



Dance With Me: Ballroom Dancing and the Promise of Instant Intimacy

Julia Ericksen

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Click here to listen to Julia Ericksen's interview about *Dance with Me* on Philadelphia NPR's "Radio Times"

Rumba music starts and a floor full of dancers alternate clinging to one another and turning away. Rumba is an erotic dance, and the mood is hot and heavy; the women bend and hyperextend their legs as they twist and turn around their partners. Amateur and professional ballroom dancers alike compete in a highly gendered display of intimacy, romance and sexual passion.

In *Dance With Me*, Julia Ericksen, a competitive ballroom dancer herself, takes the reader onto the competition floor and into the lights and the glamour of a world of tanned bodies and glittering attire, exploring the allure of this hyper-competitive, difficult, and often expensive activity. In a vivid ethnography accompanied by beautiful photographs of all levels of dancers, from the world's top competitors to social dancers, Ericksen examines the ways emotional labor is used to create intimacy between professional partners and between professionals and their students, illustrating how dancers purchase intimacy. She shows that, while at first glance, ballroom presents a highly gendered face with men leading and women following, dancing also transgresses gender.

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