



## From the President

Benjamin Soencksen

Our world of partner dancing has many topics that are considered controversial or hot button issues, such as gender identification, pros and cons of equality dancing (changing lead and follow within one dance), the choice of costumes, etc. Discussions of these topics are influenced not only by questions of what constitutes better dancing, but also by social changes and changing perceptions or what is today deemed politically correct.

But we also pick up and continue discussions that stem from the mainstream and competitive world of partner dancing, some of which are as old as the early days of competitive dancing, which can be set as early as the start of the 20th century. One of these topics is the development, usefulness and application of a syllabus.

A syllabus sets the basic language of a dance by establishing characteristic step patterns, technical execution and rhythmical interpretation, which to our understanding defines each dance. This understanding is typically based on the observations of several years of development of the dance, preceded by the musical evolution that triggered the invention of the dance. There are different types of syllabi for the various dances we still dance today, some are more and others are less restrictive in their interpretation of the basic language and some vary greatly in style, such as the same dances that are described within the International, American, Country Western or other styles of dancing. Typically, these variations are more about the addition of step patterns further interpreting the very basic pattern, the technical execution and the rhythmical application. The diversity, created over decades enjoying these dances and their various style interpretations, has also triggered calls for consistent standards when we are competing to be the best in that dance or style. Style categories have been created, organizations have formed around one style, syllabi have been established to firm up that style, establishing parameters excluding other styles and subsequently creating a standard for that style and dance.

The structure of these syllabi further changed when they were used to influence the development of a dancer by subdividing a syllabi into levels of achievement. It is widespread believed that a dancer garners better dancing skills, if initially restricted by levels of patterns that are deemed simpler in the beginning stages of the learning process and then get more complicated as we grow into higher levels of accomplishment. That is at least the theory. In reality, many people are drawn to partner dancing by examples of high level dancing, which they want to experience with the very first steps they learn. That typically leads to a learning curve less desirable, but mostly unavoidable. One rushes through the preliminaries of learning a dance to get to the more complicated, intricate patterns that tempted us in the first place, at which point we are made to realize that our skill set isn't adequate to the challenge and that we need to get back to the basics. That is the moment when a dancer starts to become truly a dancer.

In order to promote learning by application of a syllabus and therefore from the start the

development of better dancers, the mainstream world has applied syllabus restrictions on the lower levels of competitions and established a system of points and/or amounts of placements that would elevate one to the next higher level. During the very first same-sex dance events, no such or any other system was applied to separate couples into specific levels of experience, but rather couples made their own choices. It was quickly realized that in all fairness some system would be needed, but that, especially with international events and when encouraging dancers of all levels to participate, such as the Eurogames or the Gay Games, a syllabi restriction to define the various levels won't quite work and would be too restrictive. Instead, as has been done now for almost two decades, our community has taken to the grading system developed by the Europeans, through which at each event every participating couple is newly classified in comparison to all other couples before the actual competition takes place. This practice has found even in mainstream many admirers, since it establishes anew each time a fairer playing field. It has also allowed a couple to organically grow into higher levels of the competition circuit through improving their skill set(s) and not by collecting points and/or placements, which could easily be an arbitrary result depending who one was competing against at the time.

Whether learning by syllabus and being restricted when competing in one's first stages develops better dancers is in my opinion quite debatable. I personally have experienced competing in both, a system that didn't have any syllabus restrictions, which then was changed to that restriction, and I have witnessed no betterment in the learning curve or level of competition. This means to me that even though I recognize that a syllabus can be a very helpful learning tool, it isn't the only answer to a better level of dancing.

Whatever your view on this topic, I hope that you continue enjoying your own dancing, treasuring the growth process of your skill sets and valuing your dance community!

All the best,  
Benjamin

## Competition Calendar

Competition Committee

Please note that ALL of NASSPDA's Competition Rules can be found by going to the NASSPDA website or clicking [HERE](#). Any questions or input are welcomed and can be sent directly to [rules@nasspda.org](mailto:rules@nasspda.org).

**April 29, 2017**

April Follies

Website: <http://www.aprilfollies.com>

Title: California State Championships



**May 30- June 2, 2017**

World Outgames

Website: <http://www.outgames.org/sports/dance-sport>

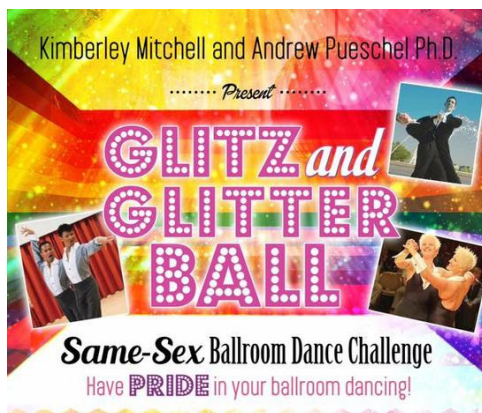
Title: IFSSDA's World Championships



**July 22, 2017**

Glitz and Glitter Ball

Website: <http://www.glitzandglitterball.com>



## **Results from Floorplay in the Desert: 2017 North American Championship Winners**

### **American Rhythm**

A Level

1st Place Nicole Wooding and Ashley Simone

2nd Place Michele Bissonnette and Stephane Quintal

B Level Student/Teacher

1st Place Linda Strine and Tina Mayer

### **American Smooth**

A Level (over 18)

1st Place Adrian Suncar and Matthew Zimmerman

A Level (over 45)

1st Place Michele Bissionnette and Stephane Quintal

A Level Student/Teacher

1st Place Leah Solimine and Nicole Wooding

2nd Place Tim Leslie and Eddie Alba

B Level Student/Teacher  
1st Place Linda Strine and Tina Mayer

### **International Latin**

A Level  
1st Place Rafael Dominguez and Chris Pham

A Level Student/Teacher  
1st Mark Williams and Robbie Tristan

B Level Student/Teacher  
1st Place Teresa Van Vranken and Liora Panic  
2nd Place Linda Strine and Tina Mayer

C Level  
1st Place Caryl Anne Hathaway and Evelyn Velez

### **International Standard**

A Level  
1st Place Photis Pishiaras  
2nd Place Andreas Woytowitz and Erik Jaeger

B Level Student/Teacher  
1st Place Linda Strine and Tina Mayer



## **Membership Information**

Membership Committee

**NASSPDA's Annual Membership Meeting Overview:**



This meeting was held in accordance to NASSPDA's By-Laws in conjunction with NASSPDA's North American Championships for 2017 at the event called Floorplay in the Desert in Palm Springs on Friday, January 13th, 2017. The meeting started at 5:00 PM at the location of the event and had six people in attendance. After a review of past and future events, those in attendance shared the following comments and thoughts: 1) combine competitions with others dance events (Harvest Moon Ball, Country events, etc); 2) appoint a NASSPDA representative to ESSDA; and 3) add European competitions on the NASSPDA calendar and a request from ESSDA to include NASSPDA events.



### **We proudly introduce our new website!**

This is timed, in part, to coincide with our membership renewal period. Please go to the website and click the "Join Now" button in the left sidebar. (Don't try to log in.)

We're asking you to join anew and, sorry, to enter some information again. Among other difficulties, we couldn't move our member data with passwords. Having you "join" affords us the chance to clean up our database and gives you a look at the new site. Clicking the "Join Now" button will take you to the new member sign-up page, where most of you will choose the "individual" level. The path from there should be clear.

Payments will now be taken by credit card instead of through PayPal. The new system has special encryption to keep your data safer than before. The new site URL is the same as before: [nasspda.org](http://nasspda.org).

If you have problems, or want to help us improve the website-parts are still under construction-please write to Kathy Wildman, our website administrator, at [wildmankathy@gmail.com](mailto:wildmankathy@gmail.com) or to [web@nasspda.org](mailto:web@nasspda.org).

## **Outreach and Media**

### **Promotions Committee**

#### **ACTIVITY GRANT FUNDING PROGRAM**

NASSPDA would like to encourage its members and our community at large to engage in various fun activities that promote same-sex dancing. We recognize that many of our members may have a creative idea and NASSPDA would like to contribute in a small financial way.

Some ideas for events and organizers to receive grant support:

- Same-sex dance classes
- A social dance mixer with actively inviting and encouraging same-sex dancing or "alternative lead and follow"
- An excursion to a local competition, introducing dancers to the concept

- A welcome party before one of NASSPDA's sanctioned competition
- Setting up a booth at a local street fair promoting same-sex dancing
- A neighborhood or community event promoting partner dancing and the inclusion of same-sex dancing
- Involving studios to promote same-sex dancing
- An event in conjunction with a city's Pride activities

These are just a few suggestions. To apply for financial support from NASSPDA's \$250 Grant Program, please visit our website at [NASSPDA.org](http://NASSPDA.org), click on the 'Scholarships and Grants' bar and then 'Grants' to read more for more information. You can also email us at [promotions@NASSPDA.org](mailto:promotions@NASSPDA.org) with any questions.

NASSPDA, 10352 Royal Oak Rd, Oakland, CA 94606

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