

## The American Style Congress – Take 2



The Second annual American Style Congress was presented this past Friday Feb 24th at the Roosevelt Hotel in association with the New York Dance Festival sponsored by Mr. Edward Simon and Mr. Sam Sodano. I reviewed only the first session dealing with the smooth dances and subjects so here it is. I am not going to list everyone's credentials and titles etc. All are either former or current champions.

Opening the Congress were Michelle Officer and Mayo Alanen. Their theme was the evolution and choreography for the Viennese Waltz. Michelle emphasized that there was no one answer for where it comes from. Mayo mentioned visual effects like YouTube and dance videos and movies for inspiration. Responding to songs feeling the body inside and out as well as seeing shapes in space. They mostly related their process of how they develop their dancing and ideas and then shared this process with the audience.

1. Verbalize
2. Demonstrate by ones self
3. Do body and dance in receiver mode (meaning accept partners idea with no resistance)
4. Collaborate to both create the idea or step to materialize
5. Michelle chatted about drawing in space for another way to communicate or to sing to your partner.

They both emphasized a safe environment for the partnership to have artistry and creativity.

## The American Style Congress – Take 2

They also showed several variations and how to develop the different dance positions starting with the basic the left turn. And developed several variations from there.

Next up was Izabella Jundzill and Mazen Hamza: This gentleman's voice and manner reminds of Rod Sterling in the old TV show The "Twilight Zone" Very soothing. Strong well matched couple with good knowledge of shaping and partnering. They demonstrated good technique using Tango fan variations for creating different effects in their choreography and stressed a lot of attention on working the weight and shapes of the partnership with equal and opposite energy lines. Good demonstrating all round.

Third in the line up was Marzena Stachura and Slawek Sochacki. The reigning United States Champions. They gave Kudos to their mentors Richard Porter and Ruud Vermey and demonstrated several ways to do the same variation with different "Laban" techniques(bound ,heavy etc) resulting in different effects and utilizing different dynamic principles.They were specific with weight space flow and time and demonstrated all superbly.They also lectured on the importance of staying true to your story, emotions and musicality. As well as dancing each round different from the next. Obviously this couple has researched their work well and does a beautiful job of demonstrating with conscious connection and intelligence. As well as working with a strong balance of closed and open positions.

The fourth lecture of the day was my favorite Jeannie and Charlie Penatello. Jeannie gave a brilliant historical lecture of the American Style beginnings starting with the Harvest Moon Ball and bringing us forward with wonderful inspiring information of each decade up to the present time. Including names of influential people, places, costumes addressing why and when things changed. A really fantastic job. Of course Charlie did steal her thunder just for a few minutes when he demonstrated the original style of American Smooth dancing with toe leads. But they both sealed the deal with their wonderful impromptu version of the Peabody. Once again congratulations to Ms. Penatello for sharing her tremendous heart felt and first hand knowledge with us. I only wish more current professionals had been in the room to enjoy this brilliant ladies lecture and information.

Number five on the list were Lena and Nick Kosovich. Nick started the lecture with his background and his wife's back ground and their differences and how Ballet brought them together. This couple also stressed their system of work which was very informative. Parallel feet a must along with working basic actions and fundamentals Actions were expressed this way.

1. Bending.
2. Stretching
- 3.Contracting(least used)
4. Twisting/Turning
- 5.Traveling: Front, Back, Diagonal,Up and Down
- 6.Balance: On and off with counter balance.

## **The American Style Congress – Take 2**

He also mentioned “WEST”(Effort) Weight, Energy, Space and Time  
They both demonstrated together the results of using or not using these actions.

Number six was Michael Mead. He stated his theme as “Where have we been and where are we going”? He made a few comparisons to the Oscars and the movie The Artist as well as and the silent movies to the Black and Whites to color and sound etc..and compared that to the style of Ballroom Dance. He also mentioned communication, emotional content and sharing that with the audience. He stressed some elements of important such as: Foot to foot actions,sway, rotation, posture, partnering and utilizing different directions.

Closing the Ballroom sessions was they very colorful couple of JT Thomas and Tomas Mielnicki. They mentioned how to develop your own style and personalities on the dance floor. Style would be personal choices in all areas. Color, light and shade etc. They did some wonderful comparisons of American Couples past and present and what their preferred style is relating to shapes. Being a vertical couple or a shaping couple. A very interesting viewpoint. And Tomas gave a wonderful version of how “Emotions” can fix technique. And really had the audience relating to his interpretation of fixing a promenade position as watching and responding to a sunset on the beach.

Congratulations to all the couples for a job well done. It is easy to be critical but in the end it is very difficult to lecture out there all by yourself especially with your peers watching ones every nuance and movement. Again we should be grateful and Thankful to Mr. Edward Simon and Mr. Sam Sodano for the opportunity to once again share ideas in this American Style Forum. Looking forward to next year.

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