



STEPPING OUT

This month, **Marianka Swain** reports on the Same Sex Open

“We never even imagined we’d get the chance to dance here – it’s a dream come true,” says Hungary’s Csaba Csetneki, who, with Balázs Gáti, won the A Class Men’s Ballroom at Blackpool’s first-ever same-sex competition on October 27.

The Netherlands’ Lisette van Bruggen and Simone Taverne, winners of the C Class Women’s Ballroom and Latin, agree: “It was so special dancing in the Winter Gardens’ beautiful Spanish Hall – and we even won a medal with ‘Blackpool’ on it!”

France’s Tony Marcireau and Stephane Galichet, who had only competed together once before, came second in the A Class Men’s Latin. “We were thrilled to represent our country in this temple of dance,” says Tony. “We came back and told everyone about it – now they can’t wait to go next year!”

Organisers and hosts Bradley and Sorèn Stauffer-Kruse AKA the Sugar Dandies, who recently collected the Stonewall Award for Broadcast of the Year for their *Britain’s Got Talent* appearance, ensured competitors



Caroline Privou (left) and Petra Zimmermann

and spectators alike had fun from the moment they arrived. “We had a welcome party at Funny Girls as an introduction to Blackpool’s party scene,” explains Bradley. “And we made the competition itself entertaining, with guest performances from our *BGT* colleagues Strictly Wheels and ballroom comedy act Stickleback Plasticus. The Mayor of Blackpool, Councillor Sylvia Taylor, presented trophies and gave a heartfelt speech welcoming same-sex dance to the city.”

The competition featured couples from 12 different countries, and the adjudicating panel, led by UK Same Sex Dance Council chairman, Vernon Kemp, and featuring *Strictly*’s Matthew Cutler, had a tough time picking winners out of the strong field.

“It was great to see so many amazing international competitors,”

comments Michele Enright, who won the B Class Women’s Ballroom with Rachel Meban, representing the UK and Ireland. The pair particularly enjoyed the Pink Jukebox’s social dance at the Tower Ballroom the next day: “It expanded the experience and meant it was definitely worth making the journey!”

American competitor Heather Brockett, who won the B Class

Women’s Latin with Sunny Williams, adds: “We didn’t realise the Tower event was open to the public as well, but it turned out to be a magical afternoon, with people of all ages and walks of life smiling at one another, united in a common appreciation for dance. Back home in California, we’ve worked

hard to raise awareness about the challenges we face as same-sex dancers and as lesbians, from limited competition opportunities to basic civil rights like marriage. We’re so impressed that Marketing Blackpool and Supadance supported this event.”

“We’re honoured Supadance chairman Barry Free himself attended – it means a great deal to have the support of a major brand,” says Bradley. “The whole event truly was a milestone for same-sex dance.”

Germany’s Caroline Privou, who won the A Class Women’s Ballroom with Petra Zimmermann, agrees: “This competition lived up to the city’s fine dance legacy, and we hope it’s the start of a new tradition of great same-sex dancing in Blackpool.” ●

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