

# Shall We DANCE?

Brothers Maksim and Valentin Chmerkovskiy are the stars of dance

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**D**ancing with the Stars brothers Maksim and Valentin Chmerkovskiy are not only known for their spicy dance moves, they are also part owners of Dance With Me in Ridgefield. While the reality-TV dance competition has undoubtedly brought them fame, fortune and notoriety (the brothers are simply known as Maks and Val), their true passion remains on the dance floor.

"Being on *Dancing with the Stars* has inspired me as an artist," Val says. "It's given me a new celebrity status, which I am not too comfortable with yet, but it has also given me a bigger platform for my art – something I am very grateful for. I always felt like I had a lot to share with the world, and *Dancing with the Stars* has given me an opportunity to share my talents with millions of people."

Maks and Val agree: Dancing has not only enhanced their lives physically, mentally and emotionally, but will enhance the lives of anyone who decides to try dancing for recreation or exercise.

"Dancing," Maks says, "boosts your confidence and flexibility, helps you become more motivated, increases creativity, tones your entire body, decreases social awkwardness, and helps you feel healthier, sexier and more attractive."

The brothers grew up in the Ukraine and currently make their home base in Fort Lee when they're not filming or traveling.

"I enjoy the community and feeling of community in Bergen County," Maks says. "I love the fact that I'm looking at Manhattan and I'm drawn to it and



inspired, but at the same time I get to enjoy the calm and serenity of beautiful Bergen County."

"At 26," Val says, "I am very proud to say I live and work in New Jersey. I am proud to be a member of this community and be a contributing member to Bergen. I love my neighborhood and the fact that I have all my friends and family around me."

They both enjoy the creative outlet and personal challenges that come with being cast members on the show. And they agree the show has made them both better dancers overall.


"*Dancing With the Stars* has brought notoriety to dancing, and ballroom dancing in particular," Maks says, "which made me a better ballroom dancer and a more successful person. I've learned a lot as an artist and as a performer from being on *Dancing With the Stars*. I've learned how to be on camera and how the entertainment industry works. Being a person on TV is not easy, and it's a job that requires certain skills. *Dancing With the Stars* has given me that valuable education."

While working hard to train for the show on and off screen, Maks and Val also work hard at sharing the demands of being part business owners, along with fellow castmate Tony Dovolani, of Dance With Me. In 2005, the first of several Dance With Me studios opened in Ridgefield, and locations in Long Island, Soho and Stamford, Conn., followed. While running a business obviously requires different demands and skills from *DWTS*, the Chmerkovskiys appear to have the business savvy to make the dance studio a success. ➤

**BROTHERS OF DANCE** Maks (above, top) performs a *Pulp Fiction*-themed dance with partner Erin Andrews in 2010. Val (above) dancing with season 16 partner Zendaya in April 2013.

TOP: AP PHOTO/ABC; ADAM LARKEY; BOTTOM: ABC/ADAM TAYLOR



A full-page photograph of two men in a well-lit room. On the left, a man with dark hair and a light beard stands leaning against a white door frame. He is wearing a light blue Lacoste polo shirt and bright red trousers. On the right, another man with a beard sits in a dark wood, upholstered armchair. He is wearing a black long-sleeved shirt and white trousers. A round wooden side table is partially visible next to the chair. The background features a white door with horizontal blinds and a light-colored wall.

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**MAKS**

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Want to know what Maks and Val think about love, life, family and Bergen County? Check out their interview with Fashion Editor Heather Zwain on [bergen.com](http://bergen.com)



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VAL



**HOT MOVES** Val and Zendaya burn up the dance floor on Latin Night in an April 2013 episode.

“I love owning a business because I have an entrepreneurial spirit,” Maks says. “As a business owner, you go through similar hardships and make adjustments and overcome obstacles in similar ways. It’s a different level of creativity but similar challenges. I have one chance to make this the best experience possible and to leave a lasting impression.”

Val enjoys taking an active role in teaching the younger students who attend the studios.

“Teaching children and adults is a very different experience,” he says. “Kids need structure and regimented lessons. Adults are often more insecure than kids, and you’re also working with established adults with very different personalities.”

The brothers say dancing can be a rejuvenating experience for couples and their relationship. Dance With Me sees countless couples for dance lessons every year, and Maks and Val have worked with

their fair share. From long-married couples to those just dating or recently engaged, the result is always the same: a deeper connection and renewed romance.

“Dancing is a form of sharing and being intimate with one another,” Maks says. “It brings couples together and sparks romance and commonality. It’s apparent in their body language, and as their lessons progress, as an instructor, you can see the couples’ closeness and intimacy. Couples that dance together stay together.”

While primarily known for dancing, Val boasts a host of other talents, including being an accomplished violin player.

“I’m most proud of the fact that I’ve been able to inspire a lot of people or even one person in my career,” he says. “I’m proud of my students, my fans, my friends, my family and anyone else I was able to make happy through my work. I’m proud of dedicating my life to my craft, dancing,

playing violin and to my education.”

When asked whom they would credit with their incredible success, the brothers say their family.

“Family is my main focus,” Maks says, “because that’s something that is constant and something that I put as a top priority. I feel everything will follow if you put family first, and it takes a lot of work and effort, but as a unit we are stronger than we are as individuals.” ■

*All four Dance With Me locations offer instruction for ballroom dance – Waltz, Tango, Viennese Waltz, Fox-Trot and Quickstep – as well as popular Latin dances – Mambo, Rumba, Samba and Cha-Cha. Additional dance instruction includes Salsa, Argentine Tango, Hustle, Merengue, and many more. For a full list of dances, locations, class schedule, visit [dancewithmeusa.com](http://dancewithmeusa.com).*





“We named our dog Sleep, Sir Sleep-a-lot Chmerkovskiy to be more precise, because his eyes always look like he’s dreaming and he sleeps a lot.”

VAL



**DOWNTIME** Maks and Val have fun joking around during our photoshoot at their home on February 13, 2013.