

UPCOMING EVENTS

HOUSTON USA DANCE
EVENTS (2ND SATURDAY
DANCES) ARE HELD AT THE
DANCE PLACE UNLESS
OTHERWISE NOTED.

THE DANCE PLACE
3300 CHIMNEY ROCK
SUITE 500
(713) 266-0666

8-9 pm: Predance Lesson
9 pm to 12 am: Dance

- **Sept. 11** - 2ND Sat.
Rabih Timani
Argentine Tango
- **Sept. 25** - REIJ ΠOT
IB~U.J~OOW!
8 pm - Midnight SPiST
Chandelier Ballroom,
1435 Beall Street
- **Oct. 9** - 2ND Sat.
Michael Schedler
Quickstep
- **Oct. 30**- 5TH Sat.
Dance With Stars
2707 Fountain View Dr.,
Suite E
Enzo Zappia
Waltz

Houston USA Dance Monthly
Dances

\$8/Members
\$10/Guests
\$5/College Students
\$5/Predance
Lesson
No Charge/Professionals
Appropriate evening attire is
requested. Soft drinks and
setups are available for
purchase.

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General Tips for Selecting a Latin/Rhythm Costume

by Jeanette Chevalier

Latin costumes today are as individual as the person who wears them. As design director at International Dance Design, my job consists of a variety of duties, one of which includes making dance costumes which are customized in terms of design, size, and purpose. Still, when selecting a Latin/Rhythm costume, there are some general factors that everyone should take into consideration:

1) Purpose: For what reason and where are you going to wear your costume? And, closely tied to this, who is going to be your audience? These questions are rarely asked as often as they should be. For example, if you are wearing your costume for a small studio competition, you would need to take different factors into account than if you were going to compete at USA Dance Nationals. At a small competition, you might take into account who your audience and your judges are going to be. Is it a conservative setting like a small town studio, where more "standout" costumes may be frowned upon or unnecessary (since there might be only two or three competitors per category), or is it more like Nationals, where the more eye-catching and unique Latin costume is better? If you're doing an exhibition, you need to think about the message you want to convey through your music and performance. Is there a theme? If so, have a costume designed to complement your performance in order to keep your audience's attention and make it memorable and enjoyable.

2) Individual Traits; Age, Body Type and Personality: After determining the general direction you would like to go based on purpose, the next questions to ask yourself need to come from an honest assessment of "who you are." Think about your age, what physical shape you



Jeanette Chevalier-White and Denis Kojinov
compete in International Dance Design
Costumes

are in and what type of "dance personality" you have. These are difficult questions to answer alone since people have a hard time being objective regarding these very personal characteristics. As a result, they often end up overlooking obvious problems and selecting a costume that is not as flattering on them as it could have been.

First, when you consider age, do so sparingly. Dancers often look and act younger than their biological age may indicate. However, if you are older and your pictures indicate that you are not in the best of physical shape, then you may need to assess things a little

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NEWS FROM NATIONAL USA DANCE

- This year our National Governing Council has been making major changes in the structure of USA Dance. The By-Laws are being completely rewritten and chapters have been reorganized into eleven Districts. The Houston chapter is in District 7, which includes the five states of Arkansas, Colorado, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. Houston Chapter President, Lydia Cascio, has accepted the position of Area Coordinator for District 7, which allows her to interact with many more dancers in our neighboring states.
- Article 12 of the new By-Laws was written to make our chapters more uniform as far as chapter structure and administration. The document states clearly the types of activities that are appropriate to forward the mission of USA Dance "to improve the quality and the quantity of ballroom dancing in the United States". Most of the information in the article relates to the usual board "housekeeping" rules around meeting protocol, bank accounts, legal limits etc.
- There are two significant changes. The number of board members now must be between 7 and 9 members (2 more than previously). The usual officers of President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary are stipulated. However, the selection process for board members and officers is changing significantly. Members of USA Dance in good standing will now vote for 7 - 9 board members for a term of two years. At their first board meeting, the Board will elect the officers from among the newly elected board members. The Houston chapter will have its first election under the new rules in fall of 2011.
- Laws on the website www.usadance.org. **1!**

(LATIN/RHYTHM COSTUMES-Continued from page 1)

more carefully. For example, as men and women age, certain body parts lose elasticity and firmness and it becomes more difficult to stay slim. Or if you are slim, but know that your skin is quite saggy in certain areas, take that into consideration when selecting a costume. Don't forget to think about how you look from behind as well as from the front. In many of these categories, I have heard judges comment that a competitor should have worn a costume that was "age appropriate."

Does this mean that the "young" have it made? No! In fact, many younger dancers tend to be unaware of their body types. Perhaps this is because they have had less experience in selecting clothing than more "mature" dancers. If you are a male, think about your proportions. Do you have a belly, larger than average buttocks, long torso or short torso? If you are a female dancer, do you have prominent real breasts, augmented breasts, small or large waist, larger thighs, cellulite, big biceps, short or bowed legs, etc? In the end, no one is perfect, everyone has "problem areas" but the smart shopper who finds or designs costumes to enhance his/her good features and disguise "problem" areas is one step ahead of anyone who doesn't.

In addition to problem areas, you need to take into account the body style you have. For example, are you pear shaped, hourglass, square-shaped, rectangular, round, or slim with little or no curves? If you are curvy, you should keep in mind that less is more in terms of gathers or ruffles. More tailored looks tend to keep you from looking heavy. On the other hand, if you have few curves, you may want to add a little fullness in certain areas by incorporating a style with gathers or ruching. If you are a male with an extremely long torso and shorter legs, you might consider a higher waist, if you do not have a prominent belly.

Another factor to take into consideration is your personality-especially your personality on the dance floor. Are you bubbly, smiling and cute? If so, you can get away with wearing more cutesy styles that complement your personality. Are you more serious, maybe a little seductive? More sleek, less cute styles might complement your style better.

Many people ask their friends or significant others what they think when selecting a costume. While this is better sometimes than just taking the word of one of the many "sleek and charming" salespeople who just want you to buy, that may not be enough. A good idea is to take a front and back picture of yourself wearing the costume and then look at the picture-not just your reflection in the mirror. This makes for a more objective assessment. It might also be a good idea to ask someone who historically has been "brutally" honest with you. I know, no one wants to hear criticism, but it is easier to hear it before you spend thousands of dollars on an expensive costume that may make you end up wishing you hadn't. However, keep in mind that, in the end, it is the look you like that matters. If you look at yourself honestly in the outfit (in a picture) and it makes you look and feel fabulous, then to heck with what your ultraconservative mother thinks, go with the outfit! Because, ultimately, your personality will determine the type of costume you feel comfortable and look fabulous in.

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UPCOMING DANCE EVENTS

Sept 25 Houston IISA Dance Second Saturday Dance	8 pm - 9 pm Pre-dance Lesson with Rahib Timani teaching Argentine Tango 9 pm - 12 am Dance: The Dance Place, 3300 Chimney Rock, #500.
Oct 9 Houston IISA Dance Second Saturday Dance	8 pm - 9 pm Pre-dance Lesson with Michael Schedler teaching Quickstep. 9 pm - 12 am Dance: The Dance Place, 3300 Chimney Rock, #500. BRING A DANCE FINDER! Join the fun and support our Chapter!
Oct 30 Houston IISA Dance Fifth Saturday Dance	8 pm - 9 pm Pre-dance Lesson with Fern Zanis teaching Walz 9 pm - 12 am Dance: Dance With Stars, 2707 Fountain View Dr., Suite E.
Nov 12 Houston IISA Dance Second Saturday Dance	8 pm - 9 pm Pre-dance Lesson with Mike M-sont-achi-Hustl- 9 pm - 12 am Dance: The Dance Place, 3300 Chimney Rock, #500.



(LATIN/RHYTHM COSTUMES-Continued
from page 10)

3) *Comfort*: The third factor to consider is comfort -and by comfort, I really mean do you have sufficient support? Many Latin costumes today are made to emphasize skimpiness rather than to keep the wearer from "falling out" of it. In addition, many companies tend to utilize flimsy fabrics that do little to support curves and often emphasize, or even create, undesirable imperfections. Therefore, it is important to try some of your routine moves with the costume on to see how the costume responds (does it stay on, does it cause certain body parts to fall out, etc"). In addition, don't forget to take a picture of yourself from different angles and look at the picture instead of just your reflection in the mirror. Don't forget, if you don't find a costume that complements you, you can have one designed that uses less flimsy fabrics and takes into account your personal body shape, tastes, and purpose. Don't be afraid to ask your designer or seamstress to include a tummy control panel, under-wire built in bra, or even boning to help with shaping if you have a routine that doesn't include extreme bending.

4) *Style and/or Design*: Here I will go over a few myths regarding what looks good on the floor. As we attend a variety of competitions and listen to numerous comments, it is interesting to note that

many are not correct. For example, I have heard many people say, "You need to wear one solid bright color on the floor; it looks better and makes you stand out on the floor." While this may be the case with, at best, 10 percent of the people (the ultra slim), the truth of the matter is that bright colors emphasize heaviness and do little, if anything, to hide slight imperfections. Plus, combined with flimsy fabrics, these bright colors are more likely to create more imperfections. Do they catch attention? Yes, but so do school buses, and would you like to look like one of those? Therefore, you can use some bright colors, but the best compromise is to mix them in with contrasting colors to create more slimming silhouettes.

The second myth, ruffles are desirable because they create movement. Yes, ruffles do create movement, but they also create bulk I would recommend ruffles to juniors or youth that are slim. However, if you tend to be a little on the heavy side or have wider hips, ruffles at or right below the hip are not the way to go. Instead, you might go for a little fringing or creative use of fabric pieces. Another problem is too much fringing (or fringes that are too long), which can also make movements look sluggish or the person look heavier.

After all this information, you may probably be thinking, "Oh my God, it takes a rocket scientist to try to find a good costume!" And, my response: no, it really doesn't, but you do have to do a bit of

research and work with a skilled designer. If you know that it is difficult for you to find clothes that fit "off the rack" at regular stores, it will probably be more difficult to find dance costumes, since many are often made to fit standard size models. Keep in mind that just because the costume "stretches" so that you can squeeze yourself into it, this doesn't necessarily mean it will look good if the proportions are wrong.

Fit is more than just being able to squeeze into a garment. In my experience, I have found that the majority of people, close to 80 of them, are not standard measurements. That's why I have built in a bit more curve to my ready to wear designs. However, even so, every person is different and should understand that there is nothing wrong with you if "standard" sizes just don't fit or look right.

Every person is unique. That is another reason why when working with a client who wants a custom design and/or custom sizing, we make an individual pattern from scratch, rather than just alter a standard size. Remember, your style should not be the same as everybody else's, because not everyone is the same. And, as far as fit, I always say you shouldn't settle with being just a size 6 or size you: '...ive to become a "perfect size you:'