

EADA 25 YEARS: A history

From July 2010 EADA will be celebrating its 25th year. EADA is the organisational and administrative body for Amateur dancesport competitors in this country, acting as the “voice of Amateur dancers” in England. Much has been achieved during EADA’s twenty five years and there have also been notable changes both to the administration of the organisation and the nature of the dance world.



Eric Morley dancing with Margaret Thatcher

In July 1968 a proposal was put forward by Eric Morley of Mecca Limited (creator of Come Dancing and founder of the Miss World Pageant) to establish the British Amateur Dancers Association for consideration by the Dancing Profession. The aim was to encourage ballroom dancing of all types and full membership was open to amateurs as defined by the official board of ballroom dancing. Dance halls, dance schools and other organisations which promoted dance were welcome to join. Membership was then just £1 per year. Syd Wells acted as the General Secretary and Eric Morley was Chairman. A permanent staff consisting of a full time general secretary with an office and secretarial staff of two were established at a BADA Office at Mecca Headquarters at 14 Oxford Street in London. Honorary area secretaries and sub-committees were set up in areas of the UK – including Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

For the next 18 years BADA thrived. Membership was well over 50,000 as members of all the Mecca social clubs joined. The organisation also received substantial grants. The Association was able to host more events such as practice sessions and training days and used to be involved with a show during the Blackpool festival known as the “forget-me-not-minstrels”, organised and choreographed by Len Colyer. In July 1986, the Council of the British Amateur Dancers Association agreed to change the name from British to English and so EADA was born. The reasoning behind separating Britain into its four constituent countries was to pursue membership of the International Council of Amateur Dancers (ICAD).

The original international amateur dancers federation was Federation Internationale de Dance pour Amateurs (FIDA) which was founded in Prague in 1935 with England as one of the first 9 members. The first World Championships was held in 1936 but World War II then had an impact and international activities ceased. There were several attempts to revive FIDA before the ICAD (International Council of Amateur Dancers) was formed, but many differences between Professionals and Amateurs and between different countries hampered the process. As competitive dancing grew, the need for an international authoritative body for amateur dancers grew and ICAD was founded in Germany in 1957. The organisation gained momentum in 1965 when the new president Detlef Hegemann negotiated with the ICBDF (the International Council of Ballroom Dancing, the international professional organisation set up in 1950) signing the “Bremen agreement” to establish a joint committee. This allowed ICAD to grant and control international championships. It was for representation on ICAD that BADA committee unanimously agreed to become EADA and support the establishment of similar associations in Wales and Scotland, although at this stage there were still plans for different representatives from each country to meet as BADA. ICAD grew and in 1990 the name of the organization was changed to International DanceSport Federation (IDSF) as discussions with the International Olympic Committee took place, and EADA is still a member.



IDSF European Ballroom Championships 2010

From its inception in 1986 to 2004 the Chair of EADA was Rita Thomas, with Syd Wells as Honorary Vice-President. Rita was based in Sheffield and had a background in Old Time dancing. Rita achieved a lot in her time as Chair, including developing schemes to encourage more people to dance, supporting the request to include over 50s events at the British National Championships in Blackpool, which started in 1997; helping with fundraising events; supporting couples dancing overseas and starting the implementation of Child Protection and Equity policy. She was presented with Carl Alan Awards in 1983, 1994, 1999 and 2001. Sadly her health failed her in 2004 and she was succeeded by David Corfield, who has been in the role for the past six years.

*Rita with Angela Rippon & Freddie Boulwood
accepting one of her Carl Allen awards*



In the early days EADA still used the London office and had a permanent staff. This is perhaps one of the major changes that has been seen in the last 25 years. The office was closed in 1994. EADA is now run by a council of sixteen volunteers, all of whom are Amateur dancers. In May 2008 EADA became a company limited by guarantee and a board of five to nine directors, again all volunteers, ensure the day to day running of the Association. Sadly funding for EADA is not as great as it was for BADA. Grants were received from the Sports Council and Sport England from the early 1990s until 2007, but because of the difficult position of dancesport as a sport and an art, funding opportunities have become increasingly scarce. This year EADA is applying for charitable status.

Although BADA and EADA had grand beginnings there was a lull in Ballroom dancing in England in the early 1990s. Come Dancing was screened for the last time in 1998, numerous dance halls across the country had closed, changes in music had brought new styles of dance and Ballroom did not seem to be popular any more. The highest membership was in 1980 when there were 3169 adults and 1131 junior members; the membership fee at that point was £2.50. By 1988 membership had fallen to 1948 adults and 502 Juniors. In 1989 the BDC amended the rule which prevented Juveniles who enter Championships from joining an Amateur association, so at this point the numbers of younger members increased, but overall membership numbers did not significantly increase again until the turn of the twenty-first century.

In the 1990s the athletic side of dancing was developing and dancesport received Olympic recognition in 1997 and it was a demonstration sport in the 2000 Sydney Olympics. Many tests in the 1980s and 1990s showed the medical benefits of dancing and encouraged more people to dance as a way of keeping fit and mentally active and the popularity of dancing began to grow again. With Strictly Come Dancing hitting TV screens from 2004 and several dancing films hitting the big screen, the popularity of dancing began to increase. Membership of EADA has now increased to over 3,500; from all ages, abilities, nationalities and backgrounds.

During the past 25 years EADA has grown noticeably in responsibility. It is the only UK Dancesport Association (Professional or Amateur), which is recognised by Sport England, UK Sport, the National Olympic Committee and WADA (the World Anti Doping Association). EADA representatives sit on the British Dance Council and are represented on the BDC committees for rules, finance and general purposes. EADA also has representation on the Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR) and the Exercise, Movement and Dance Partnership (EMDP).

A wider range of dance styles have also affiliated to EADA. Originally established for Ballroom, Latin and Old Time, Disco and Freestyle dance schools started to join in 1996. The British Rock n Roll Federation and the Wheelchair DanceSport Association (UK) affiliated in 2009. EADA have also been wary of offering more for sequence competitors and in 2009 organised the first sequence training day for members. In 2010 EADA are also pleased to offer sequence charts in five age categories, with the winners of each chart receiving the entry to their national championships courtesy of EADA.

EADA has taken many positive steps to raise the profile of dancesport, to encourage more people to compete and to promote EADA in the dancing world. EADA was initially involved with Come Dancing due to connections with Eric Morley but since then much has been done to increase EADA's profile.



Demo at the Olympic Flame Relay 2008

EADA members have also performed at Move It dance convention, on Strictly Come Dancing, on Children's BBC, outside Festival Hall as part of the Olympic Torch Relay and at the opening and closing ceremony of the Commonwealth games in 2002. EADA members have also been involved in the opening cabaret of the World Professional Latin Championships and the Professional ballroom Championships in Blackpool. EADA has also been involved with the Eurovision Dance Contest, and has helped advise many other dance related projects and associations.

EADA has worked with London Big Dance Week to provide dancers for performances in Leicester Square, Trafalgar Square and Regents Park and this year EADA are teaming up with professionals to offer free taster classes for children and adults, at several studios around the country during Big Dance Week. During the 25th anniversary year EADA members will also be performing in shows at the Royal Albert Hall for CCPR and EMDP.

From 1997 to 2006 EADA organised a group of its Amateur couples into the "EADA Showcase" which demonstrated at many major events across the country. It was designed to promote EADA and Amateur dancing as well as give couples the benefit of further performance experience. The first showcase was performed at the Hammersmith Palais Nightclub for Elton John's 50th birthday party, where 12 couples performed a 20 minute Ballroom & Latin routine. The Showcase also performed at the IDTA Medallist of the Year Finals in Blackpool; at the Victoria & Albert Museum; at the Royal Albert Hall, and for the finals of the Masters Tennis Championship televised by the BBC. Many members of the Showcase have gone on to be successful professionals and many of the Professional from Strictly Come Dancing were involved: Matthew & Nicole Cutler, Anton Du Beck & Erin Boag; Darren Bennett & Lilia Kopylova; Vincent Simone & Flavia Cacace, Andrew Cuerden & Hanna Haarala and Hazel Newberry MBE. Sadly a lack of funds have meant that EADA has been unable to revive the showcase since 2006.



EADA Showcase

EADA was closely involved with the Born to Dance Scheme, which ran from 1999-2009. The initiative was designed to place dance teachers in schools teaching after-school clubs to children or for Professional dancers to train school teachers to teach ballroom and Latin as part of the school curriculum. It is estimated that over 100,000 learnt Ballroom & Latin American dancing as a result of this initiative and Hanna Cresswell-Melstrom, one of our top Junior competitors and a former Juvenile Champion started dancing as a result of this scheme. Recently EADA has been the recipient of some funds from the Bingolotto game show which aims to raise funds for sports and recreation projects throughout the UK. The funding EADA receive is used to encourage dancing as a grassroots level, training teachers in schools how to teach some Ballroom and Latin. During the 25th year EADA plan to relaunch a scheme similar to Born to Dance to ensure that more and more children are encouraged to try dancing.

One of the challenges EADA has had to face during its 25 year lifetime is the changes in legislation affecting dancing. Government legislation that has had an impact on the dance world includes child protection and the introduction of Independent Safeguarding Authority. EADA has helped advise the Profession on child protection issues and developed its own child protection policy in 2001-2, which was approved by the NSPCC and Sport England in 2003. Immigration laws have also had an impact on dancers in this country and EADA have recently obtained a licence to be a sponsor to bring in foreign couples into the UK to compete. EADA also developed an equity policy in 2003 and have advised members on changes in the rules governing dance competing both in this country and internationally.

EADA are also keen to ensure that members are supported and provided for and discounts with several dance retailers have been established. More recently EADA have also negotiated personal accident insurance cover for all members and developed their range of merchandise. EADA have also continued BADA's commitment to supporting training of members. One-day training sessions have been held for the different age groups in London and the Midlands and in their 25th year EADA are investigating the possibility of a training weekend.

One of the major achievements for EADA is the establishment of the Amateur Coaching Scheme. Amateurs are not permitted to teach under British Dance Council rules, a topic which has been much-debated over the past twenty five years. In 2006 EADA negotiated the establishment of the Coaching Scheme, which offers competitors the chance to help out in dance schools and develop their coaching skills and gain valuable experience, whilst not risking their Amateur Status. The scheme is set up so dancers progress through four levels, which enable them to firstly demonstrate steps and assist in classes and then gradually have more freedom from the Professional they are registered with.

Like BADA, EADA are still responsible for administering the charts and selecting competitions to act as National Ranking Events. EADA selects couples from the charts to represent England in IDSF World & European Championships. Since 1990 EADA have charged promoters for hosting these events on EADA's behalf. There has always been debate as to the correct number of selection events to have; up to 1996 there were 5 events in Amateur and 3 in Youth in each discipline. In 1997 separate 10-dance charts were kept and in 1999 an over 50s chart was introduced, but the charts have now come into line with IDSF age groups. In 2000 numbers of events had increased to 5 events for Juveniles; 9 events for Juniors; 9 events for Amateurs; 9 for over 50s and 11 for Seniors. As more World and European Championships for more age groups were held by IDSF so more charts were required, for example Senior I Latin was added in 1999, Senior III ballroom in 2009. Since 2009 chart events have also been open to permanent residents in the UK who may have selected to represent another country, although to represent England at least one half of a couple must hold a British passport.

The increase in the international scene has also had implications on administration processes and on anti-doping. EADA has carried out random drugs test on championship level competitors over the past two years, all of which have been negative. Over the past 25 years EADA have sent over 500 couples overseas to compete in World & European Championships– their travel is subsidised by EADA and recently EADA have arranged travel insurance for these couples as well. Earlier this year new England tracksuits were launched for EADA members. EADA members have previously been successful internationally; Chris Hawkins and Hazel Newberry won the Amateur World Ballroom Championships and World Games in 1997, Jonathan Crossley & Kylie Jones won the Amateur World Ballroom Championships in 2000 and again in 2001 with the World Games; Matthew and Nicole Cutler won the World Amateur Latin Championships in 1999.

The international dancing scene has grown significantly since EADA has been established and recently there has been speculation that England is no longer one of the top countries in the Ballroom dancing world. However EADA believe in nurturing our young talented dancers and provided all the support possible to ensure that England is successful again.



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Over the past ten years much has been done to improve EADA's communication to their members. In the 1990s, the EADA Review, a black and white newsletter, was posted to all members each year. The logo was changed in 1996 and the possibility of a website was then investigated and in 1997 EADA had an exhibition stand at the British National Championships in Blackpool for the first time. The website was expanded from just a chart listing in 2002 and was relaunched in 2009 with the aim of being a comprehensive resource for the competitive amateur dancer. The new logo was devised in 2004 and the new magazine "InMotion" was launched in 2005 as an 8 page A4 magazine. It is sent out biannually to all members and has now grown to a 40-page A5 magazine. In the mid 1990s EADA used to have a regular column in Dancenews, this was started up again in 2008. In 2008 E-Motion EADA's quarterly e-newsletter was launched and over the past year EADA has developed a presence on Facebook, Linked-In and Twitter. During EADA's 25th year there will be a topic of the month on the discussion forum, debating some of the major issues in dancing and encouraging members to voice their opinion and make suggestions.



It seems the topics that have been debated throughout EADA's history are still of significance today: how to improve England's performance in international competitions; how to encourage more people into dancing; the conditions at ranking competitions and the number of chart events there should be; what Amateurs should be permitted to do in terms of coaching; how to integrate medallists and competitors and how and where to seek financial assistance. The challenge of seeking funds to continue to send couples to World and European Championships is still a difficult one today; there is also the challenge of working together with many different organisations and perhaps the politics of dancesport makes fulfilling EADA's aims more difficult now but even more important.

There is still much more that EADA needs to achieve in an increasingly difficult political arena in order to further English amateur dancing. We would like to thank all those who have supported and helped EADA over the years.

If you have any EADA archive material or can add further to the history then please contact publicity@eada.org.uk