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Hot To Trot



Choosing exactly who to be the main subjects in a documentary that will take over four years to shoot is always a major gamble, but one that played off big-time for **Gail Freedman** (<http://www.hottotrotfilm.com/creative-team/>) the director and producer of *Hot To Trot* a totally enchanting look at the world of competitive same-sex ballroom dancing. Freedman selected very well indeed as the four individuals she picked to focus on were not just champions when they were gliding around the floor, but they were all such charming individuals who managed to have such happy-ever-after-endings too. Well, all but one of them.

There was handsome Costa Rican Ernesto who was now a Manhattan resident and completely obsessed with dancing with the same veracity that once was when he was addicted to crystal meth. After just a few months training, his new partner Robbie suddenly got seriously ill and immediately went back to his native Hungary for treatment. It then took Ernesto some considerable time to persuade the hunky Nickolai a very successful Russian ballroom dancer to become his new partner as he had only danced with women to date. The Muscovite had only just come out as a gay a few years ago, and although he was very comfortable with his sexuality, he still longed for full acceptance from his parents back home.



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Emily's highly successful dancing partnership with Kieran had resulted in many trophies and awards, but was not without its problems too. Emily has type I diabetes and has to wear an insulin pump 24/7, and her vital blood sugar levels are all over the place the day of any dance competition. New Zealand born Kieran was focussing on building her own career which meant that half way through the documentary, she decides to cut back on her dancing, leaving Emily's rather conservative Russian girlfriend Katerina to step up to the plate.

There are evidently now countless same-sex ballroom dancing events held all over the world, but the creme-de-la-creme in the U.S. is the **April Follies** (<https://www.facebook.com/AprilFolliesComp/>) held in Oakland, California every spring for the past 16 years. Over a few very packed days the competition is tough but really surprisingly the atmosphere between all the dancers is very warm and welcoming and bubbling with genuine friendship and respect.

However even these prestigious contests pale into insignificance with the **International Gay Games** (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gay_Games) which are held every four years and are literally the the Holy Grail for LGBT dancers (and athletes too). Freedman's camera stuck rigidly too her four dancers as they train every minute of the night and day right up to their appearance at the Games. By now Ernesto and Nickolai who have such very different backgrounds and temperaments have settled into a comfortable working relationship akin to newly-weds trying to impose their own will on their new partners. They make a very cute couple but never on a romantic level, that comes later and from elsewhere.

Then there is the dancing. It is unquestionably electrifying and breathtakingly stunning. Suddenly the plethora of reality TV dancing shows pale into insignificance, for now as LGBT people we are watching something that we can really relate too, and dare we say (!) is so much hotter.

Kudos to Freedman and her crew for building the momentum up to a rather wonderful finale, and as they never gave any real spoilers all the way through to how this work out, neither will we. She gave her movie a perfect title too as it refers equally to both the dancing and the dancers who really were hot to trot.

Unmissable.