



# STEPPING OUT

This month, **Marianka Swain** learns more about a new Blackpool competition

October 27 will be a big day for Bradley and Sören Stauffer-Kruse, but in addition to the challenge of organising a brand new same-sex competition, they have an understandable dilemma: "To dance or not to dance, that is the question!" Their experience as semi-finalists the Sugar Dandies on "Britain's Got Talent" has confirmed their love of performance, "but running the competition must come first. Maybe we'll get in a dance, but mostly we're there to celebrate ballroom", says Sören.

The pair are thrilled to be pioneering the Same Sex Open in Blackpool: "It's a renowned destination for dancers around the world, so it's really special," says Bradley. "We're grateful for the support from the UK Same Sex Dance Council (UKSSDC) and so many British couples, but we're also pleased that lots of international dancers are coming. We hope it'll become a prestigious event for same-sex dancing and one of the highlights of the international calendar."

Another highlight, London's Pink Jukebox Trophy (PJT), served as inspiration. Says Sören: "It's been our blueprint, and PJT



veterans Jacky Logan and Ralf Schiller have been enormously helpful. We're operating with UKSSDC rules and we have the UKSSDC's Vernon Kemp chairing our experienced judging panel – including a surprise celebrity judge! We're also delighted that Richard Rose, who is very respected in the mainstream world, will compete – with a hosting assist from our friends the Sugar Dandies."

Vernon thinks the choice of venue, the Spanish Hall at the

Winter Gardens, is perfect: "Its wonderfully quirky décor may remind dancers of the PJT's eccentric and well-loved venue, the Rivoli Ballroom, plus it's a generous space but not too overwhelming." Bradley and Sören agree: "We're hoping to fill its 600-person capacity, and, if all goes well, upgrade to the Empress or Tower Ballroom next year!"

The Same Sex Open has a packed timetable catering to all skill levels, including a starter level and a showdance competition, culminating in a Grand Ball, "plus the Pink Jukebox is planning a social dance on October 28 at the Tower Ballroom to complete the weekend," says Bradley. "We'd love to see loads of spectators there – that's what every dancer deserves and it's what makes a competition fun. Blackpool has an amazing dance infrastructure and a big gay and lesbian scene, so we hope to see new faces as well as our stalwarts, particularly northern dancers and fans representing that growing community."

"Ultimately, we'd love this to be the start of an annual event, like the other wonderful Blackpool festivals, and for competitors to come away with a sense of accomplishment that they've danced in the same place as world champions. This is a big moment for same-sex dancing!"

Visit [www.samesexopen.co.uk](http://www.samesexopen.co.uk) to register or find out more about the competition. Bradley and Sören also recommend [www.bagsblackpool.com](http://www.bagsblackpool.com) for Blackpool's gay and lesbian-owned holiday accommodation. ●