

# STEPPING OUT

This month, **Marianka Swain** reports on the Same Sex World Championships

**B**ritish competitors made an impressive showing at the first official Same Sex World Championships at the World Outgames in Antwerp on August 7–9. Many dancers came out of retirement to contend for this prestigious title, granted by the newly formed International Federation of Same Sex Dance Associations.

"The A class competitions were even more exciting than usual, especially the women's Standard and men's Latin," observes Heather Gladding. "The former had a 13-couple semi-final, including two British partnerships, and any of them could have made the final. The audience nearly blew the roof off cheering for these events, which formed the climax of a thrilling championships."

The UK dominated the Senior section, with Alan Wake and David Smith winning Senior II A class Standard, Latin and ten-dance, and Tori and Yvonne Settle taking women's ten-dance gold and silver in the Standard. Adding to the medal haul were Thorston Dreyer and Benedikt Kraus, silver in men's Senior ballroom, Sarah



Tori (right) and Yvonne Settle (UK)

Hughes and Diane Willmott, silver in women's Senior II Latin, and Jill Shackleton and Abi Reynolds, bronze in both Latin and Standard in women's Senior II.

In fact, the home team impressed across the board at this diverse competition, with other notables success including Sören and Bradley Stauffer-Kruse, showdance silver medallists, Mary and Jacky Logan, bronze in the women's Argentine tango, and Chris Lyons and Heather Devine, silver in the women's Viennese waltz.

Hungary's Reka Fuleki and Beatrix Rencsisovszki became women's A Latin world champions, while Germany's Petra Zimmerman and Caroline Privou continue to reign supreme in the women's A Standard. Spain's Santiago

Granizal and Antonio Castillo won the men's A Latin, and Germany's Pascal Herbach and Christian Wenzel regained their title in the men's A Standard.

George Tzoulas was impressed by the atmosphere throughout the championships, which took place in the Hilton Hotel's splendid Belle Époque ballroom: "From the very first round, there was overwhelming love and respect

for all the couples. The UK Same Sex Dance Council's welcome drinks party set the tone, and the closing gala ball was a great chance to celebrate the winning couples and socialise in style."

Same-sex ballroom has become one of the most popular sports at the Outgames, both in participation and number of spectators. This year,

among the impressive range of countries represented on the dancefloor were two courageous couples from Russia, notes George: "It was inspiring to see them defying LGBT oppression and demonstrating their love of dancing and personal strength by taking part."

Heather thinks it's positive that no country dominated, with strong international competition in every event, but was delighted with the British results: "We're going from strength to strength."

Let's hope our winning streak continues at the next Outgames in Miami in 2017, and perhaps at home in 2018, with London one of three cities shortlisted to host the Gay Games. You can follow our bid progress at [www.london2018.info](http://www.london2018.info) ●