

MINNESOTA

DANCER

May 2015

INSIDE ...

- Lead or Follow? Part 2
- Should Social Dancers Compete?
- A New Dance Studio!

*USA Dance Nationals:
Tony Guinta and Lisa Mohr
are winners!*

*Photo by Ryan Kenner Photography
www.ryankennerphotography.com*



Official publication of USA Dance Minnesota Chapter #2011



DanceLife Ballroom

Dance is life • health • happiness

NEW at DanceLife Ballroom Starting May 2015

- **Twin Cities Rebels of West Coast Swing fame**
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- **West Coast Swing with *TODD PAULUS***
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 - **Daytime Dance Program and Evening Classes featuring Salsa & Bachata with *KERI SIMONSON***
- **Upcoming Events including:**
 - **DanceLife Ballroom's 1st Saturday Lesson & Variety Dance Party**
 - **Twin Cities Rebels First & Third Sunday Dance Party**
 - **Argentine Tango Fourth Saturday Fusion Milonga**
 - **Shinya McHenry & Scott Anderson's Variety Dance Party**

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with Gene and Elena Bersten

Sunday, May 10th — 2:00 pm
Sunday, May 17th — 2:00 pm
Sunday, May 24th — 2:00 pm
Sunday, May 31st — 2:00 pm

10 Southdale Center
Edina, MN 55435
(bottom floor near JC Penney)
612-564-5483



Check out our website:
www.usadance-minnesota.org

Contact us:
info@usadance-minnesota.org

Project Dance Minnesota offers free dance instruction to members of USA Dance.
Non-members pay \$5. Become a member of USA Dance at membership.usadance.org.

A different professional instructor teaches a new dance at a different location every month.

Dancer

February 2015

An Official Publication of
USA Dance-Minnesota Chapter #2011



USA Dance: Who Are We?

We are a nonprofit organization that promotes ballroom dancing. The Minnesota chapter, USA Dance Minnesota Chapter #2011, was formed in 1991. Membership in USA Dance is open to dancers of all levels.

USA Dance Minnesota Chapter #2011 sponsors monthly dances and other special dance events. Members receive discounts on admission to monthly dances, as well as other benefits.

The *Minnesota Dancer* is published monthly by the USA Dance Minnesota Chapter #2011, providing information and news about ballroom dancing. Subscriptions: \$22/year. Make checks payable to USA Dance Minnesota #2011; send to Jane Phipps, 9018 Zanzibar Lane, Maple Grove, MN 55311

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USA Dance Minnesota Chapter #2011 Board Minutes

Tuesday, March 3rd, 2015
Submitted by Leslie Whitney

In attendance: Lee Whitney (President), Ed Soltis (Vice-President), Jane Phipps (Treasurer), Leslie Whitney (Secretary), Tom Crable, Dan Fitzgerald, Karen Maldonado, Carol Post, Joyce Thompson, Paul Stachour

Location: DanceLife Ballroom Studio, 6015 Lyndale Avenue South, Mpls., MN 55419

Call session to order

Agenda – Unanimously approved
Confidentiality – Meeting discussions are confidential. Chapter minutes are posted in the Minnesota Dancer.

Minutes – Motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved to accept the minutes from each board meeting held in February.

Treasurer's Report – Motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved to accept the February treasurer's report.

Reporting Requirements

- Annual Report – Jane has submitted to Nationals
- Financial Report – Jane has submitted to Nationals
- Coordinator Budget Estimates – in progress

Membership Coordinator Report

February, 2014 – 130 members
February, 2015 – 316, Currently, 313+33 (memberships being processed) = 349
Dan will work on continuing to sustain membership growth.

Project Dance Coordinator Report – April will be at American Classic Ballroom

Social Dance, Special Projects and Volunteer Coordinator Report

- A motion was made, seconded and unanimously approved to form a committee to explore the feasibility of Newcomer Dances.
- Plans for the Tea Dance are moving along smoothly.
- We discussed the opening and closing of venues for the monthly dances.

Included in the discussion was the chapter's providing of the DJ for these events.

- We discussed the pricing of the monthly dances. This subject will be advertised in the April and May issues of the Minnesota Dancer.
- The board discussed hosting a special event dance in the fall of 2015.

Communications Coordinator Report

- USADance-MN.org recovery request - Gary Stroick is facilitating this effort.
- Hotline – Dorothy Jones updates every week. Thank you Dorothy. Joyce is managing the Hotline.
- Star of the North Coordinator Report – The board is continuing to explore feasibility.

K12 Coordinator Report – We discussed two opportunities which currently exist to promote dancing in the K12 population.

- The USA Dance, Inc. School Dance Program, which is promoted by Nationals. Lee summarized this program.
- Dancing Classrooms, a program nationally recognized and locally sponsored by Heart of Dance MN. Paul Stachour attended an organizational meeting and distributed a handout summarizing this program. We will invite the co-founders of this program to present at our April meeting.

UMR Ballroom Dance – Scholarship Request: A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved to donate to this club for the purpose of attending the Iowa DanceSport Classic on March 28th.

Next Meeting: April 7th, 2015, 6:00 pm, DanceLife Ballroom, 6015 Lyndale Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55419 ▲

**USA DANCE MINNESOTA
HOTLINE
651-483-5467**

Call for information on dance events.
www.usadance-minnesota.org

Yes! I want to receive the USA Dance Minnesota Dancer Magazine! Please send my one-year subscription to:

Name Phone _____
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Please mail your check for \$22 with this form to: Jane Phipps, 9018 Zanzibar Lane, Maple Grove, MN 55311 Janep1951@gmail.com

DANCER'S NIGHT OUT

Fri 5/1 DanceLife Ballroom Variety Dance, 8–9:30, 6015 Lyndale S, Mpls, 612-345-4219, www.dancelifeballroom.com

Cinema Ballroom Variety Dance, 7–11, 1560 St Clair Ave, St Paul, 651-699-5910, www.cinemaballroom.com

Sat 5/2 DanceLife Ballroom 1st Saturday of the Month Dance, Cha Cha Lesson, 7–10, 6015 Lyndale S, Mpls, 612-345-4219, www.dancelifeballroom.com

Sun 5/3 First Sunday Dance at Tapestry, 6–9:30, \$7–\$10, American Tango lesson with Shinya McHenry, 3748 Minnehaha Ave S, Mpls, www.tapestryfolkdance.org

Costa Rica Ballroom Sunday Salsa Nights, 5–7; \$10; 580 Mainstreet, Hopkins, MN, 952-303-3339, www.costaricaballroom.com

DanceLife Ballroom Twin Cities Rebels 1st Sunday Dance, 7–10:30, 6015 Lyndale S, Mpls, 612-345-4219, www.dancelifeballroom.com

Wed 5/6 Cinema Ballroom Practice Party, 8–9, 1560 St Clair Ave, St Paul, 651-699-5910, www.cinemaballroom.com

Dancers Studio WCS Party 8–9, 415 Pascal St N, St Paul, 651-641-0777, www.dancersstudio.com

Thu 5/7 Dancers Studio Dance Party 7:30–9, 415 Pascal St N, St Paul, 651-641-0777, www.dancersstudio.com

Fri 5/8 DanceLife Ballroom Variety Dance, 8–9:30, 6015 Lyndale S, Mpls, 612-345-4219, www.dancelifeballroom.com

Sat 5/9 Café Bailar Dance Party, 7:30–11:30, Balance Pointe Studio, 5808 W 36 St, St. Louis Pk, www.cafebailar.com

Tango Society of Minnesota 2nd Saturday Milonga, 8:30–1:00, \$10 members \$14 non-members, Four Seasons Dance Studio, 1637 Hennepin Ave South, Mpls, 612-224-2905, mntango.org

Aqua Gliders Dance Club, 7:30–11, \$25

per couple, Dancing to the Northernaires, St Richard's Catholic Church Social Hall, 7540 Penn So., Richfield, 612-869-3062

Sun 5/10 USA Dance Minnesota Beginner Samba Lesson with instructor Gene Bersten; 2:00 PM; \$5 or Free to USA Dance Members! Dance With Us America Studio, 10 Southdale Center, Edina, MN; www.usadance-minnesota.org

Costa Rica Ballroom Sunday Salsa Nights, 5–7; \$10; 580 Mainstreet, Hopkins, MN, 952-303-3339, www.costaricaballroom.com

Tue 5/12 Dancelife Ballroom Newcomer Party, 8–9PM, 6015 Lyndale S, Mpls, 612-345-4219, www.dancelifeballroom.com

DanceLife Ballroom West Coast Swing Dance with Todd Paulus, 9–11, 6015 Lyndale S, Mpls, 612-345-4219, www.dancelifeballroom.com

Wed 5/13 Cinema Ballroom Practice Party, 8–9, 1560 St Clair Ave, St Paul, 651-699-5910, www.cinemaballroom.com

Dancers Studio WCS Party 8–9, 415 Pascal St N, St Paul, 651-641-0777, www.dancersstudio.com

Thu 5/14 Dancers Studio Dance Party 7:30–9, 415 Pascal St N, St Paul, 651-641-0777, www.dancersstudio.com

Fri 5/15 DanceLife Ballroom Variety Dance, 8–9:30, 6015 Lyndale S, Mpls, 612-345-4219, www.dancelifeballroom.com

Cinema Ballroom Variety Dance, 7–11, 1560 St Clair Ave, St Paul, 651-699-5910, www.cinemaballroom.com

Sat 5/16 Monthly USA Dance Minnesota, DanceLife Ballroom 7–11, \$5 students, \$10 members, \$15 non-members, Hustle lesson with Shinya McHenry, 6015 Lyndale Ave. So., Mpls, 612-345-4219

Linden Hills Dancing Club, for dancing couples. Lake Harriet United Methodist Church, 4901 Chowen Ave S, Mpls, 6:30 -

10:30 Lesson, general dancing with Shinya McHenry. Dessert and coffee. First visit \$10/couple. Reserve: 651-636-9747 or www.LindenHillsDancingClub.org.

Sun 5/17 USA Dance Minnesota Beginner Samba Lesson with instructor Gene Bersten; 2:00 PM; \$5 or Free to USA Dance Members! Dance With Us America Studio, 10 Southdale Center, Edina, MN; www.usadance-minnesota.org

Third Sunday Dance at Tapestry, 6–9:30, \$7–\$10, American Tango with Tom and Anne LaTourelle, live music by Café Accordion Orchestra, 3748 Minnehaha Ave S, Mpls, www.tapestryfolkdance.org

Costa Rica Ballroom Sunday Salsa Nights, 5–7; \$10; 580 Mainstreet, Hopkins, MN, 952-303-3339, www.costaricaballroom.com

DanceLife Ballroom Twin Cities Rebels 3rd Sunday Dance, 7–10:30, 6015 Lyndale S, Mpls, 612-345-4219, www.dancelifeballroom.com

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DANCER'S NIGHT OUT

Tue 5/19 DanceLife Ballroom West Coast
Swing Dance with Todd Paulus, 9–11,
6015 Lyndale S, Mpls, 612-345-4219,
www.dancelifeballroom.com

Wed 5/20 Dancers Studio WCS Party 8–9,
415 Pascal St N, St Paul, 651-641-0777,
www.dancersstudio.com

Cinema Ballroom Practice Party, 8–9, 1560
St Clair Ave, St Paul, 651-699-5910,
www.cinemaballroom.com

Thu 5/21 Dancers Studio Dance Party 7:30
–9, 415 Pascal St N, St Paul, 651-641-
0777, www.dancersstudio.com

Cinema Ballroom Salsa Fusion, 7–11,
1560 St Clair Ave, St Paul, 651-699-
5910, www.cinemaballroom.com

Fri 5/22 DanceLife Ballroom Variety
Dance, 8–9:30, 6015 Lyndale S, Mpls,
612-345-4219,
www.dancelifeballroom.com

Sat 5/23 Café Bailar Dance Party, 7:30–
11:30, \$10, Costa Rica Ballroom, 816
Main St, Hopkins, cafebailar.com

**Sun 5/24 USA Dance Minnesota Beginner
Samba Lesson with instructor Gene
Bersten; 2:00 PM; \$5 or Free to USA
Dance Members! Dance With Us Amer-
ica Studio, 10 Southdale Center, Edi-
na, MN; www.usadance-minnesota.org**

Costa Rica Ballroom Sunday Salsa
Nights, 5–7; \$10; 580 Mainstreet, Hop-
kins, MN, 952-303-3339,
www.costaricaballroom.com

Mon 5/25 DanceLife Ballroom Shinya and
Scott Anderson Variety Dance Party, 7–9,
6015 Lyndale S, Mpls, 612-345-4219,
www.dancelifeballroom.com

Wed 5/27 Dancers Studio WCS Party 8–
9, 415 Pascal St N, St Paul, 651-641-
0777, www.dancersstudio.com

Cinema Ballroom Practice Party, 8–9,
1560 St Clair Ave, St Paul, 651-699-
5910, www.cinemaballroom.com

Thu 5/28 Dancers Studio Dance Party 7:30
–9, 415 Pascal St N, St Paul, 651-641-
0777, www.dancersstudio.com

Dancers Studio Dance Party 7:30–9, 415
Pascal St N, St Paul, 651-641-0777,
www.dancersstudio.com

Fri 5/29 DanceLife Ballroom Variety
Dance, 8–9:30, 6015 Lyndale S, Mpls,
612-345-4219,
www.dancelifeballroom.com

**Sun 5/31 USA Dance Minnesota Beginner
Samba Lesson with instructor Gene
Bersten; 2:00 PM; \$5 or Free to USA
Dance Members! Dance With Us Amer-
ica Studio, 10 Southdale Center, Edi-
na, MN; www.usadance-minnesota.org**

Costa Rica Ballroom Sunday Salsa Nights,
5–7; \$10; 580 Mainstreet, Hopkins, MN,
952-303-3339, www.costaricaballroom.com

DanceLife Ballroom Twin Cities Rebels 5th
Sunday Dance, 7–10:30, 6015 Lyndale S,
Mpls, 612-345-4219,
www.dancelifeballroom.com

USA Dance-Minnesota Chapter #2011

MONTHLY DANCES

MAY

Saturday, May 16

DanceLife Ballroom
6015 Lyndale Ave. So.
Minneapolis, MN

7–8 pm lesson: Hustle
Instructor: Shinya McHenry
8–11 pm: Variety Dance Music

\$5 Students under 25 with ID
\$10 USA Dance Members
\$15 Non-Members

JUNE

Saturday, June 20

DanceLife Ballroom
6015 Lyndale Ave. So.
Minneapolis, MN

7–8 pm lesson: Rumba
Instructor: Shinya McHenry
8–11 pm: Variety Dance Music

\$5 Students under 25 with ID
\$10 USA Dance Members
\$15 Non-Members

JULY

Saturday, July 18

Cinema Ballroom
1560 St. Clair Ave.
St. Paul, MN

7–8 pm lesson: TBD
Instructor: TBD
8–11 pm: Variety Dance Music

\$5 Students under 25 with ID
\$10 USA Dance Members
\$15 Non-Members

LYNNE'S DANCE NEWS

*Dance events for every day of the week.
Updated daily.*

[http://www.organizerondutv.com/
testimonials.html](http://www.organizerondutv.com/testimonials.html)

Dance address book also on the website



Leland and Leslie Whitney are preparing for the USA Dance Senior IV National Championships to be held in late June in Baton Rouge, LA. They will compete in Smooth and Rhythm Championships. This is the first year they are eligible to compete in this age group.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Leland Whitney, President, USA Dance Minnesota Chapter #2011

About a year ago (spring 2014), long-time USA Dance Minnesota Chapter member Nels Petersen filed five grievances with the National organization against the local Minnesota Chapter Board. Space doesn't permit listing the grievances in detail, however, Mr. Petersen generally charged the Chapter Board with mismanagement; alleging improperly held meetings; failure to further the purpose of a USA Dance Chapter; and improper and illegal local board policies. He called for an immediate emergency election; and demanded the removal of the chapter Executive Committee, which included myself as President, Vice-President Bonnie Burton, Treasurer Jane Phipps, and Secretary Leslie Whitney.

Mr. Petersen also filed grievances against the Executive Committee of the National organization charging that they failed to uphold USA Dance by-laws by not enforcing the Code of Ethics that Mr. Petersen believed the local chapter was violating.

The Chapter Board worked for many months to compile hundreds of pages of documented evidence disputing these charges. This evidence was submitted to the National organization who convened a hearing in February of this year.

The Grievance Hearing Panel consisted of three executives from the USA Dance National Organization who flew to Minneapolis to convene the hearing. Three board members represented the local chapter at the hearing. Mr. Petersen represented himself.

The Grievance Hearing Panel members reviewed all evidence and oral testimony presented to it and 30 days later issued its conclusions, which were as follows:

The Grievance Hearing Panel dismissed all the grievances against the USA Dance Minnesota Chapter Board and its board officers. In regard to the local policies, the panel stated that while the local policies didn't violate USA Dance by-laws, they did not necessarily meet the spirit of the National bylaws, either. The Hearing Board recommended the local chapter work with National organization representatives to revise the policies. The Chapter Board has started the process.

To conclude, both Mr. Petersen and the Chapter Board officers wanted to support ballroom dance, and to promote the well-being of the local chapter. However, there were extreme differences in management style that led to conflict. Conflict and controversy can make an organization stronger, when the differences are resolved respectfully. The grievance process allows a civilized means to resolve these differences.

It is good to put this conflict behind us, so the chapter can move forward with energy, enthusiasm, and a full focus on promoting ballroom dance in the Twin Cities! ▲

University of Minnesota Rochester Ballroom Team - Fun at the Iowa DanceSport Classic!



Dear USA Dance Chapter 2011,

Thank you very much for your generous scholarship toward UMR's attendance at the Iowa DanceSport Classic last week. It made for a very memorable experience! Your scholarship aided in hotel costs and other things such as food for the weekend. Being able to stay over both nights allowed for extra team bonding, and less stress preparing for the competition...as you know it takes some effort to prepare for such an event.

After beginning to learn ballroom dance in September, I must say we were very excited to show off our progress. There was at least 61 couples that made appearances in the final rounds. For me, the adrenaline that came with the call back was my favorite part. Each time I was called back my instructors techniques rang in my ears as I tried to make each round my best. Later on we found that we had won best college team award--a wonderful surprise ending to the trip.

Not only were we able to have a personal experience during the competition, but also observe our teammates and other higher level dancers. I find this exposure to the 'dance world' to be crucial to our growth. Sitting with my teammates I heard students creating goals as they "ooed and "aahed at different figures on the dance floor. At the competition, team dynamics began to become more evident as we cheered on those receiving call backs. Tired smiles and excited hugs were exchanged throughout the day.

Thank you for aiding in our ability to have this wonderful experience. We hope to continue our progress and pass on our knowledge and love for dancing to those coming in next fall. I know many students on our team are working very hard to progress to higher levels. Experiences like this only fuel our fire for dancing!

Thank you so much for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Jenna Kremer
Public Relations Officer, UMR Ballroom Team



Bonnie Burton is Editor of *Minnesota Dancer Magazine*. She and her husband Ed Soltis will compete next at the Gumbo DanceSport Championships in Baton Rouge, LA, in June.

EDITOR'S COLUMN

By Bonnie Burton

In 1935, my maternal great-grandfather, at the age of 60, opened a new Dance Pavilion & Beer Hall on Excelsior Boulevard, in St. Louis Park, MN. Prohibition had ended and perhaps happy days were here again; or perhaps great-grandpa Robert liked music and dancing and beer. In any case, his new dance pavilion had a 50 x 60 foot floor, which by today's standards is a decent size, and 80 years ago, would have been gigantic!

Maybe I inherited my love of dance from him, along with his July 4th birthdate; as in an odd coincidence, I was born on great-grandpa's 80th birthday. But by the time I was born, things had changed and the Dance Pavilion was closed due to Grandpa's health.

In the past 20 years, there have been other remarkable changes in local ballrooms and studios. USA Dance Minnesota is scanning copies of old *Dancing Times* newsletters from the mid-1990's, to link to their website, and many of the studios that were in business in 1995, no longer exist or have changed location. American Classic Ballroom was on Lake Street in Minneapolis; On Your Toes was at Miracle Mile (not far from Great-Grandpa's dance pavilion location!). And DanceSport Ballroom on Franklin Avenue, the Coliseum Ballroom on Lake Street, and Gus Lucky's Café are all closed, to name just a few.

The local ballroom community is constantly changing: studios closing and new studios opening. This isn't a bad thing at all - on the contrary! Growth and change benefits all the dancers in the Twin Cities area.

This means there is always a new place to go; another ballroom to visit; another studio to dance in. Our dynamic dance community always has something happening, and most of us are excited to visit a new studio or see one that's been remodeled or changed in some way.

Speaking of new ballrooms, I hope you'll enjoy reading Suzi Blumberg's article about Tricia Woods' new studio in West Bloomington; there is a grand opening party planned for May 3. Also in this issue is the story of new competitors Tony Guinta and Lisa Mohr, who set a goal, worked for it, and won! Many Minnesota amateur competitors were at USA Dance Nationals to cheer them on and to compete in their respective categories.

Also, Linda Checky discusses her experience learning to lead in Part II of a series on *Lead or Follow?* Elizabeth Dickinson re-imagines Tango; and Deborah Nelson critiques the *Dancing with the Stars* costumes. There's something for everyone this month.

Happy reading and happy dancing! ▲

GRAND OPENING

OF ROBT. JOHNSON'S

NEW PAVILION

4639 Excelsior Blvd., St. Louis Park

Saturday, Oct. 5

Brand new building with fine floor space
50 by 60 feet . . . Especially good music
. . . No cover charge at any time . . .
ALL Prices Reasonable

Serving the Best of Everything
Including Schmidt's 3.2 Beer

Liquor and setups will not be allowed . . . Come
early in order to get a seat . . . Young and old invited
MUSIC STARTS AT EIGHT O'CLOCK

Make Robt. Johnson's Pavilion Your
Recreation Center . . . You'll Like It

Above:
Advertisement for great-grandpa's Dance Pavilion & Beer Hall, as it appeared in the *Hennepin Review*, 1935.

Right: There was ample parking space in those days!



Robert Johnson's Dance Pavilion & Beer Hall,
Excelsior Blvd., St. Louis Park, MN - 1935

ASK DR. DANCE

Submit your questions to Dr. Dance at newsletter@usadance-minnesota.org.



I want to improve my dancing. What should I look for when choosing a dance teacher? What's the best way to decide?

Donna says: Assuming that you are a competitive dancer, look for a teacher who has competed professionally or is currently competing professionally.

Then, narrow down your choices by looking for a teacher that is certified in the style(s) that you want to dance. If you go to NDCA.org and click on 'directories', you can look up dance teachers and judges by state and see who is certified. Certification means that they have studied technique and teaching methodology and have passed exams.

Once you have a list of teachers/coaches that you are interested in, set up a lesson with each one, telling them that you are having a lesson with a few teachers to see who you are most comfortable with.

You are looking for the person who communicates in a way that resonates with you, is a good fit physically, and can candidly discuss their fees without pressuring you.

Finding the right teacher is a personal choice. You will instinctively know when you find the right one.

Good luck in your search!

Paul says: To improve your dancing, you need to take private lessons from a qualified instructor as well as set aside some time to practice. When choosing a teacher, location is sometimes a factor, so look in your area for an instructor. When you find one, some of the questions you may ask are:

How long have you been teaching?

What are some of your achievements?

Tell me about your qualifications and or certifications.

What is your availability?

Where do you teach?

Are group classes offered?

If all of the questions are answered to your satisfaction, take a lesson to see if the teaching style fits your learning curve. If not, you may have to explore teachers outside your immediate area. The best teachers establish a rapport with their students and adapt their teaching style to suit your needs. ▲



Donna Edelstein is a coach, judge, and organizer of the Snow Ball DanceSport Competition. www.donnawrites@msn.com

Paul Botes is a dance instructor, coach, choreographer, and judge. He is an owner of American Classic Ballroom, located in Chanhassen, MN.





New Dance Studio in Bloomington Grand Opening, Sunday, May 3

By Suzi Blumberg

Lessons in all styles of Ballroom, Latin, Swing and Country – over 20 styles total—will be available. Offerings include group classes, private lessons, private groups, performance teams, and practice parties. Offsite event offerings include lessons, performances, and emcee and music DJ services. A new performance team is just starting up that will perform swing, salsa and line dancing. The teams will meet Wednesdays in Woodbury and Sundays in Bloomington. Team dancers can do one or all performance routines and rehearse at either or both locations.

Charlie Drenth and Sandy Haydon have already made plans to attend several out-of-state competitions. They will be competing in Pro/Am this May at the American Star Ball in Atlantic City, NJ; at Scott Anderson's Twin Cities Open this July; Boston Ballroom Conference & Competition in Boston, this September; and Caribbean DanceSport Classic in San Juan, Puerto Rico, this November. Charlie and Tricia look forward to dancing Pro/Pro together soon, too.

Three out of the five staff live in West Bloomington, so that seemed like the perfect location for them. Tricia needed to be closer to her parents, as they provide her babysitting.

I'm excited to tell you that Tricia Wood is opening a new dance studio in Bloomington on Old Shakopee Road and France Avenue. There hasn't been a ballroom dance studio in Bloomington since 2007 when Harmonies closed.

The new studio will be called *Dance and Entertainment Studios* and is at the west end of the strip mall near Caribou Coffee. Tricia Wood is the owner and will also instruct, along with instructors Charlie Drenth, Aaron Wulff, and Carol Brecht-Wiles. Sandy Haydon is the new studio manager.

Tricia welcomes independent instructors to rent space in the new Bloomington studio. She is keeping her Central Park location in Woodbury and Maplewood Community Center location as well. Tricia's staff will cover all three locations and have been known to even teach out of her parents' Lakeville home studio!

Tricia's son Lucas is in kindergarten and her daughter Olivia is in preschool. Lucas and Olivia also dance and are getting ready for their spring recital, where they will perform tap, ballet and jazz. They also follow alongside mom, teaching and mimicking, "Quick, Quick, Slow... Quick, Quick, Slow."



There will be a Bloomington Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting ceremony on Monday, April 20th, at 2 pm. Mark your calendar for their big May 3rd Grand Opening and Open House from 1-4 pm. Hors d'oeuvres will be provided and there will be drawings for free dance lessons. Enjoy social dancing, check out their calendars and sign up for dance lessons. Tricia will move her dance shoe inventory to the Bloomington studio and dancers will be able to buy in-stock shoes or place orders, which are typically received within one week.

Tricia invites everyone to come out and swing into spring at her new Bloomington location. *Dance and Entertainment Studios* is located at 3701 W. Old Shakopee Rd., #700, Bloomington, or contact them at www.danceandentertainment.com or 651-605-5784. Don't forget to mark your calendar to dance the afternoon away at the Grand Opening on Sunday, May 3, 1-4 pm. ▲





102ND STARDUST BALLROOM DANCE WEEKEND

FRIDAY, JUNE 19TH

to SUNDAY, JUNE 21ST, 2015



With our
Top instructors
Steve &
Jocelyn Jensen



HONOR'S HAVEN
RESORT & SPA

Featuring:
Orlando Moran
'The Last Minute King'
with his 17 piece Latin Band

Theme: White Night Dancing Under the Stars

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Linda Checky manages a metro-based nursing education consortium. She is a social dancer and the Marketing Director for the Twin Cities Rebels Swing Dance Club. She is currently an instructor in training for the TC Rebels.

My first foray into learning how to lead came when I was trying to talk my then teenage children into West Coast Swing lessons. They were reluctant, but when I offered to take the lessons with them and learn the lead part, they agreed. I am afraid I had more fun than the kids did because I'm still dancing and they are not. The bonus for me was that it got me to try leading. I discovered that it was fun but it still took a bit of sitting out to get me to practice leading. Practicing has led to greater comfort and skill.

"Why did you decide to learn how to lead?"

Good question. I wish the answer were deep, meaningful, or humanitarian, but it really just boiled down to not wanting to sit out if a good song was playing. As a follow, there are times when the dance is 'heavy' with follows and you end up sitting rather than dancing. The sitting led to thinking about how I could change the odds and get to dance when I wanted to dance. So I signed up for my first round of classes to learn how to lead. Hmm. There seemed to be many things to learn being a leader. Here are a few things I have discovered on both sides of the frame:

Leads

- You always know what is going on because you are leading it.

Lead or Follow?

Part II in a Series

By Linda Checky

- Wow, there is a lot going on—like major traffic jams on the dance floor to avoid.
- Sometimes my feet get a little ahead of my brain and I have to do a basic step a few times to catch up (or I might just spring something on you at the last possible second). Leading requires a lot of situation analysis and fast decision making.
- I am concentrating so hard that sometimes I get off beat.
- I think my partner is bored because I lead many of the same things with every follow.
- When my lead is followed smoothly and almost effortlessly, it feels wonderful!
- I love it when my partner is enjoying the dance with me.

Follows

- You don't always know what is going on but you are doing your very best to follow it (really!).
- Whoa—it's hard to follow when the leader leads something at the wrong time or changes their mind at the last possible second.
- Sometimes I feel that the next step is a secret that you will spring on me past the last possible second (I am now on the wrong foot). Following takes intense observation and quick reactions.
- I work hard to follow your lead even if you are off-beat. I try to help you find the rhythm of the music again.
- I think my partner is bored because I don't know many fancy tricks.
- When I am led smoothly, clearly, and at the right time, it feels wonderful!
- I love it when my partner is enjoying the dance with me.

I definitely feel that learning to lead has given me a deeper understanding and appreciation for the dance and for my dance partner. Each part is difficult in its own way. Each part is enjoyable and made even more enjoyable when you have a partner who is having fun dancing with you. I do not feel that learning the non-traditional dance role diminishes your manliness or femininity; it instead enhances your understanding of

what the other side of the frame is hoping to get out of a dance. It also helps you improve your traditional dance role through experiencing what it's like to be on the other side.

It's not for everyone, but I have found it to be a great experience. I have connected with others who know both roles and it is wonderfully fun to change roles back and forth mid-dance. It's a challenge to see if you can change roles without them noticing or without missing a beat.

Benefits of Learning the Opposite Role

- I help even things up at a dance when others are sitting out.
- It helps to know both sides if something isn't going right with your partner. Social dancing is not the time to correct but you can adjust to what is happening.
- I've met know more people than I normally would because I am meeting and dancing with people of both genders.
- If you find yourself in a position to help a struggling new dancer, it is essential to know their part to be of any use to them.
- People you meet may ask you to author an article for Minnesota Dancer. ▲



Linda leading.



Photo by Jana Rose Arts

Lisa is a small business owner and avid dancer. She has been dancing since 2011, and loves to compete with her fiancée Tony Guinta.

As I buckled my seat belt, I wondered, not for the first time, how it could possibly keep me safe if I fell from 35,000 feet. Would I even be able to figure out how to get my seat cushion detached to use as a floatation device if it came to that? Then to calm myself, I resorted to prayer. As we raced down the runway I asked Tony why we couldn't just stay on the ground and go this fast. Immediately, upon leaving the ground we met with turbulence. I took a sharp breath in and glanced at the seat pocket in front of me wondering if they still provided those bags.

I felt Tony take my hand and he smiled reassuringly at me. We were finally on our way to the 2015 USA Dance National DanceSport Championship in Baltimore, Maryland! We had been working toward this weekend for a year, qualifying for it the previous October at the Chicago DanceSport Challenge. A two hour and fifteen minute plane ride stood between us and our dreams!

We arrived at the exquisite Renaissance Harborplace Hotel that would be our home for the next four days and were delighted by the view of the city from the 12th floor. Although it was quite late, we wanted to see the space where we would be dancing. Taking the elevator to the 5th floor, we followed the

2015 USA Dance Nationals: Lisa's Perspective

By Lisa Mohr

music to find the Ballroom. WOW! It was huge! I felt energy exuding from the workers as well as from the other dancers who had come for the very same reason we did. We were so excited to be there AND to see so many familiar faces from Minnesota!

We were scheduled to dance in four events; Senior II Bronze Rhythm and Senior I Bronze Smooth on Friday; as well as Senior II Bronze Smooth and Senior I Bronze Rhythm on Saturday. Our goal? To win first place in Senior II Bronze Rhythm. Not the highest of goals but we felt it was attainable.

On Friday morning, Senior II Rhythm took the floor. We felt these dances were our strength, and when we took first place out of seven couples we were ecstatic and confident. A short time later we danced in the Senior I Bronze Smooth event – and we crashed and burned taking last place out of three couples. As I look back, dancing these dances didn't make me feel nervous, as much as tentative, and I know that's how I danced them. But I wasn't overly disappointed with the results as Tony and I had previously discussed leaving Smooth behind us to focus solely on Rhythm. This was a confirmation, or so we thought.



Saturday morning, we were starting with smooth and after the results from the day before, we weren't sure we wanted to participate. We were in the practice room going over our routines and discussing changing our choreography, or just dropping out completely, when my teacher's words came to mind. Things that he had been trying to teach me started to take root. I practiced all the things coming into my mind before I lost them, and I became pretty excited about dancing this round.

When it was time to dance our waltz and foxtrot, I was prepared. It felt right, it felt great. When we saw our number recalled, we were jubilant! There we were, number 169 called back to dance in the finals!

Again, we danced for the judges and awaited awards. There were eleven couples reduced to seven in the finals. With each number called and placed that wasn't ours, we became more hopeful. There was a tie, broken by Rule 10 for the third and fourth place, then another tie broken by Rule 11 for first place. When they called our number for first place, we hugged! Maybe we even danced!

We were national first-place winners in Senior II Bronze Smooth! Seriously! We went on to win first place in Senior I Bronze Rhythm, bringing home three National Bronze Champion titles to Minnesota.

Upon arriving home, we've decided it's time to learn Silver technique so we can go back next year, not to defend our titles, but to win new ones. What I brought back with me after this experience (other than a really great pair of studded hose) is that competition makes me a better dancer. If I hadn't had this experience, it would have delayed my epiphany for who knows how long.

I want to thank Tony Guinta, my amateur partner, for this incredible experience as well as our teachers, Shinya McHenry and Nadine Messenger. Without you, this would not have been possible! ▲



2015 USA Dance Nationals: Tony's Point of View

By Tony Guinta

Tony Guinta is employed as a director in information technology. He started dancing in July 2012 and focused on salsa until October 2013, when he began studying rhythm and smooth.

When I first met Lisa, she was strictly a Pro/Am competitor with no intention of ever dancing Amateur/Amateur. I had formed a dance partnership with Michele Madsen just before I met Lisa. When Michele only wanted to dance in the Newcomer proficiency at DanceFest in March 2014, I asked Lisa if she'd dance bronze with me. I had a great time dancing with both ladies, and since Lisa had fun too, we decided to continue our dance partnership. With that, we set a goal to compete at a USA Dance National Qualifying Event and chose the 2014 Chicago DanceSport Challenge.

A goal that was seven months away put us into overdrive. We both took individual private lessons as well as couples lessons with both Shinya McHenry, of DanceLife Ballroom, and Nadine Messenger at Cinema Ballroom. We lived dance, and when we weren't in lessons, rehearsing, or social dancing, we were usually discussing dance, studying videos such as WDSF World Championship competitions, and other instructional/demonstrational videos.

Soon enough, the Chicago competition arrived. We qualified in all four of the events in which we competed; including taking first

place out of seven in Senior II Bronze Rhythm. Now, we were on to the real goal, which was to compete in the 2015 USA Dance National Championships.

We continued the same routine of taking individual and couples lessons. Additionally, we danced at events such as showcases at DanceLife Ballroom and Cinema Ballroom, Minnesota Madness, Ballroom Blast, Snow Ball 2015, and Dance Fest 2015, to get more competition-floor experience.

Finally, we hit the floor the morning of March 27, taking first place in a seven couple final in our very first event, Senior II Bronze Rhythm. That in itself gave me the satisfaction I needed. Later that afternoon, we didn't do as well when we took last place in a three couple final in Senior I Smooth. But I noticed the judges' marks were split between the second place couple (211) and us. I also saw we were to compete against 211 in our Senior II Smooth. I knew we had a chance to rise up and overtake them.

The next day, our first event was in the late afternoon, so we had time to warm up. But, when we were on the practice floor preparing for our Senior II Bronze Smooth event, I started to melt down. Nothing felt right. I was painfully aware of all of my weaknesses: dropping my frame, not getting into my knees enough, poor rotation, head in the wrong place; and with the cramped space on the practice floor, I started to worry that we wouldn't even make callbacks. At one point, I even suggested simplifying our routine. We tried that for a while and then I realized what a bad idea that was -- this was the routine we had been working on for the past year and if our teachers didn't recommend changing it, why would I change it now?

Then it was show time. We walked onto the floor and something magical happened. We were both relaxed and our dances flowed very well. I mixed up a few moves in our amalgamation, but it wasn't a big deal.

We left the floor and immediately saw that we made callbacks! Back on the floor, we were now in the top six out of eleven. Once again, everything flowed well and leaving the floor we both agreed we'd danced those dances as well as we had ever done. I was now willing to accept whatever the judges decided, feeling that I had accurately demonstrated my current abilities.

Awards time: holding Lisa's hand, the emcee announced sixth and fifth places. He then announced that there was a tie for third, broken by Rules 10 and 11. Finally he announced third and fourth places. I gripped Lisa's hand tightly as we now knew we were at least in second place. Again, he announced that there was a tie for first which was not broken by Rule ten; after applying Rule eleven, second place went to-211 (not us!). I stood there in shock, still waiting to hear them call our number for first place. When they did, we were still in disbelief. What an incredible rush to have gone from feeling so down, less than an hour before, to feeling on top of the world!

(Continued next page)



(Tony's Point of View, continued from page 15.)

Feeling completely pumped, we went back to our room to change back into our Rhythm attire for our final event. We took the floor for Senior I Bronze Rhythm, which happened to be against the same two competitors against whom we had taken third in Senior I Smooth. This round felt so good. Once again I had felt we had danced our best. When the results were announced, and we took first place for the third time in a National competition, we were soaring above the clouds.

When it was all over, the feeling was surreal as it occurred to me that we had not only accomplished our goal of taking first place in our age category, but we surpassed it by also taking first in the younger age category in Rhythm. A year's worth of work was validated! It's an amazing feeling of accomplishment that I've never quite felt before. With this chapter complete, we're setting new goals for this year.

I'm so thankful for the excellent training and coaching from Shinya McHenry and Nadine Messenger, but I'm most grateful for my wonderful dance partner, the love of my life and soon-to-be wife, Lisa Mohr, who was willing to take this incredible journey with me. ▲

COMPETITION CALENDAR

May 17, 2015

MN Star Ball

Organized by Eliecer & Rebecca Ramirez, Medina, MN

June 6-7, 2015

NJ DanceSport Classic-Summer Sizzler—NQE 2016

Rogers DanceSport Center, Hackensack, NJ

June 26-28, 2015

Gumbo DanceSport Championships—NQE 2016

Hosted by Louisiana Gumbo Chapter #5031, Baton Rouge, LA

July 9-11, 2015

Twin Cities Open Ballroom Championships

Hosted by Scott and Amy Anderson in Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN

Sep 12, 2015

Kansas City Dance Classic

Organized by Matt & Ellen Pansing, Overland Park, KS

Sep 25-27, 2015

New England DanceSport Championships – NQE 2016

Hosted by MASSabda Chapter #3002, Waltham, MA

Oct 2-4, 2015

Carolina Fall Classic - NQE (2016)

Organized by Wayne & Marie Crowder, Charlotte, NC

Oct 30–Nov 1, 2015

Chicago DanceSport Challenge – NQE 2016

Hosted by Chicagoland USA Dance Chapter #2001, Chicago, IL

Nov 7, 2015

California State DanceSport Championship – NQE 2016

Hosted by NorCal Chapter #4004, San Jose, CA

Nov 21-22, 2015

National Collegiate DanceSport Championships

Hosted by USA Dance National, Columbus, OH

Jan 8-10, 2016

Snow Ball Competition

Hosted by Donna Edelstein, Minneapolis, MN

Jan 15-17, 2016

Manhattan Amateur Classic (The MAC) – NQE 2016

Hosted by Greater New York Chapter #3004, Secaucus, NJ

SHOULD SOCIAL DANCERS COMPETE?

Few people start taking dance lessons because they want to be a competitive dancer. Most students are looking for a new outlet for self-improvement, stress relief, and community, among many other benefits.

Your lessons are going along just fine, you're feeling progress, and then your teacher, or your amateur partner says, "There is a competition coming up, I think you/we should go!"

Wait a minute, what?! I came here to go to the salsa club, dance with my wife, lose weight, make new friends, get ready for my wedding, and so forth. Not PERFORM! Why should I do this?

Here's why:

Enhance your dancing- Have you ever noticed that many of the best students at the studio are the ones who go to competitions? They didn't get that good and then go compete, it was part of the preparation process! When preparing 'freestyles,' which are choreographed amalgamations of patterns appropriate to your level, you are able to practice lead/follow techniques, balance, strengthen your frame, improve your footwork and play with musicality. Even though the freestyles are choreographed, your closed category routines should be socially lead-able at that level. This is great for leaders! You can dance much of your

material with other students without having to think because it will be ingrained in your brain and your feet.

Community - In your private lessons you may not interact much with other students. Traveling to compete together gives you the opportunity to strengthen friendships and make friends. You might meet dancers from other parts of the country or abroad. But you all share the same language through dance.

"Have you ever noticed that many of the best dancers at a studio are the ones that compete?"

Build confidence - Once you decide to spend some quality time on your dancing, you'll probably become one of the better dancers when you go out social dancing. People will stop and watch you! If you haven't spent time in front of a crowd before that might make you a little uncomfortable. But imagine how much easier going out to social dance will feel when you know that whoever you are dancing with is going to have a great time.

Opportunity to Travel - Many competitions, are hosted in beautiful locations. Many people put off vacations due to work or other obligations and before you know it it's been years since your last vacation. Competing lets you combine your love of travel with your love of dance.

Get dressed up - We can't ignore the glitz and sparkle of the ballroom dance floor. Even if you live in denim and sneakers on a daily basis, getting dressed up to dance helps you to get in character and boost your dancing. Imagine how much more graceful you will be in a gown or tuxedo. Your teacher can help you pick outfits that are flattering and comfortable to dance in; and there are also vendors, make-up and hair-style artists at the events in case you forget anything or want help.

Have Fun - If you were to close your eyes at a dance competition, you might think you were actually at a football game! When not on the dance floor everyone is cheering and socializing. Many events give you the opportunity to have fun, watch shows, and dance till you drop. Sound like a good time?

You might not be able to attend every event, but there are many different events held during the year.

Consider giving competition a try. Whether it's pro/am with your teacher, or am/am with an amateur partner, you'll find it gives you a goal to work toward and makes you a better dancer. ▲



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COMPETITION RESULTS

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March 27 - March 29, 2015

Congratulations to all Minnesota Competitors

Jeremy Anderson & Yuko Taniguchi

3rd (of 11) Amateur Adult Novice Smooth
1st (of 5) Amateur Senior I Novice Smooth
16th (of 17) Amateur Adult Pre-Champ Smooth
1st (of 5) Amateur Senior I Pre-Champ Smooth
7th (of 19) Amateur Adult Silver Standard
3rd (of 10) Amateur Senior I Silver Standard
18th (of 20) Amateur Adult Gold Standard
4th (of 8) Amateur Senior I Gold Standard

Tony Guinta & Lisa Mohr

3rd (of 3) Amateur Senior I Bronze Smooth
1st (of 10) Amateur Senior II Bronze Smooth
1st (of 3) Amateur Senior I Bronze Rhythm
1st (of 7) Amateur Senior II Bronze Rhythm

Michael Kasinkas & Taylor Wall

7th (of 11) Amateur Adult Novice Smooth
15th (of 17) Amateur Adult Pre-Champ Smooth
4th (of 19) Amateur Adult Silver Standard
15th (of 20) Amateur Adult Gold Standard
6th (of 7) Amateur Adult Novice Rhythm
3rd (of 6) Amateur Adult Pre-Champ Rhythm
6th (of 6) Amateur adult Championship Nine Dance

Andy Nordberg & Janie Nordberg

2nd (of 6) Amateur Senior I Championship Smooth
2nd (of 10) Amateur Senior II Championship Smooth
11th (of 21) Amateur Senior II Championship Standard

Daniel O'Connell & Rosemary O'Connell

5th (of 13) Amateur Adult Silver Smooth
10th (of 17) Amateur Adult Bronze Standard
8th (of 19) Amateur Adult Silver Standard
5th (of 5) Amateur Adult Gold Rhythm
5th (of 7) Amateur Adult Novice Rhythm

Greg Warner & Jill Smith

6th (of 12) Amateur Senior II Silver Smooth
6th (of 14) Amateur Senior III Silver Smooth
5th (of 7) Amateur Senior II Silver Rhythm
5th (of 6) Amateur Senior III Silver Rhythm

Greg Prasch & Susan Prasch

3rd (of 5) Amateur Senior I Novice Smooth
2nd (of 6) Amateur Senior II Novice Smooth
5th (of 5) Amateur Senior I Pre-Champ Smooth
5th (of 11) Amateur Senior II Pre-Champ Smooth
6th (of 11) Amateur Senior I Novice Standard
6th (of 14) Amateur Senior II Novice Standard
9th (of 9) Amateur Senior I Pre-Champ Standard
9th (of 13) Amateur Senior II Pre-Champ Standard

Kevin Viratyosin & Karen Maldonado

2nd (of 8) Amateur Adult Bronze Smooth
7th (of 13) Amateur Adult Silver Smooth
3rd (of 17) Amateur Adult Bronze Standard
3rd (of 7) Amateur Adult Bronze Rhythm
4th (of 5) Amateur Adult Silver Rhythm

Nic Westlake & Neli Petkova

1st (of 27) Amateur Adult Pre-Champ Standard
8th (of 28) Amateur Adult Championship Standard

Seth Westlake & Talia Rudahl

11th (of 19) Amateur Adult Silver Standard

Leland Whitney & Leslie Whitney

4th (of 11) Senior II Pre-Champ Smooth
8th (of 10) Senior II Championship Smooth
4th (of 10) Senior III Championship Smooth
10th (of 14) Senior II Novice Standard
12th (of 13) Senior II Pre-Champ Standard
8th (of 8) Senior III Pre-Champ Standard
4th (of 10) Senior II Pre-Champ Rhythm
3rd (of 11) Senior III Pre-Champ Rhythm
5th (of 7) Senior II Championship Rhythm
4th (of 6) Senior III Championship Rhythm
4th (of 5) Senior II Championship Nine Dance
3rd (of 4) Senior III Championship Nine Dance



Elizabeth Dickinson is a life/executive coach and amateur ballroom dancer. If you enjoy her writing and would like to receive her weekly emailed coaching newsletter, contact her at: elizabeth@pursueyourpath.com.

Last month I waded into the ballroom gender role debate and wrote about ways to reinterpret, reframe, or subvert traditional gender roles.

Most smooth/international ballroom dances celebrate a lighter, romantic side of life (even the sadder waltz numbers). Not so the tango. The music (mostly) sounds passionate or angry. Tango choreography can include movements that look as if the lead is shaking the follow.

So it may not come as a surprise that some women don't like the tango much. In my experience there have been at least a couple of women who haven't wanted to dance it initially because it reminded them of violence they had suffered. (Fortunately over time their concerns lessened, and they were able to dance tango and enjoy it.)

THE DANCING LIFE: Reimagining Tango

By Elizabeth Dickinson

And then there's the tango history. I was surprised to learn some tangos could be traced to the mid-sixteenth century, with origins in Moroccan and Spanish slave dances - initially danced by two men.

However most historians claim modern tango originated in the barrios around 1880 where unwashed, chaps-wearing gauchos (cowboys) had to bend their knees to dance, and women leaned back in the crook of the mens' arms to avoid the smell. (The rose in the teeth may be another effort to forestall the stench.)

Rudolph Valentino popularized tango through his 1921 film *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* and American tango eventually acquired more elegance and refinement. However, tango still has overtones of oversized machismo, or of men seeking to prove their masculinity or dominance through dance.

Initially, the choreographer we were working with wanted me to act genuinely afraid of my partner at the beginning of our tango.

Frankly, it didn't work. It leant a sense of heaviness to the dance. I became a clomper. As the choreographer observed, too many tangos look like the dancers are gritting their teeth.

No one wants to watch clomping and teeth grinding on the dance floor.

What did work was instilling a sense of what I call "playful irony" (similar in tone to the old SNL news skits called "Really?")

It's kind of a one-upmanship (and a little edgier than a foxtrot flirtation.) The internal monologue of the follow/woman goes something like this:

"Oh, so you want to chase me, do you? I'll give you a chase then."

"Oops, caught me!"

"Yes, indeed you DO have impressive muscles. What are you going to do with them, big boy?"

"Not so fast, buster...I've got a few tricks up my sleeve, too."

"Oh, so you want to play THAT game, do you?"

"Sure, I can do everything you can do...but with REAL flair."

"Really? Is that all you can do in response?"

"Watch this!"

"You can have that move, but I have THIS ONE!"

"Impressive, huh?"

"Ok, I'll give you that one...we make a good team."

"Well, maybe you are a LITTLE special..."

"But don't take me for granted..."

You get the idea, I hope.

May we pursue our paths, injecting playful ironies where appropriate. ▲



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Deborah J. Nelson is the founder, president, and head designer of Satin Stitches Ltd. More costuming tips at: www.satinstitches.com

We are in the midst of the 20th season of *Dancing with the Stars*, and I've been blogging my DWTS costume critiques, for years. I've watched (almost) religiously since the beginning. If you've followed through the years, I hope that you have enjoyed my blogs, learned a few things, had a few laughs about some of my observations, and even disagreed occasionally with my perspective!

When watching ANY dance performance, I am always critiquing what I see, so it's been fun to share my thoughts with an audience! We each have different likes and dislikes regarding colors, silhouettes, and fabric combinations. I have certain preferences and my perspective isn't the end-all be-all choice. It is comparable to our preferences for who we are attracted to. For example, I may appreciate a tall and minimally muscular guy, where as another may prefer a short and very muscular man. I might prefer blondes, and you may prefer brunettes, and so on and so forth. And, just to be clear, I believe that it is the inside of a person that truly makes him or her attractive, not their outward physical appearance. I've always said that if we all liked the same things, this world would be far too boring.

DANCING WITH THE STARS COSTUMING

© Deborah J. Nelson/Satin Stitches Ltd.

I do, however, feel that my observations carry some weight. Having graduated from The Minneapolis College of Art & Design with a BFA degree, I've had my fair share of art classes (including the study of color and shapes), and clothing design classes (including the study of patterns and fabrics). I've worked in the garment industry for many years and I've observed ballroom dancers for just about as many of those years, since the fledgling years of my dance costume design company *Satin Stitches*.

From being a professional fashion and costume designer for decades, I also know what looks more flattering on all shapes and sizes of people. I pride myself on creating costumes that can camouflage parts of the body and highlight others, ensuring that our least favorite body parts are minimized, while attention is focused on our best features.

When I critique the DWTS dancers in their costumes, I always try to keep in mind whether or not the dancers' best features have been showcased. It's generally much easier to flatter a dancer with what we may consider has a 'perfect' shape, than a dancer with imperfect proportions or what they might consider a figure defect such as 'no waistline', 'too prominent a derriere' or 'short legs' for example. I always LOVE when a larger dancer is fabulously costumed on the show, showing that we can ALL look great in a dance costume, no matter what our shape is!

I love to pick on certain costuming techniques on the show, such as all those bare chests on the guys, and when those certain dancers always seem to insist on backless gowns or really low-cut bottoms. And you probably already know that I detest the overuse of nude elastics. If you don't, I'll say it again: those nude elastics that could be replaced by beautiful rhinestone straps are UGLY! You aren't fooling anyone. They are NOT invisible!

I sometimes cringe at certain color combinations – they just aren't pleasing to MY eye (they very well could be to your eye). I prefer monochromatic color schemes and I love textured effects. As most dance costume aficionados agree, it's all about the glitz. BUT, sometimes less IS more. A beautifully tailored costume can have more of an impact than thousands of rhinestones on an ill-fitting costume.

When a female dancer is to be showcased, I'm resigned to sometimes seeing a boring guy's costume, but I really appreciate a cleverly costumed guy dancer. Male dancers should always look masculine and this is one of those areas where amateur costuming can fall short. Simple is great, just make sure the fit is perfect. Remember that everyone looks better in costumes and apparel that fits perfectly. Men's clothing is much easier to alter than women's. So, men, take advantage of this and tailor your togs to a 'T'!

Also, knowing what I know about costume making and fitting, I know that the costume professionals from the show do a fabulous job each week, with very little time to put together the looks. Most of the time they WOW me with really only a few disappointments each week.

Could my company re-create the costumes from this show? Yes! In a week? Maybe, maybe not! Has Satin Stitches created only perfect costumes? No. We always try, as the DWTS costumers try, but sometimes the results aren't as spectacular as the vision! My hat is off to these fabulously talented professionals at DWTS and also those that I work with at Satin Stitches! ▲



Suzi Blumberg and the marching flamingoes at the Ardastra Gardens, Nassau.

The tenth annual Stardust Dance Cruise with Linda Gilberg was another action packed and super fun-filled Eastern/Southern Caribbean cruise! This was my fourth Stardust Dance Cruise and the reasons I keep coming back are many: it's extremely affordable and you get much more for your money than other dance cruises. They are organized—workshops and dances are always easy to find and start on time. Instructors are top notch. Dance Hosts are there to dance with the single ladies and they are GREAT! At dinner, you can sit with other dancers in the group and make new friends. I love the variety offered—besides all the dancing and many other ship events and amenities, all cruises I've been on have visited six to seven ports, so you get to see different islands.

240 total guests sailed on the Costa Mediterraneana for twelve days that left from Miami and visited seven ports: Nassau, Bahamas; Samana, Dominican Republic; Tortola Road Harbour, BVI; St. John's, Antigua; St. Maarten Phillipsburg, France/Netherlands; and Grand Turk, Turks & Caicos.

There were over 50 hours of workshops taught by pros Cameron Johnson, Wingo Hom, Leon Harris and Ola Kozlowski. The instructors are from the New York City area and were awesome! The only class I didn't take was Argentine Tango—and there was a

10th Annual Stardust Dance Cruise: A Huge Success !

By Suzi Blumberg

large Argentine Tango group. Classes available were beginner, intermediate, and advanced level in Waltz, West Coast Swing, Samba, Salsa, Hustle, Foxtrot, East Coast Swing, Quickstep, Rumba, American Tango, Viennese Waltz, Cha Cha, Merengue, Lead & Follow, Bolero and Bachata. Instructors were available for private lessons.

There were over 35 hours of planned social dancing, two formal nights, a white night and an Italian night (because Costa is from Italy). Bob and Michelle Friedman and Lou Brockman were on board with the hottest music! There was the fabulous gourmet meals with wonderful choices in the dining room and buffet, a wonderful Broadway show each night, the Casino Royal and gorgeous pools, spas and Jacuzzis.

We visited all the ports and one was especially fun: Stardust guests were whisked away to Club Med in Guadeloupe to spend an exciting day at La Caravelle, an all-inclusive resort. All Stardust staff were there to greet us on our non-stop adventure of swimming, water sports, volleyball, and flying thru the air on a trapeze! What fun. DJ Bob Friedman, MB Music, set himself up on the beach to get the music going and everyone dancing! The resort had the most beautiful and plentiful lunch buffet waiting for us. Entertainers Sasha Bostic and Ola Kozlowski performed on the beach! It was

another Stardust memory made!

Another highlight was seeing the trained, marching flamingoes in Nassau at the Ardastra Gardens, Zoo & Conservation Center. There were many animals and tropical birds to see, and the flamingoes put on a really great show!

The Costa Mediterraneana was a beautiful ship. It's filled with beautiful paintings of world renowned ballet and modern dancers. The Costa line has more dance floors that are in the best condition than other cruise lines.

The dancing was fabulous, as usual. Linda had excellent dance hosts for the single ladies and between the superb music, wonderful floors, and great partners to dance with, I was in dance heaven! As usual, the dance workshops and events were timely and very well organized. The three days at sea we had extra dances to attend, and the ship had lots of activities, too.

I hope you can join us next year. Linda does a great job at keeping costs down—the cruise with a balcony stateroom was less than \$1300. She also supports MN Dancer as an advertiser. When dates and destinations are available for 2016, I'll let you know. It will be on Lynne's Dance News or you can contact me. ▲



*Suzi and the Costa Mediterraneana
Photos by Rita Maroun*

LAST GLANCE: DanceLife Ballroom Spring Showcase!



USA Dance Membership Application

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Name		Date of Birth (required for Athlete members)	
1.		Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>
2.		Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>
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Seasonal Address: Do you have a seasonal address? If so, enter below. Dates applicable: From: _____ To: _____			
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1.			
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Is this a renewal application? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If Yes, Member # _____ # _____			
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Total Contributions & Donations	\$	\$	Donations are used to help fund our many efforts to increase the quality and quantity of ballroom in the US on a social and competitive level including youth outreach, raising public awareness of the physical, mental and social benefits of dance, development of chapters, increased social dance options, support for our athletes and dancesport events. Thank you for helping us achieve these goals. USA Dance is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. Any donations in excess of value received are tax deductible.
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* Memberships for Adult, Student, Minor and Professional Athletes, DanceSport Professionals and DanceSport Supporters are on a calendar year basis rather than on an anniversary year basis.

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