



## MAKSIM CHMERKOVSKIY – UNDENIABLY AUTHENTIC

BY CHRISTINE MONTANTI

It's four o'clock in the afternoon, the door slams loudly and Maksim Chmerkovskiy enters his Glen Head, New York dance studio. Sharply dressed in a black, peak overcoat and grey jeans he discreetly walks to the far end of the studio where I am standing and apologizes for being late.

Chmerkovskiy explains he flew in the night before from being out of town and his schedule is considerably hectic. We are standing in his Dance With Me Dance Studio, one of four studios he owns and founded, along with partners Sasha Chmerkovskiy and Jhanna Volynets. Later Valentin Chmerkovskiy, Toni Dovaloni and Eugene Livshits joined forces and were added as partners of his rapidly growing company established in 2005.

Known for his bad boy image as a professional dancer on ABC's Dancing With The Stars, Chmerkovskiy's demeanor appears to be quite the contrary of how he is often portrayed on the hit TV show. In fact, he comes across as very tactful and humble. As the film crew hustles to set up for our interview, Chmerkovskiy begins to speak candidly to me about the past DWTS season and his love for New York. His skin is tan from being on vacation, and his relaxed personality sets the tone for a very interesting and in-depth interview. We begin to converse about his future career plans when the crew cues me their ready to begin taping. As Maksim takes his seat across from me I eagerly begin to ask him some questions.

**Christine Montanti: How has Dancing With The Stars changed your life?**

**Maksim Chmerkovskiy:** It brought notoriety to dancing and ballroom dancing in particular. This made me as a ballroom dancer a more successful person. In the past I can only do so much as a ballroom dancer, now I have more opportunities doing what I love to do. This also enables me to segue into new creative arts.

**CM: How has performing on the show increased your capability as a dancer?**

**MC:** I learned a lot as an artist and as a performer. I 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. DWTS has given me that valuable education that I am hoping to benefit from in the future.

**CM: When did you decide to open your first dance studio?**

**MC:** I was 17 years old. It wasn't a mature decision. I was just striving to create a studio atmosphere like I had back in Ukraine growing up. Everyone was one big team and family. In Brooklyn, it wasn't what I was used to, and I wanted to open my own studio to create that type of program which I felt really benefits children with the personal growth process. That was Rising Stars Dance Academy, which was opened in 1998. Seven years later, in 2005, we opened our first Dance With Me.

**CM: What sets Dance With Me Dance Studios apart from other ballrooms studios?**

**MC:** Dedication to quality and service. We only hire qualified professionals with extensive experience. We do not like to hard sell our products and service. We work hard with everything we do. We present you what we have to offer, educate you on all the benefits of dancing, and let the product sell itself. We also make sure to personalize each teaching style and program based on the student, instead of just teaching everyone the same way.

**CM: Do you like being business owner?**

**MC:** I love being a business owner because I have an entrepreneurial spirit. Dance satisfies my creativity and entrepreneurship satisfies my passion to be successful from a business standpoint. I love being a well-rounded individual. I love being a brand as a dancer and entrepreneur. I always continue to try to develop both.

**CM: How is being a business owner different from being on the show?**

**MC:** It's very different in some ways, but similar in others. On DWTS you have a person that becomes your center of your attention and you cater to them. You grow that person as a

dancer and performer. You help them deal with difficulties with ballroom dancing and performing in front of millions. 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. My celebrity has one opportunity to be on show, I come back season after season, so I have one chance to make this the best experience possible for them and leave a mark.

**CM: What about dancing do you try and impart to your young students?**

**MC:** I tell them that now they can pursue a successful career in ballroom dancing if they are passionate about it. Before many of our students had small windows of opportunities and only the best can have a successful career. It was something you did until college and then went on to become a doctor or lawyer. Now you can be happy and successful at dancing.

**CM: Do you feel that dancing can change/improve an individual's life?**

**MC:** Dancing is beneficial to anyone at any age whether you had experience or not. It lifts your spirits. It helps you stay physically healthy and it transforms your body. Whether you want to improve or maintain your health or physique, there is no better way than dance. There are so many benefits and each person benefits differently. You really have to experience it to understand the mental, physical, social, and personal benefits. Actually check out our blog and website we talk about it there more...

**CM: Why would you recommend dancing as a method of fitness versus another form of exercise?**

**MC:** I'm a big fan of any form of exercise. I've tried everything there is and dancing is the best for me. It's definitely the most fun. You can do it in a social setting and it's not boring and repetitive like some machines. I like to supplement dancing with basketball and lifting weights, but your fitness goals can be achieved with ballroom dancing.

**CM: Are there certain styles of dance that are more centered around getting in shape?**

**MC:** All styles of dance contribute to fitness differently. It really depends on your personal goals. We create custom pro-

grams for fitness but dancing is not only done for getting into shape. That is just a result of dancing continuously. You become a better version of yourself.

**CM: How can ballroom dancing be beneficial for couples?**

**MC:** I think dancing imitates life. Ballroom dancing has a man and a woman, and it imitates their relationship. Mambo is the party, Rumba is foreplay, and Samba is... well, you get the idea. It helps strengthen relationships, or form new ones.

**CM: Where do you see your career as a dancer in the future?**

**MC:** I see it grow and develop and be as big and successful as I can make it. Sky is the limit as they say and I want to be among stars.

**CM: What is your vision for the future?**

**MC:** I want to expand the company nationally and then internationally. I want to bring a studio to every metropolitan area in America. I think it's something that benefits our society and I want to spread those joys to everyone. We have a passion for business development and we want to take our brand to a global level. We have some plans to expand the Dance With Me brand so stay tuned...

**CM: Do you want to broaden your career in the entertainment business as well?**

**MC:** Well, I've done Broadway already. It was an amazing experience that I will never forget. I see myself doing more acting in the future. I'd love to segue my career into a broader scope of entertainment such as movies on the big screen.



As the interview wraps I am compelled by the knowledge I have gained about Maksim Chmerkovskiy. His talent, passion and business sense are apparent and intense. As to what the future holds for Chmerkovskiy departing from DWTS, with his capabilities, "the sky is the limit."

*Special Thanks:* Alex Samusevich, Marketing Director, Dance With Me USA

*For more information on Maksim Chmerkovskiy's Dance Studios, visit [www.dancewithmeusa.com](http://www.dancewithmeusa.com)*