

## Biography of Mary Murphy

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**Mary Murphy** is a ballroom dancer, accredited dance judge, and is a regular judge and choreographer on the Fox competition-reality show *So You Think You Can Dance*.

### ***Biography***

Mary Murphy was born in Lancaster, Ohio, the only daughter in an Irish family of four children. Keeping up with her siblings left Mary with little affinity for typically feminine pastimes, and she spent most of her free time after school and on weekends participating in athletics such as track and field, basketball, volleyball, and football.

### ***Dance Career***

Shortly after graduating from Ohio University with a degree in Physical Education and a minor in modern dance, Mary moved to Washington, D.C. where, looking for a summer job, she answered an ad in the newspaper; a local studio was recruiting trainees to become instructors. The turning point came when the owner of the dance studio invited her to attend the United States Ballroom Championships in New York City. At that moment Mary realized that ballroom dancing was more than just job for her - she no longer felt the desire to spend the rest of her life as a modern dancer, performing alone.

While continuing to teach for the studio, she sought out the best instructors in the area and began her competitive dance training. Her search for a suitable dance partner led her across the country to Southern California. Although the partnership ultimately did not prove to be viable, she decided to make California her home.

### ***Ballroom Achievements***

In April 1990, Mary opened the doors to Champion Ballroom Academy in the heart of downtown San Diego. Her vision, partly driven by her own needs as a competitor in training, was to provide the very best facility for competitive dance education, while at the same time creating a school where students and teachers alike would feel a sense of comfort and community as they sought to improve their dancing skills.

Over the course of time, the strains of commuting to Europe representing Austria as national champion with Manfred Stiglitz took their toll, and Mary was put under pressure to leave her studio and life in California behind and move to England. Ultimately the distance proved too great an obstacle for the partnership to overcome, and despite the promise of placing in the top six in the world, they were forced to part ways.

Although the partnership with Manfred was at an end, Mary's competitive career was far from over. During the five years following the breakup, she went on to build an impressive list of accomplishments with various partners including the Southwest Regional Dance Tournament, the Saint Louis Star Ball, and the International Grand Ball. With partner Bill Milner, Mary made the U.S. Open Standard final in an unprecedented six months' time. Finally, in 1996, Mary Murphy and partner Jim Desmond made the final of the U.S. Open American Smooth and won the U.S. Open American Nine Dance.

Mary immediately retired from competition and shifted her focus toward her ballroom. Mary feels comfortable with her decision to retire, and feels extremely fulfilled managing her business and watching her studio blossom.

"I love being here at the studio every day - the studio is my life, it's so much a part of me - the building of this and making the studio grow. I can't imagine doing anything else."

### ***Present Day***

Aside from training countless junior and adult champions, Mary has also done her share in bringing ballroom to the screen, acting as a dance double for Julia Roberts in the movie *Something to Talk About*, appearing in *Dance With Me*, starring Vanessa L. Williams, and most recently being a judge and choreographer on the Fox television series *"So You Think You Can Dance."*

Currently, Mary runs her dance studio, the Champion Ballroom Academy, and organizes a successful dance competition, the Holiday Dance Classic in Las Vegas. She frequently serves as a judge in some of ballroom's most reputable competitions, including the U.S. National Ballroom Championships, and can still be found on Champion Ballroom Academy's expansive floor passing on her enthusiasm and love of dance to her students.

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## ***So You Think You Can Dance?***

While in Hollywood being screen tested as a judge for the first season of Dancing with the Stars, an opportunity to meet with the producers of another new dance show was presented to Mary in early 2005. Ultimately, Mary was offered a slot on rotation as a judge and choreographer for the Fox summer series So You Think You Can Dance. Mary returned for season 2 in 2006, and spent noticeably more time at the judging table than season 1. Fans of the show developed a love/hate relationship with her emotional commentary and vocal antics; eventually Mary earned herself the name “Queen of Scream.” On March 8, 2007, TV Guide reported that Mary would be joining executive producer/judge Nigel Lythgoe permanently at the judging table for season 3, due to air in the summer 2007.