

# STEPPING OUT

THE SAME-SEX  
DANCE SCENE



**Marianka Swain** reports  
on the Vienna Dance Contest

**T**his was the year of new countries triumphing," observes Vienna Dance Contest (September 26–28) organiser Roswitha Wetschka. "Our female Italian couple won B ballroom, and, most movingly, our first ever couple from Russia took women's B Latin." The courageous pair entered anonymously, for fear of reprisals at home, but enjoyed enormous support.

"They practise in secret, so this was all very new to them," says Roswitha. "They want to compete more, but obviously can't in their own country and it's expensive to travel. We helped by waiving the starting fee and making

sure someone hosted them. I was so impressed with all the new dancers coming through – it's a sign of real progress."

At the top end, every category featured an exciting duel, notes Roswitha. Germany's Miriam Meister and Angela Pikarski impressed in A ballroom with their "beautiful technique and frame", closely shadowed by fellow countrywomen Inge and Julia Massopust. Denmark's Gilles

Hoxer and Esben Weiergang "dominated the floor" in A Latin, but energetic Czech runners-up, Vojtech Cervinka and Michal Vanicek, "were a pleasure to watch".

**I**n A ballroom, French showmen Axel Zischka and Stefan Lehner narrowly pipped Denmark's Niels Henrik Hartvigson and Thomas Nisgaard Brink – "they're the swans of the ballroom" – and the UK's Thorsten Dreyer and Benedikt Kraus also impressed.

There was no women's A Latin this year, but more chance for glory in the cha cha fun (aimed at less experienced dancers) and Viennese waltz competitions, with a popular victory in the latter for Niels and Thomas.

Lucky winners took home bespoke snow globe trophies – "we have different designs every year," explains Roswitha. They'd planned to feature Eurovision winner Conchita Wurst, but ended up choosing a rainbow-themed Vienna scene instead. Wurst did soundtrack Gilles and Esben's rumba showcase during Pink Dance Night, which also featured the debut of the rock 'n' roll waltz. "I always bring a new line dance over from the Rivoli, and this was the first time everyone shouted for an encore!" recalls Roswitha.

She's grateful for the "enthusiastic" new additions to her organising team and looks forward to next year's competition on September 26 – "our tenth anniversary. I'm so thrilled we're still going strong." ●

[www.vienna-dancecontest.at](http://www.vienna-dancecontest.at)

Niels Henrik Hartvigson  
and Thomas Nisgaard Brink

