celebrating our history.

"The Pink Dancers were early ambassadors for same-sex dance, and we performed at events like a Labour Party Conference and the first Stonewall Equality Ball, sharing the bill with the Pet Shop Boys, Ian McKellen and Pam St Clement (Pat from *EastEnders!*). But the wonderful thing about Ralf's choreography, which is sheer artistry, is that viewers can engage with the patterns, storytelling and emotions, whether or not they know anything about ballroom or the political side of it.

"Ralf is completely committed to the Pink Dancers: he's taught every week for 21 years, and we've done over 100 performances. I'm so glad we have this opportunity to thank him for what he's given us."

Tickets for the ball cost £16 and proceeds go to the Pink Dancers. Email Jacky at [jacjake@aol.com](mailto:jacjake@aol.com) to buy one. ●