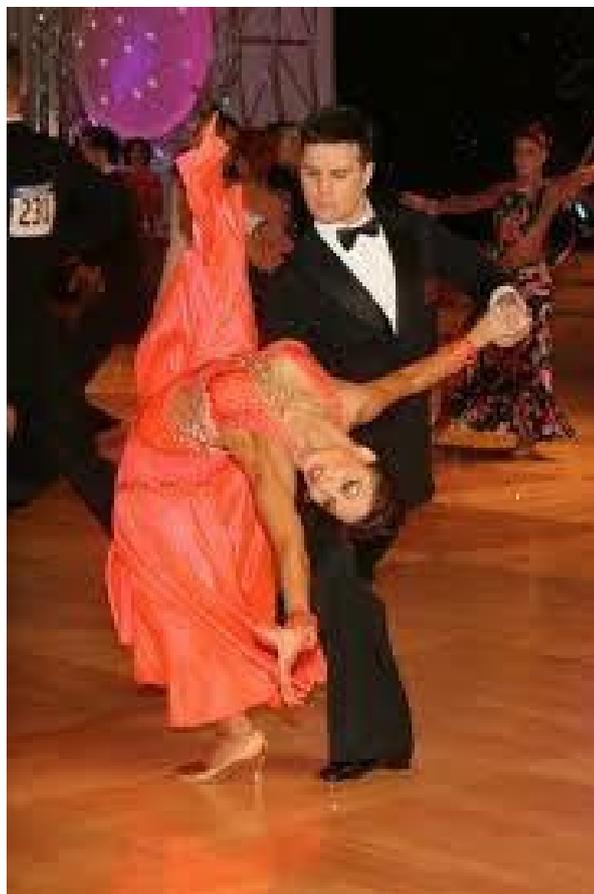


# Jonathan Roberts: Inspired By Stars on the Big Screen



## Larger Than Life

Moving pictures made their debut at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, forever changing the way ordinary people perceived dancing. Larger than life stars pretended to be normal working class people who happened to dance divinely, flowing gracefully in a waltz or foxtrot, barely restraining their passion for a tango, or capering playfully in the swing dance. Times changed and grand musical productions faded into the background in favor of shoot-em-up westerns and

cinematic masterpieces. Yet some plots did, and still do, sneak a pivotal scene onto the big screen, a magical albeit brief time in which two characters connect through an impromptu dance. Those fleeting moments of glamour on screen have the power to change a life forever.

Consider the moment when a man, about 19 or 20 years old, watched Al Pacino twirl co-star Gabrielle Anwar through a tango in the 1992 movie ‘Scent of a Woman.’ The young man left the movie theater with his ticket stub in his hand and stars in his eyes. Spying an offer for a free dance lesson in exchange for that ticket stub, he took the first steps in an illustrious

dance career that culminated in titles as United States National Professional Smooth Champion, World Professional Smooth Champion, and a second place ranking for the prestigious Blackpool Latin Rising Star.

Now he *inspires* dance students as a **dance coach,**

**choreographer,**  
**and competition  
organizer**

Jonathan, with the four time undefeated smooth championship team Toni Redpath and Michael Mead, founded a unique dance competition in sunny southern California. See page XX for more about the ***San Diego Ballroom Beach Bash.***

# Journey From Spectator To Competitor

Jonathan had a healthy interest in sports during his youth, but had never pursued anything he called ‘artsy.’ Yet something in that first dance lesson appealed to him. He decided to follow through with the dance lessons and eventually found himself on the sidelines of dance competitions. The gentlemen competitors, with their grace and elegance, compelled him to add competitive dancing to his regimen. Despite his lack of dancing experience and his tall, athletic frame, Jonathan embraced the inclusiveness of ballroom dancing.

*“In ballroom you can be short, tall, wide, thin, flexible, stiff; it doesn’t matter.”*



Unlike other sports and some styles of dance where minimum requirements for body weight, height, flexibility, and even girth may prevent an individual from pursuing his or her dreams, ballroom dancing is much more forgiving. For example, the general expectation for a female prima ballerina is a slim figure. The neck is expected to be long and the torso short or medium in length. Long legs pair with long arms plus a high instep. Males in ballet tend to have a lean, strong physique without bulky muscles that would interfere with flexibility. Ballroom dancing is much more forgiving and Jonathan possessed the adaptability to take the ballroom dance world by storm.

Jonathan devoted his time to his new pursuit and progressed through multiple levels of competitions with several dance partners, winning various titles before achieving the two moments he considers his best: He placed second in Rising Star Latin at the prestigious Blackpool Dance Festival in 2003 and won both the United States National Championship and the World Smooth Championship titles in 2008. With multiple championship titles under his belt, he took a break from competitive dancing and turned to teaching. Years of dedication, training, and competition gave him the ability to connect with dance students at various stages of their dance journeys.



in order to feel ‘satisfied and happy.’

*“Not everyone can win,” he stated. “You can’t control the judges, people, or the floor. You can control what you have prepared and worked for.”*

## Television Reality Star And Dance Coach

Although Jonathan is probably best known for his work as a choreographer on *So You Think You Can Dance* and his partnership with stars during seven seasons of the United States version of *Dancing With the Stars*, he also works with amateur and professional dancers in the private sector.

Jonathan likes teaching and loves to bring out the best in his students in every lesson

and for every goal the student has. It’s not just about winning.

Dancers spend a lot of time and energy to reach their goals in a world that is filled with people and dance genres of many backgrounds and types. Unfortunately, not everyone can be first. That’s why Jonathan uses his choreography and teaching skills to bring out the best in the individual students. To get the most out of the dance journey, Jonathan advises students to set clear goals for each milestone or competition. Goals can be as simple as improving hip action or posture. Dancers should maximize what they do great

After the competition, he advises dancers to schedule a review with partners or coaches to review videos and to see where they are compared with where they want to be.

What is Jonathan Roberts’ ultimate goal for the dancers who turn to him for instruction?

*“Through my choreography I like to create the best version of them.”*

# B *San Diego* Beach

## Ballroom

**Ballroom** - n. a large room used for dancing

Ballrooms have been in use since the 1400s, when dance became a favored pastime of royalty. Kings and queens sent for Dance Masters, usually dance masters from Italy, to instruct them in the proper way to carry themselves as well as the correct steps to take for certain dances.

**Beach** - n. a pebbly or sandy shore, usually by the ocean between high and low water marks

Beaches have long been associated with fun, food, and dance. From the earliest humans who turned to sandy shores to find food to the popularity of teenagers shimmying on a beach blanket, it's just fun to let loose and have fun . . .

Photo by Stephen Marino

## Bash

**Bash** - n. a party or social event

A party or social event may have been referred to as a 'bash' during World War II by Americans, but the etymology goes back farther when delving into Australian history. Whether one is referring to the slang term for 'a drunken spree' or a lively party, a bash on a beach seems the perfect place to have fun.

Dancers: Nick Chermukin & Viktorija



What happens when you give three dance champions carte blanche to run their own dance sport competition? If those three champs are Jonathan Roberts, Toni Redpath, and Michael Mead, you get the San Diego Ballroom Beach Bash.

Jonathan, Toni, and Michael have been friends for over 20 years. Hailing from different parts of the world (Toni is from Australia, Michael from the UK, and Jonathan from Sonoma County, California), they eventually made their way to San Diego. After the exhilarating, albeit hectic, life of competition dancing, the relaxed attitude of the region and the great weather gave them every reason to settle down and call San Diego 'home.' Of course, competitions were still a major part of their lives. All three perform as judges,



Brodie Kastor, Michael Mead, Toni Redpath, Jonathan Roberts, & Kristy Rivers

Photo by Stephan Marino

coaches, and choreographers for dancers across the United States. Unfortunately, there were few competitions in the area. They discussed this at great length and created a list of what they liked and didn't like in other competitions.

Then someone asked a simple yet epiphanous question.

*What would a ballroom dance sport competition look like if they did it their way?*

1. It would include the chill, down to earth feel one experiences in southern California.
2. They would be part of every step of the process, from initial planning stages to the last Kinkeda Klash and Trash Talk Volleyball session.
3. It would be a high quality competition where everybody that comes has a good time.
4. For every Beach Bash competition, Jonathan and organizers would suggest everyone only dress formally on the final night.
5. Resort wear would be encouraged for competitors *and* judges. **You don't even need to wear a tie!**
6. During the Friday Night 'Beach Formal,' contestants *and* judges would wear **half formal** attire and **half beach casual** attire.
7. Although high quality of dancing would be expected, having fun would be a priority.

The skills of a champion dancer are not that different from those of a comp organizer.

The path to dance sport stardom is long and requires commitment to practicing, learning choreography, practicing, competing, practicing, and taking part in a few more hours of practice. Champions are goal-oriented, focusing on perfecting every detail of their dance. They also have to be mentally flexible at the right times. If one pattern is not working or when unexpected stumbling blocks arise, they have to be able to adapt on the spot and make it look planned.

Although Jonathan Roberts may feel that his dance background did not prepare him for the requirements of organizing a major dance competition, one might argue that years of preparation as a competitor, well as the connections and social skills honed during that time, played a key role in the success of the Beach Bash. On his own, not taking into

consideration the background of his partners, Jonathan knows many people in the dance world. His time as a competitor as well as his time as a television personality lend credibility to the endeavor. It also allows flexibility in the mission of the Beach Bash.

Jonathan stated that a key element to their success revolves around the fact that they are “not there just to make money but there to make people happy and enjoy selves.”

In addition to keeping the tone lighthearted, When asked about the work involved in organizing a competition, Jonathan stated that, while he wants everyone to have fun, a lot of work goes into coordinating with hotels, booking rooms, arranging food services, creating and managing entry forms, managing websites,

scheduling staff judges, and creating music selections. Every week is devoted to one aspect or another of the competition. In addition, Jonathan meets with Toni and Michael at least twice each month to brainstorm new ideas, take pictures, and resolve any other issues that come up.



Shark: Toni Redpath Lunch: Akira Hojo and Shozo Ishihara Photo by Stephen Marino

**Who?** Contestants and spectators come from all over, with some arriving directly from a snowy home to the sunny beaches of California. Some come to support their family, friends, or studio. Some come for the location and time of year.

**Why?** Great ballroom dancing competitions, swimming, sunbathing, water sports, after parties, fine dining by the Bay, s'mores over the fire pits in the evening, Sand Sculpting competitions, Kinkeda Klash competitions, Trash Talk Volleyball in the park on Sunday, and the opportunity to access a load of local San Diego activities.

If you look at the competition as a living entity, the Ballroom Beach Bash was born in the late 1900s as the San Diego Dance Camp and New Year's Eve Gala. With a change in ownership and a move to San Francisco, the event grew into the New Year's Eve Holiday Ball and Dance Camp. Continuing to evolve, it moved to Los Angeles, first under the name 'The Holiday Ball and Dance Camp' and then the 'Beverly Hills Holiday Ball and Dance Camp.' Surviving multiple changes in ownership and movements up and down the West Coast, it finally found a stable home under the innovative direction of Jonathan Roberts, Toni Redpath, and Michael Mead in San Diego in 2014. The first official competition as the San Diego Ballroom Beach Bash hit the sandy dance floors in April 2015.

They purchased a competition based in Los Angeles, moved it to San Diego, and began working to bring fun and social interaction to the competition circuit.

## Year 1:

In 2015 the competition consisted of three days packed with with five styles of dance,

plus a bonus day of fun, games, and relatively friendly non-dance competitions. Activities include Sand Sculpting at your table between heats, a heated session of Kinkeda Klash (think of thumb wars on a grand scale), and Trash Talk Volleyball on Sunday following the final ceremonies.

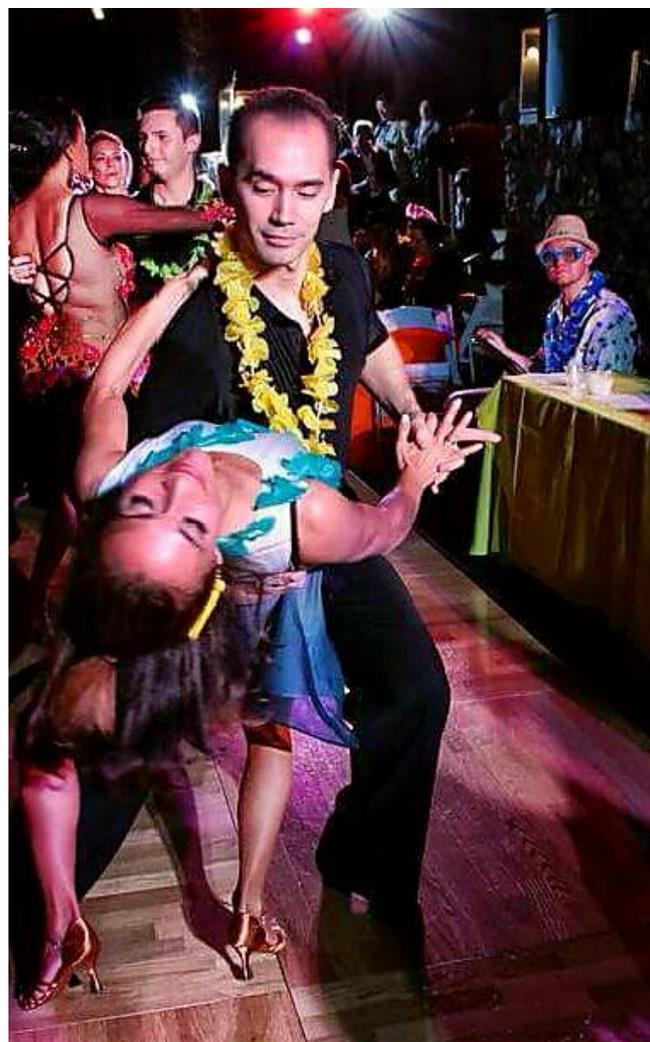
## Years 2 and 3:

During 2016 and 2017 the event grew enough that each dance style had a day of its own, plus an additional night of nightclub 'dancing under the stars' with the feel of being in a Latin club. On this night contestants are encouraged to wear social dance clothing, not formal gowns and competition costumes. Between heats dancers and spectators partake of chips, salsa, and margaritas. It's just a Friday night of social dancing, with a few casually-attired judges and awards at the end.

## Year 4:

In 2018 the competition grows and expands the theme with great dancing and a lot of fun.

**“We enjoy working together,”** Jonathan said of his partnership with Toni and Michael. **“We’re best friends and love the Ballroom Beach Bash so much. It’s fun to do, tons of work, but so much fun to do.”**



Dancers: Michael Choi and Sophia DeAngelo Photo by Stephen Marino

Presented by Jonathan Roberts, Michael Mead & Tomi Reupath

San Diego  
**Ballroom**

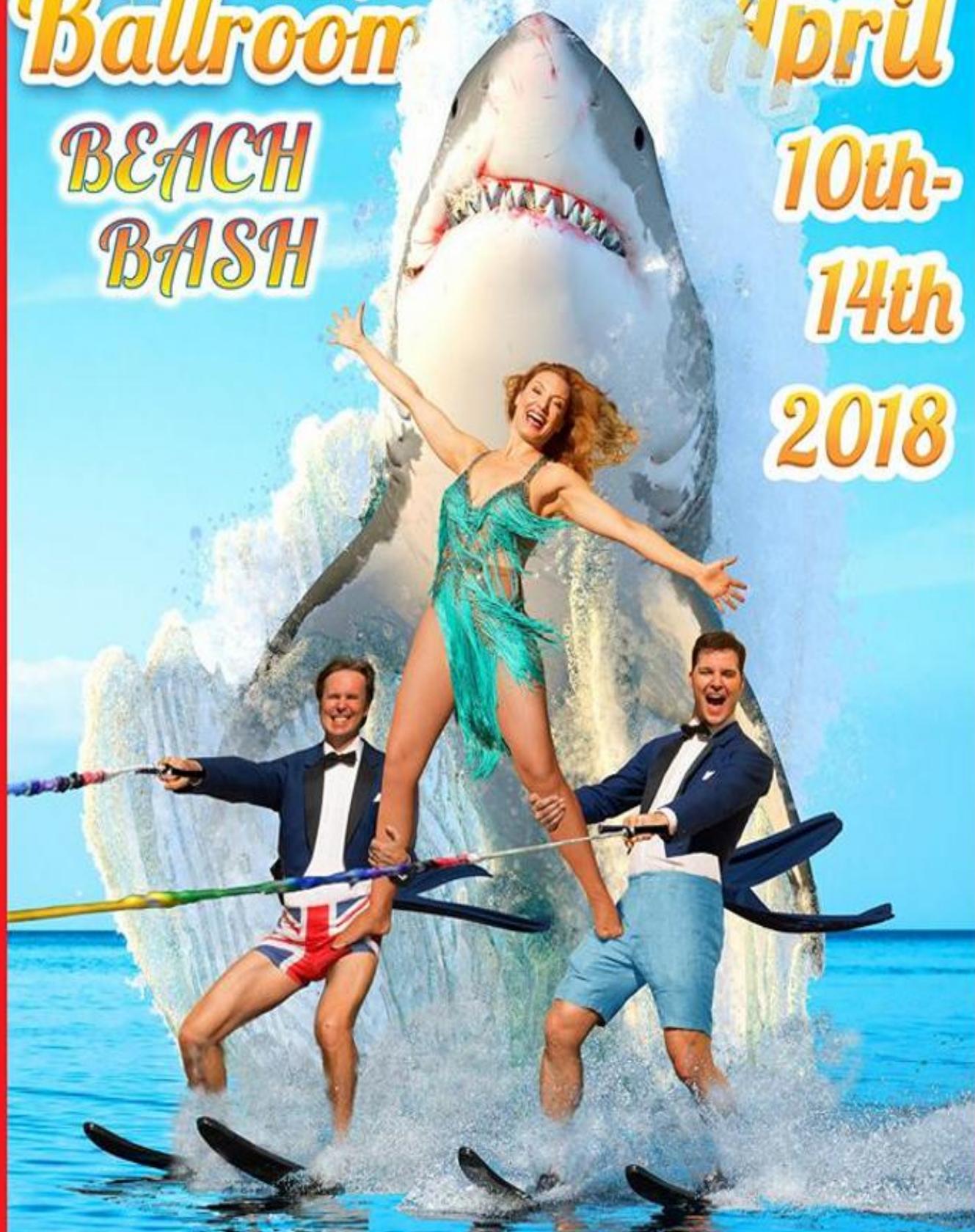
**BEACH  
BASH**

**April**

**10th-**

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