

## Dancing Profile:

# Peter and Inge Fischer

by

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IN AUSTRIA THERE ARE NO DANCING classes for children—you do not start dancing until you are in your mid-teens. Peter and Inge Fischer therefore began their dancing careers quite late in life by our standards.

When Inge left school she went straight into the hairdressing business. The girls she worked with wanted to go dancing so Inge tagged along. She was then fifteen.

Ballroom dancing is very popular with this age group in Austria. The majority of teenagers have lessons and do medals. These are taken less seriously than in England and Austrian youngsters do not go on doing medals for years as many people do in England. After a year or so they usually either join the competitive ranks or stop learning altogether.

Peter's interest in dancing started in his early teens. He used to watch both ballroom competitions and ballet on television. After he left school he took a job in a sports shop and started taking ballet lessons. Then, at the age of seventeen, he began lessons in ballroom and passed his medals.

When he had to go to Salzburg to do his nine months National Service, he looked around for a partner. His sister, Lorli, had already started to compete but her partner lacked sufficient interest, so Peter teamed up with her.

In Austria competitions are organised

by clubs rather than by individual promoters but since these clubs very rarely have their own premises, competition venues are similar to those in England: dancing schools, town halls and public dance halls.

The amateur section is divided into five grades and points are awarded for placings. Couples get promoted when they have accumulated enough points and Peter and Lorli made good pro-



*Peter and Inge dancing together in 1965; note the simplicity and elegance of her frock.*





*Peter and Lorli specialists in The Twist, 1964, a picture taken in Bratislava.*

gress. Since, however, there are only a hundred odd amateur couples in Austria, competitions cannot be held every week as in England and it took Peter and his sister seventeen competitions spread over one and a half years to graduate from grade D, through C, B and A, to grade S, the top grade.

Because only the better couples did Latin, there was just one class in Latin competitions.

Ultimately Peter and Lorli were faced with the choice of either giving dancing up or spending more time and money in order to improve on the

number two spot they had held for the last three of their four years competing together. Since Peter was planning to marry Inge, whom he had met just a few months after he started dancing, he and Lorli decided to stop competing.

The wedding took place in September 1965. Peter found that he did not want to give dancing up completely so he and Inge trained together. Then, through a friend, they heard of a school in Hamburg which was looking for teachers so they packed their bags and went.

They took their exams and taught



for over a year before competitions were even given a thought. Then their teacher persuaded them to have a go at the German championships. They agreed, only to be told, two weeks before the event, that they could not compete because they were not German nationals.

Rather than waste their training, they decided to enter for the first ever Austrian Professional Championship, to be held in June 1968. This was over ten dances and they were clear winners in both the Modern and the Latin in spite of being, at that time, mainly a Modern couple. Inge did not enjoy Latin because she was shy and did not like having to do things on her own in the middle of the floor.

Encouraged by this success, they did the European Modern in London in the same year and were pleased, and surprised, to be placed seventh. They

returned to Austria, living with Peter's father, and practised really hard. Time was one thing they had plenty of for they were not getting very much work back home as professional dancers.

They first competed at Blackpool in 1970, on which occasion they met Hazel and Alan Fletcher. The Fletchers invited Peter and Inge to stay with them in future when they came to England which the Fischers still do to this day although the two couples are now rivals in the Professional ranks.

Such stays have produced many happy moments—and some very funny ones. On the first occasion that the Fischers stayed, Hazel always brought them tea in bed. One morning Peter decided to return the favour and the gesture was greatly appreciated even though the Fletchers had tasted better cups of tea than the one Peter made.

When Hazel went into the kitchen



*Peter and Inge in 1973, Latin champions.*



to get breakfast and discovered that the kettle was full of dark brown liquid, she began to suspect the reason for the odd flavour.

"How did you make the tea, Peter?" she asked.

Peter, who drinks only coffee at home in Austria, replied, "Well, I put some tea in the kettle, poured cold water on it, then plugged the kettle in and switched it on and boiled it."

Hazel swears that her kettle has never been the same since.

On the competition scene, the Fischers' achievements are sufficiently well known that little need be said. After making finals in major Latin events during 1971 and 1972, the happiest moment of their dancing lives came in May 1973 at Blackpool. The results of the British Professional Latin were read out dance by dance and the



*Peter and Lorli dancing in Salzburg in 1963, their second Austrian championship.*

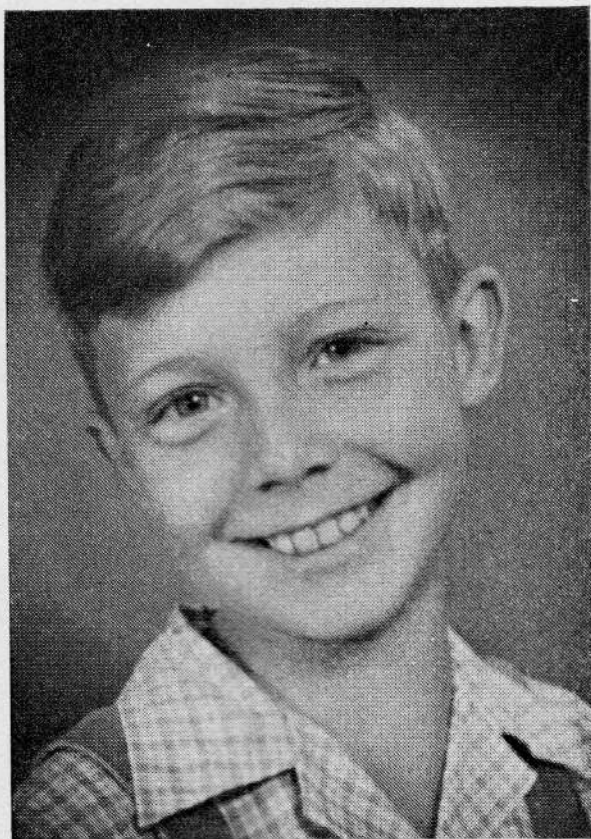


*Peter's early career was in a sports shop and he was no mean performer on a bicycle. A picture taken in 1958.*

Fischers won the Rumba and Cha Cha Cha but were only second in Samba. It seemed like an age before their names were finally read out as winners in the Paso Doble too and, therefore, in the whole championship.

They won the World's Latin in 1973 and came third in the World's Modern. This year, after dropping the U.K. to Michael Stylianos and Lorna Lee, they again won Blackpool and the World's—whereby hangs another tale.

The 1974 World's Latin took place in London the day after the British Latin at Blackpool. Michael Stylianos, in the rush to get home from Blackpool to Surrey and then on the Albert Hall, left his Latin boots at home. A friend rushed off to collect them but had not returned by the time the first round



*Above, the young Peter in 1949; below, an even younger Peter, as he posed for the camera in 1940. The smile is unchanged!*

was due so Peter Fischer lent Michael his spare pair. Michael liked them so much that, even though his own boots arrived in time for the recall, he continued to wear Peter's for the rest of the evening.

Which all goes to prove that, in spite of the stories one sometimes hears, dancing is basically a very sporting business—a happy note on which to end, for the time being at least, this series of Dance Profiles.



## Dancing on Wheels

LEN GOODMAN AND CHERRY KINGSTON gave one of their best demonstrations at a ball given by Ann Jones at Burry Port in South Wales recently but they would be the first to admit that the main honours of the evening went to a group of four men and four women who danced a formation. The routine was made up of St. Bernard's Waltz, Veleta and a Waltz routine danced to Viva Espana.

Everyone present was filled with admiration for these dancers and they surely helped us all to obtain a better perspective of our own dancing for *all these dancers were in wheelchairs.*

They are members of the Disabled Drivers Club and come together through the Burry Port and Llanelli Red Cross. This is the first group in Wales, but I hope that our ballroom dancing fraternity will give these wonderful people the opportunity of gaining and giving great pleasure. The idea should be extended all over the country and I commend it to the dance teacher associations. We can get up on our feet; these people can not. But they manoeuvre in strict tempo and master the patterns of formation.

The event had been a small entry invitation contest which I judged with Len and Cherry. The large audience greatly enjoyed the competitions. Robert Thomas and Beverley Day won the Modern and Latin pre-championship contest and Adrian Perkins and Lesley Dodd scored a double win the junior events. The Novice Waltz went to Ivor and Doreen Hanney and the Cha Cha Cha trophy to Bryan and Lesley James—very good winners indeed. George and Eileen Clarke won the Senior Modern while John and Yvonne Greco had an easy win in the senior Latin.

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