

THE ROLE & BENEFITS OF THE BDF

The Ballroom Dancers Federation was formed more than 60 years ago. Its formation was born out of the need for professional competitors to unite in order to raise the standards of conditions under which they competed. Since those early days the role of the BDF in today's dance world has evolved immeasurably.

I summarise below the main areas in which the BDF is active:

Representation

The original raison d'être is still very much in evidence today. This takes the form of delegates who attend British Dance Council meetings to represent the interests of BDF members and generally nurture the well-being of the competition side of the business. This includes a seat on the influential International Professional Affairs Committee as well as the main Board of Directors. In addition, BDF delegates can make proposals to be forwarded by the BDC to the World Dance Council on such matters as rule changes etc.

Education

Biennially the BDF organises the International Congress that takes place during the British Open Championships in May. This employs Lecturers with a vast range of knowledge, who lecture to a very appreciative audience comprised of dancers from the four corners of the globe. Of particular benefit to BDF members is that for the past few years entry has been free of charge for both days of the Congress for members of two years or more standing.

The BDF, although predominantly concerned with Professionals, recognises the importance of nurturing the talent of young dancers. The earlier they can be made aware of, and gain an understanding of, the important principles of Ballroom and Latin-American dancing, the greater their chances of realising their potential as adults. With this in mind the BDF has from time to time organised Youth Training Camps and Amateur Training Camps, which have included young couples from the ages of 10 years upwards.

Organising of Events

The Star Championships were in the 1950s some of the most prestigious titles contested by Professional competitors. Following a period when they were not run and not wishing the titles to be lost into oblivion, the BDF resurrected the titles by taking on the organising of the event. In recent years the Star Championships have taken on a new lease of life with a new venue and the addition of a Pro/Am showcase, which could in future be the seeds of growth of Pro/Am competitions.

One of the most spectacular events in the dancing calendar is the Night of 100 Stars. This was the brainchild of former BDF Chairman and President, Sonny Binick, who wished to present the world's best Professional couples in cabaret-style performances. Each year the couples surpass themselves with ever-better cabarets. To organise a World or European Championship is a major task. It seems that there was no-one or any organisation in Great Britain willing to take this on. The BDF therefore stepped in and for some time now has presented either a World or European Ballroom or Latin-American Championship in Great Britain at least every second year. The expense of organising such a major event is so enormous that even a sold out Blackpool Winter Gardens Empress Ballroom is insufficient to cover the costs. Fortunately, the BDF has benefited from generous sponsors and the shortfall is made up from BDF Funds.

At one particular Championship some years ago which was being aired on television, the Executive Committee developed a formula, where the competitors danced an additional performance in which a combination of all five dances was performed without a break. At the time this was known as "Segue" and its popularity became such that World and European Segue Championships came into being in parallel with the standard Championships. This was the beginning of what are today known as Ballroom and Latin Showdance Championships.

Recognition

The BDF Awards were introduced in order to give public recognition to people who had, in the BDF's view, given outstanding service to dancing. The selection of Award recipients is given great thought by the selection committee and the Awards are highly coveted by the Profession.

Assistance

The BDF assists its members in a variety of ways. Members can write to the Secretary and all correspondence is given full consideration by the Executive Committee. If necessary, members' concerns can be brought up at BDC meetings as explained earlier. As well as this, BDF funds are used to assist couples representing Great Britain in World and European Championships with their travel expenses.

As can be seen from the above summary, the activities of the BDF have evolved from its humble beginnings to become multi-faceted. The Federation has been fortunate to have been guided and led by a small number of dedicated and enlightened Professionals. The present officers are mindful of the legacy they have inherited and are resolute in their intention to keep the BDF at the forefront of Competition Dancing in Great Britain.

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