



Stepping Out

The same-sex ballroom and Latin dance scene

Marianka Swain
reports on the UK
Fun Competition

Around 100 people took part in the 12th annual UK Fun Competition at London's Rivoli Ballroom on October 1, inviting beginners – including impromptu partnerships – to make their competitive debut in a supportive environment. The event showcases a variety of styles, alongside the standard ballroom and Latin: everything from same-sex Argentine tango to sequence dances the Sindy Swing and Saunter Together.

“It was great to see so many couples competing in some of the same-sex graded competitions that we had to split the heats,” observes Bradley Stauffer-Kruse, who, with partner Sören, was on hand to inspire competitors with a Sugar Dandies waltz demonstration. “We love the change partners competition, because it produces unexpected results, and the solo line dances – this year, Hello Dolly and the Rio Cha Cha – as they’re so fiercely contested. Vernon [Kemp] taught a new line dance, the Charleston Rag, which got everyone up on the floor, and there’s Vernon’s usual good cheer and cheekiness as compère.”

Vernon was impressed by the standard of the line dance competitions in particular, and observes that the six trios in the Six Legs Rumba round was “the highest entry we’ve had in this type of competition. They were very creative combinations and well received by the audience.”

Bradley adds: “We’ve

been proud to see many Fun Competition beginners go on to be serious competitors. It’s a good way of encouraging young couples to try it without the initial pressure of large international events.” Vernon was pleased to see a number of new faces this year, some of whom “are definitely going to compete again”, and would love to

Dancers at the UK Fun Competition at the Rivoli Ballroom.

see other Fun Competitions in the UK – though “it’s probably important to build a social scene first so you have a strong layer of support.”

There’s also an exciting new opportunity on the horizon: the Brighton Diversity Games Same-Sex

Dance Championships. The competition will be held on July 8, 2017, from 10am-8pm in the Mandela Hall at the University of Sussex, organised in conjunction with the Brighton LGBT Sports Society with support from the UKSSDC. Registration details to come in the New Year at blagss.org ■

