hottotrot

A feature documentary film about the fascinating world of **same-sex competitive ballroom dance**

Production company	Hot to Trot Productions LLC
Director & Producer	Gail Freedman
Contact information	gfreedman@hvc.rr.com 646-522-6159
Film website	hottotrotfilm.com

Film information

Run time	88 minutes
Format	HDV
Aspect ratio	16:9
Audio	5.1 Surround-Sound
Language	English

For festivals and screening dates, please check our website: **hottotrotfilm.com**

Image: Ernesto Palma and Nikolai Shpakov. Photo byt Curt Worden

Image: Emily Coles and Katerina Blinova. Photo byt Curt Worden

synopses

A deep-dive look inside the fascinating but little-known world of same-sex competitive ballroom dance, HOT TO TROT follows a small international cast of four men and women, on and off the dance floor, over a four-year period. An immersive character study—and an idiosyncratic attack on bigotry—this powerful and celebratory story unfurls with the rhythms and energy of dramatic cinema.

short

61 words
385 characters

Using the storytelling techniques of dramatic cinema, HOT TO TROT is an intimate account of a captivating, little-known phenomenon: same-sex competitive ballroom dance, a world where expressions of personal passion become a political statement. Away from their graceful turns on the dance floor, the characters' backstories frame their struggles. The film chronicles charismatic Ernesto, a former meth addict from Costa Rica who strives for success and love; Emily, a lifelong type 1 diabetic, who has to wear an insulin pump 24/7 to manage her disease; Nikolai, a dazzling dance champ who came out only a few years ago and longs for his Russian family's acceptance; and Kieren, who grew up in a conservative New Zealand military environment and wrestles with how to balance career and commitment to dance.

The film follows these dancers over several years, as their relationships develop and deepen, and the spectacle of the Gay Games, the pinnacle of same-sex competitive ballroom dance, approaches. They are emblems of LGBTQ politics, writ small—but they are *living* the issues, rather than *working* them. As they evolve, they demonstrate, vividly and personally, the dimensions of the LGBTQ politics we all read about.

medium

192 words
1,220 characters

synopses

long

277 words
1,804 characters

Using the storytelling techniques of dramatic cinema, HOT TO TROT is an intimate, humanist account of a captivating, little-known phenomenon: same-sex competitive ballroom dance, a world where expressions of personal passion become a political statement, and where one *literal* false step can crush aspirations.

Away from their graceful turns on the dance floor, the characters' backstories frame their struggles and conflicts in life. The film follows charismatic Ernesto Palma, a former meth addict from Costa Rica, who strives for success and love; gritty, determined Emily Coles, a type 1 diabetic, diagnosed at age three, who wears an insulin pump 24/7, even while performing; handsome Nikolai Shpakov, a dazzling dance champion, who came out only a few years ago and still longs for the full acceptance of his Russian family; and introspective Kieren Jameson, whose identity was forged in the strict, conservative environment of a New Zealand military household. The film follows the dancers over a four-year period, as it watches their relationships with family, dance partners, life partners—and themselves—develop and deepen.

For these individuals, dance is a form of personal power and political engagement that simultaneously shapes their identities and helps them overcome uniquely personal challenges. They are not mere emblems of LGBTQ politics—they are living them. And HOT TO TROT's narrative, which lives at the intersection of art, activism, and creative passion, appeals to a broad and diverse audience with its universal, human stories. Following these characters' evolution, as the spectacle of the Gay Games approaches—the pinnacle of same-sex competitive ballroom dance—we understand, vividly and personally, the real impact of the LGBTQ politics we read about every day. And we care.

Image: Nikolai Shpakov. Photo by Curt Worden

productionteam

gail freedman

Director & Producer, Executive Producer

A one-time aspiring concert pianist, Gail Freedman abandoned the stage for the screen many years ago, with brief stops in academia, government & health care along the way.

It hasn't exactly been a planned migration, but in 20-plus years as an award-winning filmmaker, she has produced, directed & written dozens of documentaries on a wide range of subjects. She has also taught at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.

Among her films is **Making the 9/11 Memorial**, a primetime special for The History Channel, which aired on the 10th anniversary of September 11th, when the Memorial opened. Other notable films, among many, have included **Breaking the Silence Barrier**, **Where's The Cure?**, **Generation Rx**, **Lessons for the Future**, **A Forever Family**, and **Giving While Living**. Her creative output encompasses independent projects, as well as extensive work for PBS, network television, cable, syndication, and the Internet, along with educational & non-profit films.

She was also Executive Producer of the 13-part PBS series, **World@Large with David Gergen**. Early in her career, Gail worked at both CBS 60 Minutes and ABC 20/20.

dina potocki

Editor

Dina Potocki has an impressive track record & wide-ranging experience editing documentaries. With a strong sense of story and a gifted eye, she has worked on both independent films and television documentaries, including projects for PBS, ABC, A&E, The History Channel, Bravo, National Geographic, and Discovery. She & Gail Freedman have been crafting films together for 20+ years. Dina's noteworthy credits, among many, include **Making the 9/11 Memorial**, **The World Was Ours**, **Out of the Shadows**, **Finding Kalman**, **Giving While Living**, **Generation Rx**, **Breaking the Silence Barrier**, **Lessons for the Future**, and the forthcoming **Forgetting The Many**.

elizabeth watson

Executive Producer

Elizabeth Watson is an actress, filmmaker and musician. Also, as she notes proudly, a native New Yorker. Elizabeth's recent film, **Home Invasion for the Holidays**, garnered a nomination for Best Short Film in Quebec, Canada.

joel shapiro

Cinematography

Joel Shapiro is an Emmy Award-winning cinematographer. An expert in hand-held photography and in portrait lighting, he has worked in a wide range of documentary genres, including art, classical music, and dance. For six seasons, he was lead cinematographer on the Peabody Award-winning PBS series, **Art in the 21st Century**. His HBO film, **A Child's Garden of Poetry**, won a Directors Guild Award for best children's program. He was the D.P. for several Van Cliburn International Piano Competitions and for eight Dodge Poetry Festivals. He & Gail Freedman have worked together for over 15 years, including **Making the 9/11 Memorial**.

productionteam

diana wilmar

Cinematography

Diana Wilmar has worked both locally and internationally on broadcast, commercial, and corporate productions for over 20 years. Her work has been shown on every major US television network as well as cable channels including Discovery, HBO, National Geographic, History Channel and A&E. PBS programs include: the **Treasures of the World** series, **Oil and Water**, **Buyer Be Fair**, **Silent Killer**, **The Meaning of Food**, **Affluenza**, and the **Motherhood Manifesto**. For her work in news, documentaries and features, she has won five local Emmy awards and a Silver Medal from the New York Film Festival.

john cummings

Cinematography

John Cummings is a multi Emmy & Peabody Award-winning documentary cinematographer based in Cleveland, Ohio. For over two decades, he has been creating cinematic content ranging from feature-length films to TV segments & episodes for PBS, Discovery, History, HGTV, Animal Planet et al. Among his notable projects, in addition to **Hot to Trot**, are **Yellowstone: Four Seasons After Fire**; **Aztec**; **Catholicism**; and **Violins of Hope: Strings of the Holocaust**.

vanessa carr

Cinematography

Vanessa Carr is a San Francisco-based cinematographer specializing in verite-style shooting. She earned a Master's degree from the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism. Among her documentary credits are **Warning: This Drug Will Kill You** (2017), **The Destruction of Memory** (2016), **Heroin: Cape Cod, USA** (2015), **Code: Debugging the Gender Gap** (2015), and **T-Rex** (2015). In her spare time, she likes escaping to nature and hopes to one day make her cats famous on the internet.

allyson newman

Original Music

Allyson Newman received a Master's degree in composition from the Sydney Conservartorium of Music and studied film scoring at USC in Los Angeles. Her first feature, **Watermark**, screened at the 2003 Cannes Film Festival. Allyson was awarded an Australian Guild of Screen Composers Award for her work in film music. She scored the 2015 award-winning documentary **Limited Partnership**, which premiered on PBS Independent Lens. She also co-scored comedy feature **Spare Change**, directed by **Orange is the New Black** producers Arturo Guzman and Jonathan Talbert. Alongside writing partner Matt Novack, Allyson scored the comedy series **Filthy Preppy Teens** (2016), as well as the Emmy-winning TV series **Children's Hospital**. She also scored the recently Emmy-nominated series **Her Story**.

tom bergin

Audio Recording

Tom Bergin began his career in film installing camera mounts in helicopters. Not long after, Tom began recording audio for CBS News, specializing in fast-moving, documentary-style journalism. Capturing sound while solving problems was paramount. Tom has worked on many documentary features, including "**An Inconvenient Truth** and "**My Architect**", as well as various projects for PUBLIC POLICY PRODUCTIONS, WORLDWIDE DOCUMENTARIES and MAYSLES FILMS. Tom's work on feature documentaries epitomizes why he became a soundman: to mic people and turn knobs in the pursuit of spreading knowledge.

lauretta molitor

Audio Recording

Lauretta started working on documentaries while still in high school, volunteering at her local PBS station (KPBS) in San Diego. After a short stint in the sound department at a San Francisco rental house in the mid-80s, she's been doing freelance production sound since 1987. She's amassed an impressive resume, with dozens of credits on feature docs, as well as national PBS series, including NOVA, Frontline, P.O.V., and Independent Lens. Past projects include, among others, **We Were Here**, **The Celluloid Closet**, **The New Americans**, **It's Elementary**, **Waging A Living**, and **Crude**. Other films in the works, in addition to **Hot to Trot**, are about early feminism, superheroes, and folk musicians. Lauretta also guest teaches at local colleges and mentors young, aspiring audio engineers.

For more information, high resolution images, and press materials, go to hottotrotfilm.com/press.

Image: Emily Coles and Kieren Jameson.
Photo by Chris Phan