

Ballroom Dancing - Dancers, & Judges

Ballroom dancing has been around for decades upon decades producing thousands of dancers, and judges. These are all people dedicated to their craft. Some are big names that everyone knows but most, the average person would never recognize.

Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers are probably two of the most recognizable names when it comes to dancers. Fred Astaire, a native of Omaha, Nebraska was born in 1899. He started studying dance at the age of 4 and by the time he was 7 he and his sister Adele had formed their own vaudeville act. By the time he hit his mid-twenties he had already garnered international acclaim for his roles on Broadway. In 1933 he landed his first film role, a small dancing part in *Dancing Lady* and later that same year he and Ginger Rogers appeared in their first film together, the musical comedy *Flying Down to Rio*. Ginger Rogers was born in 1911 in Independence, Missouri. Her mother's big ambitions for her took down the same roads as Fred Astaire, vaudeville, Broadway, then Hollywood. Fred Astaire danced with many ladies over his long career but none of them matched the chemistry he had with Ginger Rogers.

Irene and Vernon Castle were among the first to make a career out of social dancing. At the time the world was looking for something new, more exciting, less stiff and somber. The Castles, both athletes had an exotic, stylish air about them. They were a breath of fresh air for the world of dance for the short time before the world war brought everything to a halt.

Gocha Chertkoev and Shorena Gachechiladze are powerful competitors who have become much sought after performers. Originally from the Soviet Republic they have trained in ballet, jazz, disco and ballroom. They have performed on the "Championship Ballroom Dancing" for five years running and hold many titles between them.

Cheryl Burke is the 2005 World Cup Professional Rising Star Latin Champion. She is one of the pros, and the only one to have won 2 straight seasons, on the popular television show *Dancing With the Stars*. Cheryl grew up in San Francisco, California and began dancing at the age of four. At the age of 10 Cheryl came to the realization that ballroom wasn't "just for old people" and started training in both the Standard and Latin dances.

Jonathon Roberts, another pro from *Dancing With the Stars* has half a dozen championships under his belt. He had a strong background in basketball and other sports but after watching Al Pacino dance his famous Tango in *Scent of a Woman* basketball took a backseat to ballroom dancing.

Carrie Ann Inaba, Bruno Tonioli and Len Goodman are the three judges on Dancing With the Stars. Carrie Ann was a professional dancer, choreographer and director; Bruno was also a dancer and a top-notch choreographer and Len, specialized in Exhibition Dancing winning the British Exhibition four times. He is also an accomplished judge of professional Latin dance competitions.