

**The
United
States
Open
Championships**

Dance Beat World
1234 S. Dixie Hwy. # 346
Coral Gables FL 33146 USA
phone (+1) 305-532-4737
email info@dancebeat.com



Keith Todd
Editor



Trudy Faust
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Tara Christensen
Design Director

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US Open Regains Strength

Report by K. Todd

*Photos by
Dore Photography*

The US Open Championships run concurrently with the US National Championships, held this year for the second time in Orlando, Florida, September 2nd – 6th. The US Open is a WDC World Series Event and several members of the WDC Presidium, including its president, Donnie Burns MBE were present.

Although at one time the US Open attracted most of the world's best professional and amateur competitors, since the power change at the top of American Ballroom Company (the organizing company) and ongoing political

distractions between the WDC, NDCA and IDSF, the events have declined in attendance over the past three years.

This year, however, we saw some resurgence in attendance from overseas couples and the Professional and Amateur Latin divisions in particular were exciting events. Both US Open Professional Titles were taken by the USA to nobody's surprise. Arunas Bizokas & Katusha Demidova and Riccard Cocchi & Yulia Zagoruychenko both followed wins in their respective National Championships with further wins in the Open Championships.

Of the two divisions, the Open Pro Latin was the more exciting because this was the only one of the two with a real challenge from overseas. In fact the final six was comprised equally of three couples from USA and three from foreign countries. As I said above, Riccardo &

Yulia were the winners and lost only 2 first place marks from a possible total of 95. Judge, Jerry Abrate (Italy) gave them a second in rumba and Shirley Johnson (USA) in paso doble. The main challengers were the new partnership of Dmitry Timokhin & Natalia Petrova (Russia). The challenge proved to be not as strong as expected and Dmitry & Natalia placed 2,2,2,3,2, not really a threat to Riccard & Yulia at all. In fact their marks ranged from second to sixth in all dances. As a judge of this event I awarded them 2,3,2,3,4. For me their emphasis was too much on power and speed tonight and whilst Natalia is certainly one of the fastest girls on the floor her demeanor was



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US Open continued

Timokhin / Petrova



too monochromatic for my taste. Third were Justinas Duknauskas & Ekaterina Lapaeva (Lithuania), 3,3,3,2,3. This was a very unconventional couple, especially the lady. They also received marks from second to sixth. The USA's second representative in the final was the team of Pavlo Barsuk & Anna Trebunskaya who were fresh from their third place finish in the national championship the night before. I felt they danced, if anything, better than in the national event. I especially liked their samba and gave them second in that dance. Overall they placed 4,4,5,4,4. Canada's national champions, Andre & Natalie Paramonov were fifth and were certainly not out of place in this final with overall scores of 5,5,4,6,5. Their dancing has improved recently as they have added more depth to their usual

Belorukov / Skrynikova



crowd-pleasing performance. Even here, the audience loved them and I heard several groans when they were announced in fifth position and not higher. Closing this final, from the USA, were Delyan Terziev and Boriana Deltcheva 6,6,6,5,6. I felt Delyan & Boriana were somewhat subdued in both this event and the national championship. Possibly they need to reinvent themselves to stay fresh amid the myriad new couples that are joining this division.

Certainly worthy of consideration for this final in my opinion were Dmitry & Violetta Kurakin who gave a much better account of themselves in this event than in the National Championship. Next into the final were Ghigiarelli/Andracchio (Italy) who found much greater favor here than at Embassy Ball the week before when they failed to reach the semifinal.

Interestingly, two US National finalists did not dance in this division - national runners-up Eugene Katsevman & Maria Manusova and 4th placed Vaidotas Skimelas & Jurga Pupelyte. I wonder if both these couples had danced what the result would have been?

Adele Hyland of Australia will have the report on this division soon.

The US Open Professional Standard produced an all US final, and rightly so in my opinion tonight. In fact the result was the mirror of the National Championship. Jonathan Wilkins & Hazel Newberry (England) withdrew following the first round as Hazel is suffering from an ongoing shoulder injury and was unable to continue. Arunas Bizokas & Katusha Demidova won all dances, but were challenged very strongly by Victor Fung & Anna Mikhed. Although Arunas &

Katusha won all dances, Victor and Anna were especially close in tango and quickstep where the result was decided by 10 first place marks to 9. Interestingly, it was mostly the US judges who favored Victor & Anna. For me Victor & Anna danced extremely strongly, but I still preferred the classic line of Arunas & Katusha overall, but time will tell.

Placing third in all dances were Mikhail Avdeev & Anastasia Muravyeva. Mikhail & Anastasia offer a very classic style of standard dancing with great emphasis on sweeping movement.

For me their best dance is waltz. I find that Mikhail could carry his weight a little further forward in tango and generally offer a more compact frame in all dances. With their superior height, they do not need extra width to attract attention.

Placing 4,5,4,5,4, Igor Litvinov & Julia Ivleva were fourth, Linas Korieva & Liene Apale were fifth 5,4,5,4,5T and Urs Geisenhainer & Agnes Kazmierczak were sixth, 6,6,6,6,5T.

All these couples danced extremely well tonight. Personally I placed Urs & Agnes higher that they finished, but the degree of difference from second to sixth was really quite small. Having witnessed most of these couples dance three times in 1 week, (including the Embassy Ball) I felt that these were the best performances of the week. It was certainly "third time a charm" for the Standard couples.

Only 2 "non-USA" couples progressed to the semifinal and these were Lebedev/Borsht (Canada) and Perry/Perry (New Zealand).

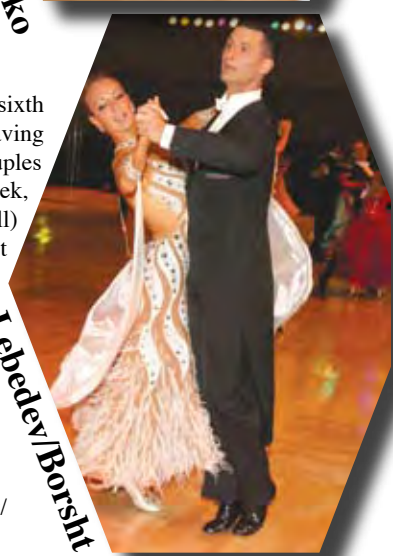
Avdeev/Muravyeva



Smagin / Kazatchenko



Lebedev/Borsht



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8 US Open continued

Giampiero Giannico of the USA will comment on this event.

The biggest upset of the Open Championships occurred in the Open Amateur Latin. Blackpool finalists, Evgeni Smagin & Polina Kazatchenko, should have been a shoe-in for the championship but in fact not only did not win but actually struggled to hold on to the runners-up spot. The winners were Dorin Frecautanu & Rosalina Doneva (Moldova) who won all dances with a comfortable majority. It was the US judges who really seemed to prefer Dorin & Rosalina. Although I did not judge this event, I was not really surprised at the result. I had noted this couple at Blackpool this year and was impressed then with their unique style. Rosalina is really offers a different aspect of Latin dancing, based very much on personality and characterization. If you are looking for speed and explosive lines, this is not the

couple for you. Evgeni & Polina were obviously disappointed although overall they placed 2, 2, 2, 3, 3. Although many, but not all, of the European judges did place them first this was not enough. In truth, although Evgeni has long been one of my favorite gentlemen in this division, their performance was lackluster tonight. Italy took third place in the persons of Emanuele Soldi & Elisa Nasato – 3,3,4,2,2. This couple brings experience to the floor and it showed tonight. Fourth were the Open British Youth Champions, Kiril Belorukov & Elvira Skrynikova (Russia) 4,4,3,4,4 who also won a 3-couple youth division here earlier in the week. This is a couple with limitless potential. They seem to have it all – the look, the technique and the confidence. For me right now, they are too much about speed and technique and not enough about the art of Latin dancing, but with the technical groundwork already done, I'm sure they can build a wonderful career in this division. This was certainly the most international of the week's "Open" championships.

Michael Mizner & Anastasia Belykh (Australia) were fifth in all dances and Oleksandr Altukov & Oksana Dmytrenko (USA) were sixth.

Forrest Vance of the USA will have the full report.

The Open

US Amateur Standard did not produce anything like the same quality or excitement. Only five couples entered. Gaetano Lavarone & Emanuela Napolitano (Italy) were the winners, Andrzej Bator & Angelika Orent (USA) were second and Vasyl Makarov & Grace Fu (USA) were third.

Kimerlee Piedad. Michael Neil & Danielle Wilson were third.

Gergory Day & Tommye Giacchino will have the report on this event.

For a full report on the National Titles go to www.dancebeat.com or subscribe to our US newspaper, Dance Beat. The US national champions not so far mentioned in this article were: Gherman Mustuc & Iveta Lukosuite (10-Dance & Classic Showdance), Riccardo Cocchi & Yulia Zagoruychenko (S. American Showdance) and in the American Style Divisions: Jose DeCamps & Joanna Zacharewicz (Rhythm), Jonathan Roberts & Valentina (Smooth), Joe & Leisa Howard (9-Dance) and Jerry & Virginia LeNoir (Theatre Arts).

Overall, this US Championships was the largest ever in entries with over 8,000. Most entries, by the numbers of course, are in the pro-am categories that began on Tuesday and continued through Saturday afternoon. There were "open to the world" championships in all categories and we will bring reports on these both here in Dance Beat World and in Dance Beat. Very large cash prizes were awarded to the top teachers with the overall winner, Mr. Rauno Ilo of Indiana picking up more than \$22,000. The total prize for the top teachers was

contd. pg. 13



Koulouris/Szpiech

The Open US Rising Star Professional divisions both went to new partnerships from the USA both of whom also won the National Rising Star events. In the Standard Damien Koulouris & Karolina Szpiech were the winners, 2,1,1,1,1, from Canada's Anton Lebedev & Anna Borshch, 1,2,2,2,2 and Russia's Lev Sidelnikov & Marina Aleshina 4,3,4,3,4. In the Latin it was the turn of Roman Kutskey & Anna Kovalova who won all dances. Second were Vlad Borodinov & Irina Garus (Russia) and third, Alexander Nishakov & Marina Goncharova (Macau).

Nine couples contested the World Professional Cabaret Championship, seven from the USA, one from The Netherlands and one from Canada. The USA took the first four places. Eric Luna & Georgia Ambarain won, again as they did the National Title with their new exciting and death defying routine. Also repeating from the national title as runners-up were Jesse Benedetti &



Frecautanu / Doneva



Tribute Award for George B. Theiss, former President of Arthur Murray International, Inc. & VP of American Ballroom Company. Accepted by son Leonard Theiss.



**Luna/
Ambarian**



WDC Meets With US Pro Couples

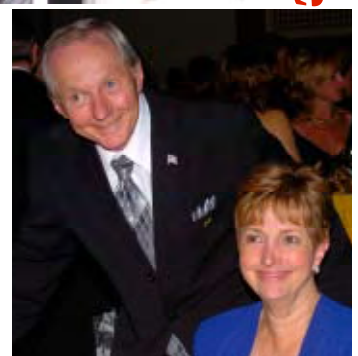
The WDC invited US competitive couples to meet with members of its Presidium, led by its President, Donnie Burns, MBE. The purpose of the meeting was for the WDC to respond to the US couple's open letter of complaint, published here in Dance Beat World, about the lack of US adjudicators on WDC World Championships in recent years.

The press was not invited to the meeting, but Dance Beat World did poll most of those professionals who attended the 3-hour meeting. Most we spoke to felt that the question was not adequately answered although they are now aware of the selection process for judges for WDC World Championships - they are selected by the Dancesport Executive Board of the WDC.

Paul Ricahrdsn, who is Vice-Chairman of the Competitors' Commission, was present and he has told Dance Beat World that he will submit a report.

We have also received a press release from the WDC giving their reaction to the meeting we will publish this next week.

Before the meeting there was reportedly a scuffle between Donnie Burns and some members of the US Dance Community who were not invited to the meeting. Dance Beat World will make no comment on this.



IDSF LATIN - GERMAN OPEN

by Nadia Eftedel

Photos courtesy GOC
www.goc-stuttgart.de

If you haven't heard by now.... **this** is a great event . It is all that the dance world claims it to be.... hundreds of entries, great dancing, beautifully organized and quite prestigious judging panels. (and let's not forget there is also an element of fun added in there)

The IDSF Grand Slam Latin event had 339 couples and some observations I had in the earlier rounds were as follows:

Dancing too close to the judges: it seems there is a belief that if a couple dances right up into a judges face, challenging them with a glaring eye, they'll get marked.... hear this kids...NO!

This kind of behavior, done deliberately, shows an arrogance and a kind of disrespect that highlights one's lack of experience. On behalf of the judges, we are standing as far off the floor as we can to give you enough floor space....stop pushing us into the daisies!

Noise: It seems **HA!** is the preferred

phrase of the year and being expressed quite loudly. ("tssaa", and "shhhp" former favorites) As dancers, we understand the physical exertion of competing and the importance of "breath" however, many dancers are making more noise than is necessary or required. Turn down the volume please.

Ladies Shoe Straps: Details, ladies, details. Look at those making the rounds ahead of you....the detail of cutting those long, ugly straps reveals a more experienced dancer who has heard all this before.

Moving into the 24, it became quite difficult to pull out only 12 for the semi. This round can often be a preview to what lies in store over the next two to four years in the amateur field and I'm so glad to see the future looks bright. It's been a long time coming but I can see much more rhythmical dancing plus partnerships that appear to be more evenly balanced between the men and women.

Countries to watch in the future.... Slovakia, Spain, Latvia, and some of the younger Russian dancers. Good luck to you all.

Into the Semi-final:
Imrekov-Divak : Very stylish and

quite clear in execution of actions and rhythms. Did not look out of place in this semi. I believe adding places of releasing tension would help their performance for the future. Bager-Jeliazokova: What an energetic and enthusiastic young man! No one doubts this man's talents and abilities however, it does become difficult to see the partnering aspects within the performance. A little more attention to the lady just might be what she needs to shine through.

Birkehoj-Kravchenko: So much working in favor of this couple....good looks, talent, physically fit and a clear understanding of strong dance technique....biggest obstacle is the lack of "connection" between these two dancers. Avoiding eye contact and their lack of interaction leaves the spectator feeling cold.

Iannoccone-Musikhina: I quite enjoyed watching this couple. I think the man has improved and looks better having slimmed down. They were consistent and will hopefully reap the reward of their hard work.



Silde-Firstova

Chmerkovskiy-Kozharinova: Perhaps not one of their better performances. I think this young lady has improved and continues to do so by consistently competing with these world class dancers. In my opinion, Rumba is their strongest dance. As a partnership, I'd like to see more rhythm and release of energy. Hopefully your next outing will be more of what you want.





**Thank you to everyone who
attended this year**

**See you in 2009
August 26th - 29th**



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IDSF LATIN - GERMAN OPEN

continued

Kulczak-Motshegets: One of the couples where “togetherness” seems to be the priority. They have a lovely floor presence and share a genuine pleasure in dancing with and for each other.

Into the final, in reverse order:

6th Langella-Maiduk: I’m not sure what to think with this couple....I see glimpses of beautiful dancing then it’s gone. Somehow, it suddenly falls apart. Not just once but round after round. With so many other couples eager for a place in the final I think they are lucky to maintain such a high position.



Zaitsev-Kuzminskaya

5th Plohl-Lahvinovich: This couple seems to be consolidating their place as regular finalists since Blackpool. In my opinion, Paso seems to be their strongest and clearest dance. I would like to see the element of rotation become more of a priority to soften their movements.

4th Batagelj-Strukelj: I like this couples sense of musicality. They are on equal par with the other couples in strength, power and speed however they add more rhythmical awareness which is nice to see. I would greatly suggest turning this aspect into a feature since it would make you stand out from the rest of the crowd.

3rd Zaitsev-Kuzminskaya: People take note: this is what “rehearsed” looks like. Great dancers and in peak physical form. In the positive, there is great security in watching this couple because you know each moment looks to have been thought out and planned, leaving nothing to chance. In the negative, it looks as though everything has been thought out and planned, leaving nothing to chance. In short, I

would say there is some “over” rehearsing which has made the dancing predictable. **2nd Silde-Firstova:** Walter Laird used to say, “The sign of a great man is the one who can present his woman to become the most desired woman in the room.” I wish more of today’s young men knew and heard some of Wally’s wisdom.

1st DiFillipo-Melnikova: Perhaps this young man heard of Walter Laird at some point in his life but may need some gentle reminding. I find this young woman to be capable of so much more that I wish



DiFillipo-Melnikova

their choreography or approach was directed towards presenting her talents more equally with her partner’s. This couple are great “audience-pleasers” and my hope is that they move their dancing closer to the realm of “beautiful artists” rather than farther away.

USDC, from pg. 8

\$55,000.

In an emotional moment two legends of US Dance both received awards during Saturday night. Linda Dean accepted induction into the United States Championships Hall of Fame for herself and late partner, Vernon Brock. Then immediately after Rufus Dustin was presented with the John Monte Award. Mr. Monte was the originator of the US Championships in 1971. Both these great dancers received a prolonged standing ovation. Mr. George Theiss who died earlier this year and was a past Vice-President of American Ballroom Company and was President of Arthur Murray International at the time of his death, was also

remembered.

The US Championships is held in the Lowes Royal Pacific Resort



in Universal Studios theme park. This is an attractive venue with a very large ballroom and a good choice of restaurants. Luckily two hurricanes, Hannah and Ike, both gave us a miss and those not dancing were able to get in some “pool” time or visit the amusement

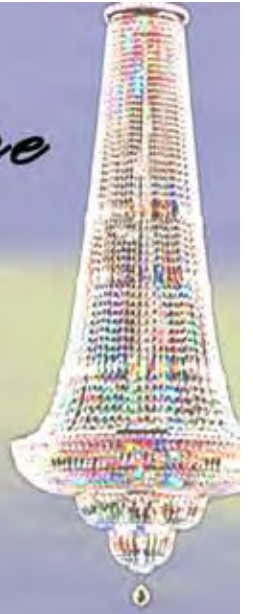
park. (ABC had arranged a 2 for 1 deal on theme park entrance).

Keep watching Dance Beat World and Dance Beat for continuing reports from The US open and Closed Championships.

Look for reports on USDC from:
Alan Dixon, Giampiero Giannico, Armando Martin, Adele Hyland, Rita Gekhman, Ieva Pauksena, Forrest Vance, Bob Powers, Michael Mead & Toni Redpath, Gregory Day & Tommye Giacchino and many more!

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6TH CRYSTAL DANCESPORT CHAMPIONSHIP 2008

REPORTED BY
JOHN LIM

The Organizing Committee wishes to take this opportunity to report on the successful organizing of the 6th CRYSTAL DANCESPORT CHAMPIONSHIPS 2008, endorsed by WDC, WDC-AL, BDFI, MDA & PDMB held at the Grand Ballroom, Shangri-La Hotel, Kuala Lumpur on 31st August 2008 in conjunction with the celebration of Malaysia's Independence Day which falls on the same day of the Championship.

This 6th Crystal Comp is the 6th in the Series of Championships is held annually in Kuala Lumpur by World Dance Academy as a regional Asian Event to promote and improve the standard of competitive dancing and fellowship amongst the Asia Pacific Countries.

This Year's Comp has attracted more than 250 couples on the disciplines of Standard and Latin making it a record for Crystal series of Championships held. Categories from Professionals to the Beginners were conducted and the standard has greatly improved.

Amongst the foreign invited adjudicators are the presence of the Vice President WDC, and ADC President, Mr. Isao Nakagawa (Chief Adjudicator), the Mr. Marcel De Rijk, the Vice President, WDC Social Dance and the Presidents from WDC Asian representative countries, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong- China, Thailand, Indonesia & Singapore. Amongst the Guests and Spectators of more than 1200 attendance is the Guest of Honour, Dato' Sieh Kok Chi, the Secretary General of the Olympic Council of Malaysia.

The Organizing Chairman, Mr. John Lim has mentioned in his opening speech, that his fervent wish is to eradicate barriers in preventing competitors and adjudicators participation in order to have a truly open creditable and successful Championship with all parties participating as one unified organization.





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