



The truth in ballroom dancing.

World Professional 10 Dance Champion Martin Lamb explains why there is no truth in dance.

Since winning the World Professional 10 Dance Championship in 1993, Martin Lamb has become a world class adjudicator, judge, coach and, in his own way, a dance philosopher. If you add the years of training and competing prior to that moment, he has over 40 years of experience to share with his students. In a recent interview he recalled the time that his mother sent him and his older brother to dance lessons on weekends so she would have time to clean the house. He was nine at the time. When asked about his most memorable moment he shared not one but three times that stand out in his memory. He also explained why he began the interview with the statement that “There is no truth in dance.”

When Mr. Lamb stated that his mother sent him to dance lessons so she could clean house, the corners of his mouth twitched as though he fought the urge to smile. With just a slight shrug he described how his mother sent him, along with his older brother, to dance lessons on Saturdays and Sundays while she cleaned the house. The owners of the local dance studio were neighbors, making it a logical and safe choice for a nine year old and a twelve year old boy whose mother needed time to catch up on various household duties. The dance studio specialized in Latin and International Ballroom dancing, but Mr. Lamb worked primarily with the formation team at first, along with most of the younger dance students. As the students, young Martin Lamb included, became better dancers, they transitioned into competitive dancing. Mr. Lamb danced through the juvenile segment from the time he was nine until he turned eleven years old. At that time he began a four year progression at the junior level. As most young dancers do, he juggled work, school, dance, and his relationship with his dance partner, a different partner for different stages of dance.

Martin Lamb and his partner at the time won the Closed British Youth Championship, yet

he stated that he felt frustrated. He had more fun working at a bank to pay for his dance competitions than he had preparing for and competing in those very same competitions. The pressure of dancing combined with the frustration of 'getting it right' took its toll.

"There is a lot of pressure as a competitor. One is always trying to out-dance your last performance."

He went on to compare it to singers or movie stars who begin at a young age, adding that they "burn themselves out" with the pressure.

"I was dancing from nine years." He shrugged. "I was bullied at school."

With that said, Martin Lamb stated that he took a six month break from dancing. He focused on his career at the bank, grew a beard, took up smoking, and put on a few pounds. All was well until his mother brought out the family albums at Christmas. As she described his accomplishments to a friend, Mr. Lamb heard a voice in his head telling him he "might make something out of this" as opposed to sitting behind a desk for the rest of his life.

He thought of the partner he left behind.

At that time, she worked at a bank down the street from his own bank. He called her and convinced her to meet him for lunch. They ate and talked. She assessed the new Martin Lamb. Once she established a few rules, they began dancing as a team again, competing until 1993.

So what was Martin Lamb's most memorable moment in his dance career?

Three achievements stood out:

- The first moment was making the final for the first time in an amateur competition in the British open, an achievement Mr. Lamb didn't think would happen at the time that it did.
- Next, he and his partner won the British Open Amateur Latin Championship, taking first in every dance.
- Finally, in 1993, they won the title of World Professional 10 Dance Champion.

The win was "a weight lifted off of his shoulder" he stated.

In addition to a release from the pressure of having to win, the title of champion provided an opportunity to transition into active retirement. Martin Lamb and his partner officially

retired from the competition circuit as competitors, but continued to perform in the dance world. They danced professional showcase routines around the world and Mr. Lamb became an adjudicator in the UK on the International side of the ballroom dance circuit. He followed that title by earning his certification as a coach and adjudicator for the Fred Astaire system on the American side. Mr. Lamb stated that he is on the Board of Trustees for the Imperial Society For Teachers of Dance, is a World Class Judge for championships across the globe, judges at the U.S. Nationals, and earned the 2017 John Monty Lifetime Achievement Award from the Fred Astaire Franchised Dance Studios.

"I try to keep my teaching simple," he said, adding that he wants to relate it to "everything they (students) do in their everyday lives. As coaches we have to look at context of why they came here. I need to know their background to understand why they came through the door."

His crowning moment as a teacher is "that moment when they realize they have achieved a goal in their dancing during the lesson, not afterward during a competition."

This may be because judges have less than a minute and a half to make a decision for each dance. That it is a lot to do in a short amount of time.

"Judges, especially those who are ex-competitors, get used to a certain standard based on their past experiences. They remember what they did and that might or might not be a good thing. Body language, facial expressions, connection to partners and to the music, it's all in the eye of the beholder."

"There is no truth in dance." Martin Lamb, September 2017

