

Ballroom Dancing and Television

Ballroom dancing competitions have been broadcast on television for years. Men and women of many different ages and nationalities dance in costumes ranging from elegant to sexy to fun and amusing competing for titles in all categories of Standard and Latin American Ballroom. Television aired these strictly ballroom dance competitions where professional dance judges determined the outcome and the audience were merely onlookers.

In the last couple years there has been a new twist added to the Ballroom competitions thanks to the "reality television." craze. Television shows like So You Think You Can Dance?, Ballroom Bootcamp and Dancing With the Stars have hit the airwaves with a tremendous reaction from viewers. Millions tune in each week to watch and root for their favorites.

Ballroom Bootcamp airs on TLC (The Learning Channel) and is a wonderful series where three everyday ordinary people from all walks of life are paired up with three professional dancers and given five weeks to learn either the Cha-Cha, the Waltz, The Tango, the Jive or the Rumba. At the end of the 5 weeks they are matched against each other in an authentic Ballroom Dance competition where the judges decide the winner.

So You Think You Can Dance?, the brainchild of Fox television has its judges (some of whom are also the show's choreographers) go to New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and Atlanta and check out literally hundreds of dancers. Not all the dancers are ballroom dancers; many are students of jazz, break dancing, contemporary dance etcetera. Once the field has been reduced to the top 20 (10 men, 10 women) the dancers are paired up and the main competition begins. Each week each couple is given the dance they are to perform the following week. This may be one of the ballroom dances or they may draw one of the other dance forms, jazz, contemporary etcetera. They have 7 days to work with the choreographer and get their dance ready. The television viewers vote on their favorites and each week the judges decide who among the 3 lowest vote getting couples will leave the show.

Dancing With the Stars on ABC is one of the favorites among television dance competition shows. Dancing With the Stars pairs a professional ballroom dancer with a celebrity. There have been sports celebrities, football and basketball players, female wrestlers and boxers and even an Olympic speed skater, entertainers, singers, actors, television talk show hosts and even one contestant who had a prosthetic leg. Each week the celebrities have to learn at least one new dance. Towards the end there are weeks where they have to learn two dances in a week. These are strictly ballroom (both Standard and Latin

American) dances. The judges who have all danced professionally critique each dance and score the dancers with a high score of 30 points being possible. After each show the audience votes on their favorites either by phone or online. The audience votes count for 50% of the total with the judges scores accounting for the other 50% and each week the couple with the lowers score is sent home.