

STEPPING OUT

THE SAME-SEX
DANCE SCENE



Marianka Swain makes a French connection with Le Rendez-Vous de Paris

It's all change for France's same-sex ballroom competition, which for the past three years took place in June as part of a multi-sport tournament. "We realised that date was hopeless, squeezed between the Berlin Open and Blackpool European Championships, so we switched to April 26," explains Torben Doose, member of organising association Rainbow Evidanse.

It proved a wise decision. This year's event saw the 19th-century Gymnase Jean Jaurès, which has a striking cast-iron skeleton vault reminiscent of the Eiffel Tower, packed with keen dancers.

Caroline Privou and Petra Zimmerman defended their title in women's A ballroom, shadowed by fellow Germans Ines and Tania Dimitrova. "We really enjoyed performing in front of such an enthusiastic crowd, and we're very happy with our win," says Caroline. "Although it's a relatively new competition, it's

brilliantly organised and offers a huge dancefloor, great music, delicious food, and a range of international couples and judges."

"It's a special experience and has become an integral part of the same-sex scene," adds Petra. Torben was thrilled to see the

Women's A ballroom champions Caroline Privou (leading) and Petra Zimmerman



couple return: "They're always victors in Paris. I guess it's time we start calling them legends!"

Men's A Latin had an exceptionally high standard, but powerful Spaniards Santiago Granizal and Antonio Castillo also retained their title, holding off Germany and Switzerland's Christian Wenzel and

Marcus Mnerinsky.

Bronze medallists Lemington Ridley and Nejc Jus from the UK made a real impact. "Their performance is fascinating and flamboyant, and somehow much more than just couple dancing," observes Torben.

Elegant Finnish couple Santra Rinne and Pii Korpi triumphed in women's A Latin,

and Thorsten Dreyer, representing Great Britain, were "over the moon" to take bronze. "Some of our routines were still settling in, so this was a great opportunity to try things out ahead of Blackpool," explains Ben.

"We really enjoyed the atmosphere – it's a bit less formal than some of the other competitions," adds Thorsten. "Because

it's so close to London, we had a big group from the UK, both competing and cheering us on.

"There are also strong links, as lots of French dancers come over to the Rivoli Ballroom or dance holidays in Laurieston, while we have holidays in Ligoure."

Next year, Torben hopes to add a

mixed tournament to the Paris competition, "as we've had lots of interest from studios around the country.

"Rainbow Evidanse feels very privileged to organise this event, and we'd love more people to join us in celebrating people's choice to follow their hearts and dance with whoever they want." ●