

# Helsinki Open Dance Festival

## 23-24 Oct 10

It was very early in the morning on Friday, 22 Oct; it was time to leave for Finland to take part in the 2010 Helsinki Open Dance Festival. We were all very excited; a new country, a new dancing experience.

Already at Heathrow airport waiting for our plane to Helsinki, we could see quite a few international competitors heading for the dance festival in Finland. After a very pleasant 3 hour flight, the sliding doors of Helsinki airport opened and we stepped into a wave of wintery cold snow showers. In no time, our bus arrived and we were on our way to our hotel.

The Scandic hotel was huge and very beautiful; our room was on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor and had a lovely view on the park next to us. All the foreign competitors were staying there and having a look around the hotel, it was clear that they were mainly from Easter European countries; it felt very much like we were on their turf and the competition would be tough.

Saturday was the time for the Youth and U21 Latin. Doors open at 7.30am and the usual registration process got on its way. With that done and our numbers in hand, it was time for warming up and getting ready as our group was the first one on the floor. We had many couples from Finland, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and more...

The mood became a lot more intense; a mix of excitement, anticipation and concentration. Then it was time to dance. The competition started with Samba and finished with Jive; we kept a close eye for the heat numbers as Chris & Clara competed in different heats for each dance. The atmosphere was electric. There were around 50 couples in 4 heats and we wondered where we came. But it was time for a break.

We came back in the late afternoon for the U21s competition. As this group included the older youths, we were given a wonderful show of mature, electrifying dancing as the couples pushed even harder to impress the judges. We then found out that Chris and Clara had been placed 25<sup>th</sup> in Youth and 29<sup>th</sup> in the U21. We were very happy and as the evening was already on us, it was time to prepare for the next day (Ballroom).

Sunday, even earlier than the previous day, Chris and Clara were back on the competition floor for the Youth Ballroom where it was clear that the ballroom competitors were extremely talented, skilled and experienced. They had an incredible strength, speed and precision while showing excellent flow and dance characterisation. Chris and Clara raised to the challenge and gave their best taking top 40<sup>th</sup> place.

Evening came and it was time to flight back home. We had had a great time. Chris and Clara said that they had really enjoyed dancing in the Helsinki Open Dance Festival and they felt that they had learnt so much from the experience. And of course, they said that they would love to do it again lol!!

Stef

