

# The Centre of the World

## Blackpool 1974

by

BRYAN ALLEN

*Photographs by David Hughes*

THE FIRST PAGE OF THE PROGRAMME FOR THE 49th annual Blackpool Dance Festival makes no claim; it states a simple fact. I quote—for nothing I could write could explain so well a basic truth: THE WORLD'S FIRST AND FOREMOST FESTIVAL OF DANCING.

Mrs. Ida Ilett, her staff and stewards, the scrutineers, Charles Barlow and his Orchestra, the way in which the chairman, Alex Warren, O.B.E., holds the audience in his hands—all these “little” things make the festival unique.

What better tribute can ever be paid to British ballroom dancing and Britain's greatest festival than the entry for the Professional Latin and Modern Championships in which 75 per cent and 65 per cent respectively had come from overseas? Not only was the entry high in quantity but very high quality. Most certainly “Open to the World” events.

### Senior Modern Championship

In 1972 Denis and Jean Tavener won this event but then experienced the despair of losing their title last year. After six long, hard rounds with a consistent performance they regained the title conceding only the Foxtrot to the former favourites, Ray Ellis and Beryl Singleton. Ray and Beryl seemed possible winners until the final, but they failed to produce in the last vital stages the quality of which they are capable. John and Joyce Walter danced well to hold off a best ever performance from Len and Margaret Page. From the first round I was attracted by the dancing of Angelo and Helga Volpe from Austria, an unknown couple, rewarded for some fine dancing. Paul and Brenda Bishop, who have improved very much in this style completed an excellent final; the original entry was 120 couples.

### British Professional Rising Stars Latin

The numerical challenge from overseas was obvious from the first round. There were 51 couples visiting the U.K. against the 21

home entries. Quality among the visitors was even better than quantity for 11 of the 12 semi-finalists and five of six finalists from overseas exposed a weakness in the Rising Stars of Britain!

Winning all dances, Hiro and Yoko Torii from Japan held off West Germany's Harry and Doris Koerner and Frank and Vicky Regan from Canada—with whom I was most impressed. They were sharp, expressive, but never brittle. Raymond Miles and Mary Richardson, U.K., Mickey Pedersen and Linda Laursen, Denmark, and Kerry Wilson and Ann Harding, Australia, completed a wonderful final, and gave a foretaste of things to come later in the week.

### Senior Latin Championships

By winning all four dances, Paul and Brenda Bishop won this event and became the first couple to win the senior title on three consecutive occasions. They were good winners from an entry of almost 60 couples, but I thought that John and Yvonne Greco, who finished second in all dances, need only a little more improvement to take this championship. They have made great progress. Dan and Joyce Seeley obtained third place, their competent dancing finding favour over the first class Latin portrayed by Ron and Doreen Stone.

The tumultuous reception after the invitation professional team match was proof enough of the popularity of this event. Four teams, representing Canada, West Germany, Japan and Great Britain danced over ten dances in front of three neutral judges, Miss Hildemor, Norway, J. Hendriques, Belgium, and Albert van Lingen, Holland. No one could dispute the markings which gave Great Britain 296½ points, Japan 267½, West Germany 257 and Canada 230½. What is of great importance in this competition is the *rapport* between dancers and spectators. It was a brilliant idea of Mrs. Ilett's, four couples in each team, two couples for each style, and ten excitement-filled dances.





*Michael Needham with the British team at Blackpool; from left to right, Short-Last, Stylianos-Lee, Gleave-Gleave and Douglass-Douglass. Not surprisingly, they won*

### **British Professional Rising Stars Modern**

Eighty-two entries with a content of two-thirds from overseas. Six rounds were needed to select the winners and by the final the standard was very high indeed.

Japan completed a double by also winning this event. Micky and Momo Kezuka eventually won the contest but I felt that over the whole six rounds Chu and Susie Tanaka would have gained first place. Although Tanaka's Tango has lost some of the pure "Scrivener" influence which he had, to me it is still one of the best to be seen today. David and Janice Douglass were delighted to finish third, one of the two British couples who made the final and just taking the third place from Japan for fourth went to Hiro and Yoko Tori.

### **Latin Youth Contest**

The first round standard of this event was excellent with the grooming of the couples of the highest order. Jeffery Dobinson and

Debbie Lee-London won all dances with David Sycamore and Denise Weavers dancing at their very best to take second place. Sixth were Jesper Nielsen and Susanne Gelling, a most attractive and talented couple from Denmark.

### **North of England Amateur Championship**

The entry for this closed championship has been reduced by the decision of some of the younger couples, who would have been eligible, to dance in the Youth Latin contest. Gary Richardson and Susan Pedvin retained their title. No one did quite enough to challenge them and they won every dance. Mervyn and Wendy Herbert, runners-up, were in first class form. They have gained in projection and if they can sustain this they should soon be strong challengers. Paul Pritchard and Elizabeth Adey were third in each dance to finish in front of Kenny Welsh and Kathy Gillmartin who were nowhere near their best form. Fifth were Paul Taylor and



Susan Wilson who need a little more drive. I hope they will persevere.

### **British Amateur Latin Championship**

Six rounds reduced 170 couples to a final which, after last year's tense battle between Fletcher and Maxwell, held great interest but little drama. With an overall standard that gets better each year it was inevitable that very good couples had to be eliminated even in the early stages. Among these were Gottshall/Gottshall, Pritchard/Hughes, Hansen/Hansen, Pfeiffer/Pfeiffer, Harvey/Young and Bellinger/Munt.

Generalising a little, it seemed to be Norway which had made greatest progress in this style over the past year.

Selecting the finalists was one of the most difficult tasks of the festival so far. Jones/Jones, finalists last year must have been disappointed; Bernaads/Bernaads, Dobinson/Lee-London, Smith/Alleyne, Cutler/Bedford, Richardson/Pedvin made up a magnificent semi-final but could not obtain enough marks to go forward. The last named couple showed dancing of such precision and skill that I was surprised they did not make the final.

Peter Maxwell and Lynn Harman only managed to obtain 43 from a possible 44 first placings! Without the spur of a serious challenge, it was pleasing to see the high quality Maxwell and his partner achieved round after round. They fully displayed their World Championship ability.

Ian and Ruth Walker, second in all dances, have a good rhythmic quality and well deserved their placing. Lynn Clifton showed a very marked improvement which greatly assisted Alan Armsby to obtain third place. After the U.K. had dominated the first three placings, the remaining places went overseas; fourth to Philip and Jan Nicholas of Australia; fifth to Espan Salbers and Kirsten Slora, Norway; and sixth (my own preference) Joop Bronmeijer and Elly Beck of Holland whose more expressive body rhythms portrayed, for me, the emotion suggested by the music.

### **British Formation Championship (Modern)**

Five teams were entered, two from overseas and it was the visitors who took first and second placings. Gunter Dresen's Dusseldorf team won the title, making something like 16 dance changes in their routine, slick and very well rehearsed. Roy Mavor's American team from New York State College gave the audience little chance to applaud their skill as they covered the ballroom floor with breath-

taking speed. Frank and Peggy Spencer were placed third but their more conventional dancing could well have been placed higher.

### **British Formation Championship (Latin)**

The Dresen Dusseldorf team achieved a fine double by taking this title too. They received a terrific ovation. The Hamburg team, trained by Wolfgang Opitz, made this, like the ballroom section, an overseas "one-two". This team made good use of extended lines and the climax was two girls doing a cartwheel (the original, full circle, hands to floor turn) followed by slow splits! Very dramatic, but hardly formation *dancing*? The routine was great without these gimmicks. The North Twenty team were placed third with a clever and clear routine.

### **Youth Modern Contest**

It was delightful to see so much mature dancing from so many young couples and the amateur field in due course will benefit from this talent. I know how difficult the judges' task is, but I could not understand how John Wood and Julie Sohl and Martin Harvey and Ruby Young failed to make the final. A tie between Robert Grey and Carol Meacham and David Sycamore and Denise Weavers was resolved by the application of rule 11 in favour of Grey. This is a new partnership with great potential; nevertheless I thought Sycamore was unlucky.

### **Latin Professional Championship**

Three out of every four couples—75%—from overseas! Eighty-six entries, the largest professional entry of the festival. The largest crowd of the week was hoping for a cauldron of excitement but, after a most unfortunate collision with another couple in the early stages, Lorna Lee did not seem able to recapture the magic everyone hoped she and Stylianos would produce.

Peter and Inge Fischer won each single dance contest and there was little doubt that they would retain the championship. Stylianos-Lee were second in all dances and although not at their best were not pressed. David Douglass and Janice Barb were placed third but there was no doubt that the crowd had their eyes on Alan and Hazel Fletcher who made great impact. They will provide a spur to the couples who finished above them.

### **Invitation Exhibition Contest**

Everyone had looked forward very much to this event for many remembered these contests from a few years ago, always such a



*Gary Richardson and Susan Pedvin, winners of the North of England and placed third in the British Amateur Modern Championship.*



feature of the festival.

Five couples had been invited and the standard was good. Perhaps more important was the reaction of the audience; they left Mrs. Ilett in no doubt that this was one of the highlights of the week.

Len Goodman and Cherry Kingston with "Apache" were placed first and Barney Conway and Evelyn Hislop second with "The Slave Girl"—fortunately Conway handled his whip with great skill. Chu and Susie Tanaka came third with "Concerto", a slow number giving scope for their expressive abilities.

### **British Amateur Modern Championship**

Peter Maxwell is twenty years of age. He, with his talented partner, Lynn Harman, hold almost every title in the world, both modern and Latin. Immediately upon being declared the new British modern champions they announced that they would turn professional (see last month's *Ballroom Dancing Times*). Having won every single dance in both the Modern and Latin championships they have proved themselves to be supreme amateurs.

The rest of the championship this year was most interesting and I thought that the overall standard very high although most of the im-

pact was made by the overseas couples.

Six rounds on the night plus two qualifying rounds held in the afternoons resulted in a very good final. I do wish Maxwell could display a body tone which would avoid the breaks which still detract from his otherwise quite excellent dancing. It is vital that he does so now or this will inhibit his progress in the future. Frank Venables and Linda Horwood danced very well except in Foxtrot where Glen and Lynette Boyce shone. Glen and Lynette faded in Tango and Quickstep and this weakness enabled Gary Richardson and Susan Pedvin to finish third with a much better performance than they had given in the North of England event. For me, third place could have gone to Greg Smith and Marianne Alleyne who were magnificent all through the competition. Often overlooked, they were rewarded with fourth place. Fifth and sixth places went to Australia.

The semi-final was staggering in drama as thirteen couples all reached for the promised land—the final at Blackpool. Despite the inevitable disappointments they can all take heart for they all danced well enough to have been carefully considered for selection. They deserve mention. Brian and Susan Puttock, Joop Bronmeyer and Elle Beck, Kazuo and





*Denis and Jean Tavener, winners of the British Senior (over 35) Modern Championship.*

Satomi Sakuramoto, Timothy Palmer and Linda Chatterley, Robert and Barbara Grover, Mervyn and Wendy Herbert, and Richard Weinecke and Birgit Nielsen of Denmark whom I should have liked to see in the final.

Among "new faces" were the Australians Potter-Potter, Jones-Swales, Wiater-Wiater (Austria), and Roberts-Roberts.

### **British Modern Professional Championship**

I do not think I am being unjust when I say (with regret) that, thinking domestically, some of our professional competitors would have difficulty in obtaining a gold medal. Much of the time they seemed completely to disregard any correct application of technique. Is the use of the feet a dying art? Is all to be sacrificed in the effort to be fastest round the floor?

That said, the final night of the festival was a wonderful experience for those visiting Blackpool for the first time. Sixty-five per cent of the 84 couple entry were from overseas and although the devastating emotional involvement produced in the days of the Irvine and Eggleton confrontation was absent it was one of the best contests for years.

The standard in the semi-final was exceptionally high and it was sad to see Honda-Honda, Kezuka-Kezuka, Wilson-Harding, Burton-Burton, Torii-Torii, Sakurada-Suzuki, Mr. and Mrs. Hull, Gierok-Gierok, Wylie-Peters, de Rijk-de Rijk, Stevenson-Hayes, Ritchie-Ritchie and Bosholdt-Bosholdt eliminated.

It must be many years since the same six couples appeared in all four dances in the

British. It was no surprise that Richard and Janet Gleave were successful in retaining their title and winning all four dances. They obtained 42 of the possible 44 first placings. Janet has now become one of the finest lady dancers. I have seen the couple compete and demonstrate both in modern and Latin a great deal in the last few weeks and would like to say "thank you" for all the pleasure they have given.

Robin and Rita Short were second in all dances, always very clear in shape and rhythm but they did not, for me, capture some of the magic I saw from them in the team match—two or three flashes of melodic brilliance of the type I have only ever seen from Eggleton at his best. If they can regain and retain that magic, then Gleave will be under pressure. Byron and Dorothy Charlton on this occasion were attacking Short; they were placed third in every dance but many thought them unlucky. Tall, elegant, with command and style they were among the best on the floor. Colin and Toni Twine were fourth in all dances but Tango in which they dropped to fifth. Joe and Nancy Jenkins (5, 6, 4, 6) were the only overseas couple in the final. They did not produce the dancing of which they are capable but we can understand the problem of coming from the U.S.A. for only a few months before taking on the British couples who have every advantage. The remaining place in the final went to Michael and Vicky Barr, amateur champions in 1972-3, who give perhaps the cleverest interpretation of Quickstep in the field.



And so it was all over. But we shall return to the Centre of the Dancing World in May 1975 for the Golden Jubilee Blackpool Festival. *Au revoir.*

**RESULTS.** *British Professional Rising Stars Latin.* 1st, H. Torii-Y. Torii; 2nd, H. Koerner-D. Koerner; 3rd, F. Regan-V. Regan; 4th, R. Miles-R. Richardson; 5th, M. F. Pedersen-L. Laursen; 6th, K. Wilson-A. Harding. *British Over-35s Modern Championship.* 1st, D. Taverner-J. Taverner; 2nd, R. Ellis-B. Singleton; 3rd, J. Walter-J. Walter; 4th, L. Page-M. Page; 5th, A. Volpe-H. Volpe; 6th, P. Bishop-B. Bishop. *Invitation Professional Team Match.* 1st, Great Britain; 2nd, Japan; 3rd, Germany; 4th, Canada. *British Over-35s Latin Championship.* 1st, P. Bishop-B. Bishop; 2nd, J. Greco-Y. Greco; 3rd, D. Seeley-J. Seeley; 4th, R. Stone-D. Stone; 5th, J. Lamb-I. Lamb; 6th, G. Clarke-E. Clarke. *British Professional Rising Stars Modern.* 1st, M. Kezuka-M. Kezuka; 2nd, C. Tanaka-S. Tanaka; 3rd, D. Douglass-J. Barb; 4th, H. Torii-J. Torii; 5th, D. Campbell-B. Adams; 6th, D. Nuzinger-D. Nuzinger; 7th, B. McDonald-C. McDonald. *British Amateur Youth Latin.* 1st, J. Dobinson-D. L. London; 2nd, D. Sycamore-D. Weavers; 3rd, A. Smart-C. Sanderson; 4th, S. Stopford-L. Aspdin; 5th, T. Pryor-J. Cross; 6th, J. H. Nielsen-S. Gelling. *North of England Amateur Championship.* 1st, G. Richardson-S. Pedvin; 2nd, M. Herbert-W. Herbert; 3rd, P. Pritchard-E. Adey; 4th, K. B. Welsh-K. Gilmartin; 5th, P. Taylor-S. Wilson; 6th, J. Vyse-W. Matthews. *British Amateur Latin Championship.* 1st, P. Maxwell-L. Harman; 2nd, I. Walker-R. Walker; 3rd, A. Armsby-L. Clifton; 4th, P. Nicholas-J. Nicholas; 5th, E. Salberg-K. Slora; 6th, J. Bronmeijer-E. Beck. *British Professional Latin Championship.* **WINNERS.** H. P. Fischer-I. Fischer (first in all dances); 2nd, M. Stylianos-L. Lee (second in all dances); 3rd, D. Douglass-J. Barb (third in all dances); 4th in Rumba, Samba, 5th in Cha Cha, Paso Doble, A. Fletcher-H. Fletcher; 4th in Cha Cha, 5th in Rumba, 6th in Samba and Paso Doble, G. Weissenberg-H. Weissenberg; 4th in Paso Doble, 5th in Samba, 6th in Rumba, P. Neubeck-H. Neubeck; 6th in Cha Cha, R. Ritchey-H. Ritchey. *British Amateur Modern Youth Competition.* 1st, R. Gray-C. A. Meachen; 2nd, D. Sycamore-D. Weavers; 3rd, A. Smart-C. Sanderson; 4th, J. Dobinson-D. L. London; 5th, T. Pryor-J. Cross; 6th, D. Hogan-P. Robinson; 7th, S. Cole-L. Cole. *British Amateur Ballroom Championship.* 1st, P. Maxwell-L. Harman; 2nd, L. Venables-L. Horwood; 3rd, G. Richardson-S. Pedvin; 4th, G. Boyce-L. Boyce; 5th, G. Smith-M. Alleyne; 6th, J. Kimmins-C. Kimmins. *British Professional Ballroom Dancing Championship.* **WINNERS.** R. Gleave-J. Gleave (first in all dances); 2nd, R. Short-R. Last (second in all dances); 3rd, B. Charlton-D. Charlton (third in all dances); 4th in Waltz, Foxtrot, Quickstep, 5th in Tango, C. Twine-T. Twine; 5th in Waltz, 6th in Foxtrot and Quickstep, 4th in Tango J. and N. Jenkins. 6th, M. Barr and V. Green, 5th in Foxtrot and Quickstep, 6th in Waltz and Tango.

## The Winning Fun Dance

by

**GERD KAECHLE**

*We told the story last month about Gerd Kaechele's dash to Blackpool where he won the "fun dance" competition with this number. The party dance records of Sydney Thompson will suit the dance, notable PDR 4 with its Eightsome Reel and PDR 2 with a Gay Gordons and Dashing White Sergeant. Or any bright "March" tune.*

**Start:**

All couples stand side by side, facing the Line of Dance and with inside hands joined. (Man's R to lady's L.) The couples make a circle round the room, one behind the other.

**Bars 1 to 4**

Man and lady walk forward 8 steps down the room, man commencing with L.F.—lady

R.F. On step 8 they release hold and man will turn quarter to R and close R.F. to L.F. Lady will turn quarter to L, and close L.F. to R.F. Man and lady now facing each other, slightly apart.

**Bars 5, 6**

Man walks backwards, L,R,L,R, moving back towards centre. (Lady walks backward R,L,R,L, moving back towards wall.)

**Bar 7**

Man stamps his feet 3 times in place (L,R,L). Lady stamps in place R,L,R. Use the rhythm "Quick, Quick, Slow" or "1 & 2".

**Bar 8**

Man and lady now clap their hands 3 times using the same "1 & 2" rhythm. Lift the hands to about the height of the head.

**Bars 9 to 12**

Man and lady now walk 4 steps forward moving towards each other but passing each other on the right side. They then take one step to the right so that they are for a moment back to back, and then move backwards in a diagonally right direction, so that they pass each other on the left side. They end facing a new partner. (Man will be facing the lady who was dancing directly behind him.)

**Bars 13 to 16**

The new couples now adopt normal (but loose) hold, man's R hand on lady's waist and the man's L and lady's R hands joined. The couple now "Swing" in place for 4 bars. The "Swing" is like the Square dance swing or similar to the Volta Spot Turn in Samba. Man and lady have R.F. forward and the outside of the feet almost touching. Propel yourselves round by taking a small step to side and back with L.F. (count &) and then turn on the R.F. in place (count 1). Dance this 8 times, circling on the Spot—until the end of the 16 bars and then join inside hands with the new partner and face the Line of Dance, ready to repeat from the beginning.

**THE BIG MIX!**

The greatest fun comes when the M.C. or leader shouts "The Big Mix".

When the dancers walk 8 steps forward on bars 1 to 4 they release hold of their partner and walk in any direction they wish. They can walk forward, towards the centre, towards the wall or even in a circle.

They continue walking on bars 5 and 6 and then Stamp and Clap hands on bar 7 and 8.

During bars 9 to 12 everyone has to find a new partner. Having found a partner they will then "Swing" with their new partner until the end of the 16 bars and then commence the sequence again.