

STARLIGHT DANCE PARTY

Report by Hazel Fletcher

When I write a report on a dance event I like to try and set the scene for those that were not present and recreate the atmosphere for those that were and wish to enjoy the nostalgia of re-living the moment. This is my report on the Starlight Dance Party held on the last Sunday evening preceding the Blackpool Dance Festival every year in May.

Starlight Dance studio in Streatham High Road is one of the oldest dance establishments for both competitors and social dancers. I attended practice nights as an amateur when the studio was run by Bob Burgess and Doreen Freeman, and that was a very long time ago! With my husband Alan we later became teachers at the studio in the mid 1970's when Bill and Bobbie Irvine MBE had taken over the lease. Now, with Marcus and Karen Hilton MBE and a team of former top Champions at the helm, the studio very much lives on. The late Bobbie Irvine MBE asked me if I would pen a piece on the occasion of the 1st Starlight Dance Party, and in exchange for a prime seat I have continued every year since.



Desperate measures are called for: Marcus Hilton MBE and Augusto Schiavo leading "YMCA" was the plan for this year to get everyone to let their hair, and conventional "Holds" down and just dance with anyone socially! It worked for about five minutes, and then everyone went back to just taking up the dance floor space chatting!

As a first ever performance of the newly formed partnership of Italian, Angelo Madonia and Lithuanian former Amateur Champion, Edita Daniute we were treated to a spectacular Tango. Fiery red soft satin was the choice for Edita; it will be interesting to see their competition debut.

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When it comes to cabaret time literally there is absolutely no space whatsoever, therefore the tradition of the Streatham ladies (the teachers) using strong arm techniques to force the crowd back against the walls is now expected. Then for a few precious minutes enough space is gained for a dance performance, although most of the Ballroom couples would prefer at least double the size!

Commencing the cabarets were former three times Italian Amateur Ballroom Champions Paolo Bosco and Silvia Pitton with a Viennese Waltz. Classic black velvet and pearls was the look for Silvia with a beautifully cut black lounge suit for Paolo; this option has now seemingly become the favourite costume for Ballroom men in a demonstration. They danced an interesting mix of Natural turns, Reverse turns, pivots in both directions, fleckerel and some alternative movements. The continuous tilting effect worked well as an opening show. An instrumental piece of music was their choice and also the choice for the next couple.



It is a pleasure now to sit at my computer and recreate the enjoyment of the evening. Too many pleasurable dance events in the calendar become distant past memories all too soon. Usually I start by re-reading all my previous years reports, the reminiscence is most incredible and fascinating. Unfortunately this year this was not possible as my lap top crashed last October, killing all my previous reports!

From top to bottom: Victor Fung and Anna Mikhed. Augusto Schiavo, Karen and Marcus Hilton MBE. Angelo Madonia and Edita Daniute. Franco Formica and Oxana Lebedew. Pics by Ron Self.

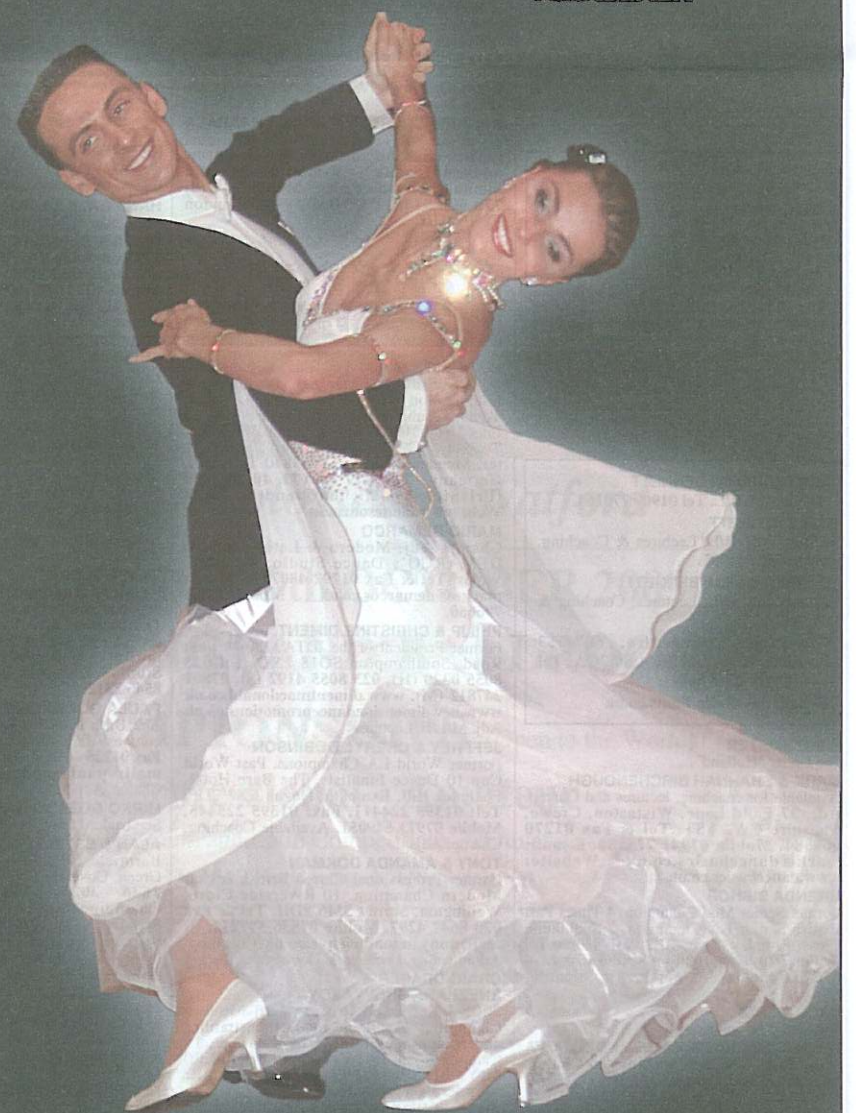
The reputation of the Starlight Dance Party as providing a great social scene is now famous Worldwide. Competitors, teachers and adjudicators can all meet, mix and enjoy a chat in a most welcoming social setting. The wine flows freely, an enormous buffet provides sustenance for all; the occasion is a real light relief in the midst of a month where everyone seems a little extra stressed in preparation for the British Open with all the dreams, hopes and expectancies driving them on. Dimmed lights, the classic whirring of the mirror ball, good social dance music playing in the background sets the scene. What is incredible is that usually dancers all have a degree of vanity, this they need in order to compete, and yet every year at this dance party, despite Marcus urging everyone to dance, the bulk of the people stand around all looking at everyone else, somehow too shy to start the dancing!



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