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Monthly Newsletter

March 2016



From the President

Benjamin Soencksen

"Partner dancing had some of its origins hundreds of years ago, but most of the dances as practiced today developed in the late 19th and early 20th century. The first recorded competitions took place in Mid-Europe in the very early years of the 20th century, highlighted initially by summer and winter championships and eventually by annual championships. Though same-sex coupling had also been, even if marginally, part of the development of these partner dances, competitions solely for same-sex partner dancing had their first incarnations in the mid-1990s, in Europe as well as in the USA (IAGLCWDC formed already in 1993, but had its first recorded competition in 1998; the 1994 Gay Games included a side event held at the Roseland Ballroom in New York City). This development in our communities prompted a call for continent-wide standardization, which subsequently led to the formation of ESSDA as well as NASSPDA in 2007 and ultimately, to have worldwide representation, to the formation of IFSSDA in 2010.

What offsets these, "our" organizations from mainstream organizations has primarily been the definition of a couple, with a focus on same-sex versus opposite-sex composition. But also that the definition of a leader or follower isn't tied to gender, which led to the possibility of switching lead within a dance multiple times (referred to as "equality dancing" since the 1998 Gay Games, when the term was coined by the organizers of the Dancesport event). A discussion ensued and is still continuing whether changing the lead within a dance helps to enhance partner dancing or hinders the development of "good" dancing. But it is undisputed that with that possibility partner dancing has gotten a new dimension, redefines what characterizes a dance (a main criteria for judging) and constitutes a higher degree of difficulty, if executed successfully.

Additionally, the traditional "look" of a couple was challenged and to this day is a hot topic. What is one to wear so as to not become a copy of a mainstream couple? Or is that desired? To what extent are we defined in our gender or role in the couple by what we wear? What could be considered politically correct within the context of our community or mainstream? This is obviously a very complex issue on so many levels.

Along with all these questions and new possibilities, it has also become increasingly clear that defining a couple as either same-sex or opposite-sex is way

too limiting. Even with the introduction of a reverse-role definition of a couple (by NASSPDA rules that defines a couple as a female leading a male at a minimum 75% of the dance), it became soon evident that the limitation wasn't fully addressed with this addition. BASSDA (Bay Area Same-Sex Dance Association), which organizes "April Follies" each year, has established a new category for that exact reason, which allows basically any configuration of a couple, and added transgender to its definition of male or female categories. Along with the increasing openness of mainstream organizations (USA Dance and FADS, as reported previously) to change its definition of a couple, allowing for any configuration, NASSPDA's Directors of the Board are considering adding a broader definition of couples to its rules and changing its name, since "Same-Sex" is in this context clearly not adequate.

What is your opinion? We would like to know. Make your voice heard! Consider becoming a member of NASSPDA today, and our collective voice will be even stronger. Or, better yet, get involved by nominating yourself or be nominated for the upcoming Board elections (see NASSPDA's homepage at www.nasspda.org.) But most importantly, enjoy your own dancing with whatever expression you choose!"

Competition Calendar

Competition Committee

2016 SAME-SEX DANCESPORT CALENDAR - The first 1/2 of the year:

April 23

Competition: April Follies in Oakland, CA

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

Title: California Championship - registration open in February. Check website for details.

June 1-3

Competition: North American Out Games in St. Louis, MO

Website: <https://www.naoutgames2016.org/dancesport.html>

Title: North American Championships

July 23

Competition: Glitz and Glitter Ball in Columbus, OH

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

Registration packets available [HERE](#).

Title: U.S. Championships

Membership Information

Membership Committee

Now is the time to renew your memberships!

In order to renew, sign into your online account and you will find a button in the upper right hand corner next to "logout" for renewing your membership.



Not a member yet? [JOIN TODAY!](#)

Board Elections

Elections Committee

We are now looking to fill four positions via nominations for the 2016/2017 election to the Board of Directors, which will take place around MAY 2016 (members will be receiving ballots via Survey Monkey.).

Important dates are as follows:

- April 8th candidate applications and forms are due.
- Elections will be held from May 8-22

Candidates need to be prepared to join a monthly phone meeting as well as travel once per year to an in-person Board meeting and/or for the annual membership meeting. If you are looking to get more involved in a wonderful and growing organization, please email this year's Election Committee Chair, Garrett Gerritsen at ggerritsen@nasspda.org and find related material under "About Us" and "Organizational" (<http://nasspda.org/about/>), such as an explanation of the process and required submissions.

Outreach and Media

Promotions Committee

ACTIVITY GRANT FUNDING PROGRAM

If you have an outreach program that you would like obtain funding for, please click [HERE](#) for more information.

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE -**DEADLINE EXTENDED**

NASSPDA's Board of Directors announces the availability of 5 scholarships in the amount of up to \$500 per person to help with the costs of participating in the 2016 North American Championships held at the North American Outgames in St. Louis from June 1st to 3rd, 2016 (<https://www.naoutgames2016.org/dancesport.html>). The deadline for an application is **April 3rd**, 2016, and the application can be found at <http://nasspda.org/documents/ScholarshipApplication2016.pdf>. At any time, if you have any questions, please contact us at info@nasspda.org.

PARDON OUR DUST

The current NASSPDA website is under a complete overhaul and we look forward to sharing our new site with you soon! You can still visit the existing site until the replacement site is up and running.

NASSPDA, 10352 Royal Oak Rd, Oakland, CA 94606

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