

## **They Feel Like Dancing at Ballroom**

**By Sally Pollak**

Vermonters do dress up.

At least several dozen make a go of it the third Saturday of the month, when about 100 women and men kick off their boots and kick up their heels to dance the waltz.

The what?

The waltz.

It's a ballroom dance in three-four time: step, step, close. People dance with an actual partner – twosomes are formed when a man asks a woman (called a lady) if she'd like to dance. Sometimes, no words are necessary.

The women, in silvery tops, black gowns and heels, line up in front of the stage at the Elley-Long Music Center in Colchester, where once a month the Vermont chapter of the United States Amateur Ballroom Dancers Association (USABDA) meets.

A man will approach this line of primed partners, and with a word or a gesture ask the first woman in line to dance. They waltz around the room, before he deposits her at the end of the line. He can then make his way to the front of the line for another go-round with another partner.

The USABDA evenings can include foxtrots and tangos, swing and merengue; dance lessons are offered for newcomers.

Marting Pincus, a yoga teacher and actor from Middlesex, made his rookie appearance Saturday night at the ballroom dance. Sitting on the sideline, Pincus, 65, offered this analysis as couples danced to "Our Day Will Come."

"I think a lot of people here are having fun that wouldn't be having fun otherwise," he said. Pincus, apparently, wasn't one of them. "It's not New York-ish enough for me." There were coolers of water and lemonade for waltzers who worked up a sweat, cheese and fruit for snacking. Mostly, there was an elegant room (typically used by the Vermont Youth Orchestra) filled with people who spoke in hushed and gushing tones about ballroom dancing.

"It's a really wonderful, friendly group of people," said Timn Dulmer, 30, of South Burlington. "I met my husband ballroom dancing. I've met a whole group of great new friends while doing it."

Dulmer, a past president of the USABDA, estimated that about half the dancers come alone.

One solo-arriving waltzer Saturday night was Janice Lamore, 62, of Essex. “I have a new fellow who doesn’t like to dance,” she said. “I’m here. He’s home.”

Lamore is a bank vice president who earlier this month went on a dance vacation to Florida, where she and the 70-year-old partner she met danced in a competition, winning first place in the Foxtrot and the Viennese waltz.

“He came up to me and said, ‘You’re short like me. Would you like to compete?’” Lamore explained.

Lamore, wearing silver and black, said dancing was her passion. “I always did the rock ‘n’ roll freestyle when I was young, but never this,” she said. “It’s in my blood.” For Kevin Laddison, 35, ballroom dances are places where “happy, friendly, smiley people” go to meet each other.

“You can go to bars,” he said, “but then it’s smoky and everybody’s drunk.” Zipping across town from glamour to grunge proved Laddison right: It was smoky Saturday night at Nectar’s. People who were dressed for the weather, not the dance floor, sat around drinking pints of beer.

A two-man band – no one seemed to know their name or care what it was – warmed up for Ambulance, LTD. People were friendly and smiling. Some of them looked happy. But, no one danced.