



# Stepping Out

The same-sex ballroom and Latin dance scene

## Marianka Swain reports on the Vienna Dance Contest and UK Fun Competition

**T**he Vienna Dance Contest returned after a year off, and it was “a good break – we looked at the whole concept, improved our website, and brought in new team members. We’re actually now a wholly female organising team!” says Roswitha Wetschka.

The 11th edition of the event, which took place on October 14, saw plenty of growth in competitors too, including 19 from Austria. Roswitha was also delighted to welcome a Finnish couple for the first time, and the radiant Santra Rinner and Piia Korpi went on to win women’s A Latin – holding off excellent German duo Miriam Meister and Angela Pikarski.

In men’s A ballroom, Germans Thomas Marter and Stefan Lehner were “really fighting it out” with Poland’s Rafael Chmiela

and Gregor Dyrda – “that was superb to watch”. The talented Polish pair didn’t leave empty-handed, picking up the men’s Latin title, while Thomas and Stefan added Viennese waltz to their trophy haul.

Women’s A ballroom had an interesting twist, with Reka Fuleki – previously led by partner Beatrix Rencsisovszki – now pairing up with Maria Glotz, and leading her. Roswitha was hugely impressed: “They created really good shapes and looked like they were one body. Reka said it was a big challenge learning not just different positions, but a different attitude and responsibilities as a leader, but they’re flourishing. It was incredible watching them take the title, and I can’t wait to see more.”

This was a hectic year for Roswitha: the first Vienna Dance Contest since the arrival of her daughter, where she was competing as well as organising. She managed to keep her

Reka Fuleki and Maria Glotz.

competitor’s focus by “hiding in the changing rooms for 20 minutes before we went on! And doing lots of preparation beforehand – everyone called me ‘Lady Lists’, because I had lists for everything.”

One thing didn’t quite go to plan, as an administrative error meant Roswitha and partner Del were announced for the A Latin final, and then subsequently called for B – when Del wasn’t there. As the marks were close, it was suggested they compete in A instead, but an official complaint from another federation stopped that.

Loath to escalate the situation, Roswitha left it there, and she did have a surprise success dancing with Chrisi Lyons in ballroom. “We only had seven weeks to practise together, so it was a real pleasure coming third in A – it shows what’s possible.”

Roswitha also loved the overall “fantastic atmosphere”, completed by a joyful social night and a performance from Viennese formation team Les Schuh Schuh. “They chose melodies from Viennese history – Strauss onwards. It was very well done, and perfect for the occasion.”

One thing some visitors reported missing was the lead swapping, which has become less prevalent in same-sex competition – perhaps as couples become more serious standard-wise. Roswitha feels that’s a loss, as “it’s specific to same-sex dance and gives us a chance to play with gender roles”.

With leading Austrian politician Ulrike Lunacek once again handing out prizes, and plenty of

## Wanna have fun?

The 12th UK Fun Competition at London’s Rivoli Ballroom was again “extremely successful, with over 100 attendees,” says the UK Same-Sex Dance Council’s Pete Meager. The event is a key bridge between social same-sex dancing and competing, letting couples take those first steps in a friendly, low-pressure environment.

It’s also a way for experienced dancers who don’t have a regular partner or haven’t competed in a while to get back on the floor, notes organiser Vernon Kemp – “perhaps with a sequence dance or single dance test. Through change partner competitions and line dance categories, participants are able to compete even if they don’t have a partner, so it really is easily accessible to everyone.”

Pete’s highlight was “a brand new couple travelling all the way from Shropshire – five hours each way – with a view to watching and taking part in the general dancing between rounds. I’d met them in Brighton in July and told them about this fun competition. To our delight, they decided to compete at the very last minute, winning first place in Starters Cha Cha Cha!” [funcompetition.co.uk](http://funcompetition.co.uk)

feedback about the excellent, caring organisation, Roswitha was thrilled with the event. “It’s wonderful to be back, and roll on October 20, 2018!” ■ [www.viennadancecontest.at/en](http://www.viennadancecontest.at/en)

