

## BEFORE YOU SIGN UP . . .

Before you sign up for dance lessons, be aware that two vastly different kinds of partner dancing exist. They are separate worlds, really. So be sure to know which type appeals to you..

When you watch a TV show like “Dancing With The Stars” or channel surf past a ballroom dance competition on PBS, what you’re seeing is not spontaneous dancing but rehearsed choreography. Those partners practice set routines, over and over, and with each other exclusively. At the opposite end of the partner-dancing spectrum is social ballroom dance.

In social dance, no one keeps score. Nothing is rehearsed; no one memorizes routines. They just listen to the music—respond with their partners—and move as the moment suggests. Because it’s “social” dance, these dancers can change partners easily, routinely. And, because it’s not focused on winning contests, the aesthetic is more about enjoying that one person in your arms than impressing the vast auditorium.

This, of course, is how most people actually danced in North America throughout the first half of the 20th Century, before the television pandemic killed off the public dance halls.

At Northwest Dance Network, we teach this social brand of ballroom dance. We care less about promoting competition or choreography and more about inspiring connection between two dancers. In Greater Seattle, there are plenty of small studios and famous franchises that do specialize in a more highly stylized Ballroom aesthetic; just not us.

We call your attention to these two kinds of dancing because, unless you understand something of their differences, you could land on the wrong dance planet and end up miserable. Recognize that some people love the thrill of competition and feel great pride as their teachers promote them from Bronze to Silver to Gold levels of achievement. Others thrive in environments free from contests, hierarchy and the pressures these generate.

So, once you’ve decided you want to learn partner dancing, then decide which style appeals to your temperament. Most people find themselves drawn to one aesthetic or the other. Whichever you choose, we think you’ll love the challenge, as well as what you’re sure to learn about yourself as you glide about the dance floor in the arms of another human being.

For those of you who lean toward the world of social dance, know this: Seattle is perhaps the best city in North America for social dance venues, as well as organizations that teach this non-competitive brand of partner dancing. Every night of the week here you can waltz, swing, tango, fox trot, salsa, two-step, cha-cha—and never have to worry about some judge holding up a scorecard.

**BEFORE YOU SIGN UP ...**



Clothes encrusted with glitter are not required, either.

- by *Dean Paton*

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*Dean is a Seattle-based writer who also is an avid dancer and manages the Northwest Dance Network dances.*