



Stepping Out

The same-sex ballroom and latin dance scene

Marianka Swain reports on the Vienna Dance Contest

In celebration of the Vienna Dance Contest's tenth anniversary, the competition moved to the prestigious University of Technology in the heart of the city, encouraging record spectator numbers on September 26. It was aided by political sponsorship, explains organiser Roswitha Wetschka. "It helped that we were in the run-up to an election. The Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs gave support, acknowledging our contribution to anti-discrimination and changing the female image through women leading." Prominent politicians attended, and Ulrike Lunacek, vice-president of the European Parliament,

handed out prizes.

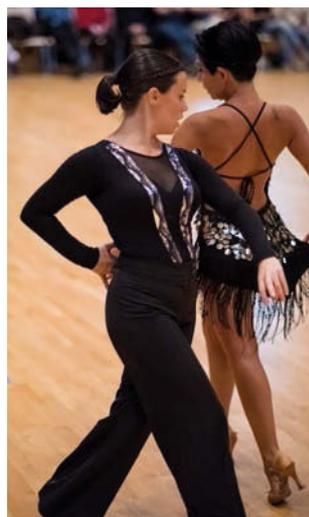
Dancers from ten nations competed in front of this prestigious crowd, including two new ones: Poland and Spain. But the big story was a home triumph, with Austria's Gitti Puster and Anna-Katharina Schramke winning women's A ballroom and Viennese waltz on their partnership debut. "We're always proud to see great dancing, but it's lovely when they're from your own country," says Roswitha.

They faced tough competition from Hungary's Reka Fuleki and Beatrix Rencsisovszki in a clash of the titans. "People didn't dare breathe watching them. It was a real contrast of styles, with Reka and Beatrix's power versus Gitti and Anna-Katharina's elegance." The Austrians snatched ballroom by just one point, but could

well shake up other same-sex competitions if they continue – watch this space.

Reka and Beatrix won women's A Latin, holding off Spain's Ainhoa Moreno Perez and Janire Iglesias Marzal. France's Axel Zischka and Stefan Lehner took men's A ballroom,

Spain's Ainhoa Moreno Perez and Janire Iglesias Marzal.



impressing with their beautiful shaping, while Polish men's A Latin winners Gregor Dyrda and Rafael Chmiela look like future stars.

At the Pink Dance Night, Roswitha welcomed everyone who'd helped with the contest over the years onto the floor – "about 80 people. And showdance group Les Schuh Schuh, who performed at our first competition, returned." There was also a personal blast from the past, as Roswitha paired up with former partner Helga Eberherr for a last-minute entry to the Viennese waltz. "We'd each developed our ballroom since I moved to the UK, but we were amazed to make the final – we'd expected to do one round, not three! It was a joyful bonus during a wonderful celebration." ■

For more information about the competition, visit viennadancecontest.at.

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