

## A Different View



Sometimes taking a hiatus from the things you love the most (like dancing) can be a blessing or a curse. For me it was a blessing. At the time I didn't think so but now that I have become more active in the dance world specifically the competitive Ballroom and Latin dance scene by judging and coaching I believe I have a "different view"

When I'm adjudicating all these dancers, whether amateur, pro-am or professionals I have no preconceived notion of who the champions should be, nor do I have any alliances to any of "my teams" on the dance floor and clearly no vested interest in someone else's competition since I do not run any events myself. So as one of the scrutineers smiled at me and said "come back soon you have a fresh eye" and giggled as she noted and enjoyed the mix up on the scores. I assured her I did it with no specific intent in mind except to try to judge it on the spot. But I do know I have an educated and experienced eye, and have no second thoughts about any of my decisions. And when a fellow judge or dancer asks me why I judge the way I do I have the answer.

I reviewed a wonderful piece of writing by Walter Laird called "Judging? A Science or an Art". He originally lectured in the USA on this subject in 1988. This helps to explain why I feel I am able to judge in the moment and on the day with no regrets. No dancer can perform perfectly 100% of the time. Then why should they win 100% of the time, especially if they don't produce the perfect product or effect? I have a different view.

Does Mr. Laird's formulas apply to today's Dance Sport venues? I say YES! So when judging I try to stick as close to Mr. Laird's assessable elements as possible in the short time given to the dedicated and over worked judges of today's competitive dance

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world. Please note this is just a section of this brilliant mans work. His full article has much more detail.

The first section is Music and Dance Form:

Standard Dances: Waltz, Foxtrot , Quickstep: Based on Body Swing.

Tango and Paso Doble: based on Mime, Dramatic Effects and Postures.

Latin Dances: Rumba, Samba, Cha-cha and Jive. Based on Body Action.

The second section is Assessable Elements:

Group 1 (Requires Expert Assessment).

Technique 20%

Rhythmic Interpretation 20%

Characterization 20%

Total 60% and the result is Quality

Group 2 (Assessment by Experts or Public).

Choreography 10%

Presentation 10%

Efficacy 20%

Total 40% and the result is Crowd Appeal.

In theory this formula totals 100% and produces IMPACT AND THE CHAMPIONS!

Maybe, or maybe not.

The truth is judges are human and when under fire they may base their decisions subjectively instead of objectively. And they may have a different criteria or background to judge. They may have never even heard of Walter Laird.

Your eye gets drawn to what or whom you know. It's human nature. My blessing is I don't know anyone actively competing any longer. How fun is that! To start with a clean slate every time. What a gift!

That said in the competitive dance world today what guarantees do we have that the best couple of the day won? There are none. Just like life. And when trying to adjudicate to the best of my ability with the above stated formula's as a reference many times it gets down to trying to find some percent of the above formulas working with the tremendous speed and athleticism of today's Dance Sport couples. To get back to Wally's original statement is it Science or Art? I throw that back in your court. But it is still my opinion that no matter what you call competitive dancing today it is still a Visual ART form. With the venues today all we can do is the best we can and apply accordingly and keep our integrity about us. Whatever direction the dances continue to evolve it will be an exciting ride. I am glad to be a part of it. Once again, just a different view.

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