

STEPPING OUT

THE SAME-SEX
DANCE SCENE



Marianka Swain reports on Holland's De Danser competition

Same-sex competitions are on the rise, but there are still few affiliated with mainstream events. That didn't deter dance teacher Stella Ponne from introducing De Danser to long-running annual competition NADB, held in Badhoevedorp near Amsterdam.

"I was training same-sex couples who really wanted a competition, so I said 'OK – I'll make one'," recalls Stella. "It's been running six years now, and I'm proud of creating that opportunity."

De Danser takes place alongside adult and Senior competitions, meaning the audience flocking to see

mainstream dancers also gets a chance to watch same-sex ballroom. "There was definitely surprise at first. Some thought it was great, others asked why I was doing it – I said 'Why not?' Now, everyone knows about it, and dancers in the other events tell me how much fun it looks."

There's been some opposition from a local studio, "but I say

there's no difference. Male/female, male/male, female/female – they all love ballroom." In fact, for the past three years, same-sex dancers have won the all-comers partner-swap competition.

This year's De Danser, held on March 7, featured entrants from Holland and Germany. In A ballroom, it was a closely fought battle of the sexes, with Cor Besseling and

Arno Doorn eventually triumphing over fellow Dutch dancers Jacqueline van der Meij and Cok Troost.

"Some people think men are automatically stronger, but it's as much technique as physicality," comments Stella. "The adjudicators – who also cover

the mainstream competition – had no problem judging them side by side." In contrast, B ballroom was an all-female, all-German affair, with Karolin Jacobs and Constanze Alpen holding off Anna-Verena Schwarting and Franziska Mesch.

There weren't enough entrants for A Latin this year, and Stella would love to see more international couples in general. "I know it's hard with travel costs, but it would be amazing to build up this competition – it's so important for local same-sex dancers, and for ballroom. Kids here are all into hip hop (including my daughter!) – unless we encourage the next ballroom generation, we're going to lose something amazing." ●



Karolin Jacobs and Constanze Alpen, winners B ballroom and Latin, Germany

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