



STEPPING OUT

This month, **Marianka Swain** looks forward to October's Same Sex Open in Blackpool

“We learned a lot from last year! We've been competing for a long time, but only now that we've done it can we fully appreciate how much goes into putting on a competition,” note Bradley and Sören Stauffer-Kruse AKA the Sugar Dandies, who will be taking on host duties once again for the second Same Sex Open competition at Blackpool's Winter Gardens.

Despite the steep learning curve, “the response has been amazing, more than we expected for a first-time event,” observes Sören. “Everyone loved Blackpool – not just the competition, but the welcome party at Funny Girls and social dance at the Tower Ballroom. And yes, they all encouraged us to make it annual, so we must have started something good!”

The theme for 2013 is “bigger and better”, says Bradley: “Blackpool Council was so impressed that they've given us the title of the Blackpool Same-Sex Dance Festival. It's a huge honour to be an official part of the town's acclaimed portfolio of competitions, so we want to make it a true festival by adding new events, such as a dinner



Dancers on the floor at last year's Same Sex Open

for spectators and competitors and more social dancing.

“We also overlap with the Sequence Dance Festival, so there's an opportunity to mix with the wider dance world, including a full festival vendors' area and other events to watch. We may be the new kids on the block, but we intend to be good neighbours.”

Sören believes the competition is a great representation of same-sex dance: “We had many top international couples dancing last year, and they'll

be joined by more stars this time around, so it'll definitely be a good show, plus we're expecting even higher numbers.

“One of our core goals is to increase the visibility of same-sex dancing and Blackpool is ballroom's world stage, so we're working on more media promotion to hopefully make everyone in the North aware of our event.

“It's wonderful being resident in the Winter Gardens, because they let us put up posters and banners for the Same-Sex Dance Festival at Blackpool Pride, also held there, and at the prestigious main Dance Festival in May – both key audiences for us. One person commented on Facebook that they never thought anything like this would happen in their lifetime!”

All of last year's sponsors have returned, including MarketingBlackpool and Supadance, and this year *Dance Today* is very happy to be on board as a media sponsor. This year's compères are UK Same Sex Dance Council chairman Vernon Kemp and Margaret Redmond, who also compères at the mainstream Blackpool festivals.

“This has always been the place to be for dancers,” adds Sören. “We've had enquiries from as far afield as the US, Australia and New Zealand. Blackpool is held in highest esteem throughout the international dance community, so when something new like this happens, the whole world takes notice.” ●

www.samesexdancefestival.com

Look out for the chance to win tickets in next month's issue!