

# Flavia - An Artiste in the Making



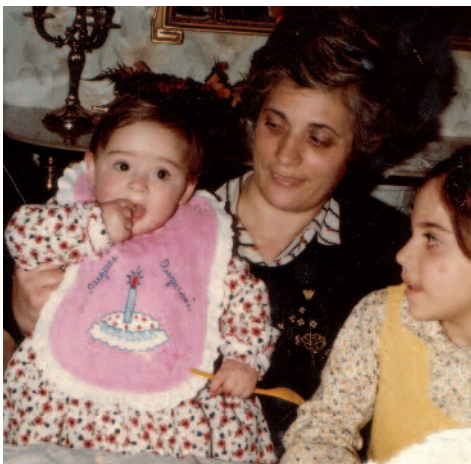
Born the youngest of six children in Naples, Flavia has very few recollections of her life before the family moved to England when she was only four. Life must have been very bewildering to such a little girl, not only with the move to a strange environment, but starting school almost immediately and not understanding the language. The trauma of such a major upheaval obviously took a toll on her memory in those early years, as she does not have much of a memory of being young. She says "I think a lot was going on when I was four and five, and I seem to remember hardly anything."

She remembers crying a lot when she first started school, as she wanted to go home so that she could understand what was being said and to speak Italian. However, she does recall how the school made her feel comfortable and she managed to learn English in about 6 months. Flavia obviously has fond memories of the school, Sandfields in Guildford, as she describes it as being lovely.

When you meet Flavia, you get the impression of a charming, level headed girl who is friendly, loyal and always looks on the bright side of life. So, it is not surprising that she formed a very close group of friends in middle and secondary school. Over the course of time she lost touch with them but in the last few years they have met up again. She does not have time to meet with them very often but whenever she has the chance they enjoy a giggle about some of the things they got up to in their youth.

Always an artist, she had a leaning towards graphic design and the arts at school. Her favourite subject was technology, as she enjoyed making things out of wood, plastic or metal and, by her own admission was "pretty good". She also excelled in her 'A levels' achieving an 'A' grade in English Literature.

"I least enjoyed maths," says Flavia, "I was probably average at it, but I'm finding with Sudoku and brain training games that it is just practice and you can convince yourself that you are not good." [Note: the positive and optimistic approach typical of Flavia within this comment – most of us would have said that we 'hated' maths!]



"I feel very fortunate because luckily I have always spoken Italian to my parents and speak it fluently – so that's a real bonus and I love it. At the moment, because of work, I only manage to go back on the occasional holiday."



At her mother's behest that all the children should have an activity, Flavia, aged five, and her elder sister, who was six years older, joined Hurleys Dance School, Guildford, a very good Ballroom school in the centre of town, which held children's classes on a Saturday. To date, she has only trained in Ballroom and Latin but admits that she would have loved to study Ballet as well. As life holds so many paths and surprises, who knows what this artistic young lady will be doing in the future.

Her mother has to be the one person who has had the most influence on her life. She would have loved to have danced when she was younger, but was not allowed to do so. Seeing her daughters dance gave her a great deal of pleasure. Flavia's sister also became a professional dancer teaching Latin and Salsa. As for Flavia, little did she know where her 'activity' would lead!



As a youngster, Flavia played the violin, and her ambition was to be a travelling violin teacher.

They noticed right from the start that they were equally good in both Latin and Ballroom dances, which they attributed to the fact that they had both practised as amateurs in all disciplines, and enjoy all of the dances immensely. By 2002 they had won the UK Professional Ten Dance Championships, a title they held on to for four consecutive years. Flavia's most memorable moments stem from both these achievements.

Vincent and Flavia have always loved the Ballroom Tango and knew that they had a special connection with the Argentine Tango. Once they saw the film 'The Tango Lesson' and fell in love with it, they started taking lessons and dedicating their time to this genre of dance. Flavia is inspired by the music, "It speaks to you and tells you what to do. It's simply beautiful." She has unforgettable memories of winning the Argentine Tango Championships in 2006, because as she put it, "we were older and more aware of what was going on."

When not appearing on 'Strictly', teaching, touring, making guest showdance appearances and charity work, Flavia loves to go to the gym to relax using the jacuzzi, sauna, and steam rooms. So what about the future? "It scares me and I truly have no idea. I just pray I'll still be dancing and will be happy and content," says the serene young lady who always gives 110%.

**A message from Vincent and Flavia.**

We would like to welcome you to our Argentine Tango DVD. The first DVD, Volume One, will take you through several basic moves, step by step, with clear explanations along the way. There is also a technique section which you should find very helpful.

Volume Two will take you through several challenging figures together with a section on technique.

For details visit [www.vincentandflavia.com](http://www.vincentandflavia.com)

As an extremely shy and reserved child she cried all through her first dance lesson, but thanks to her mother and sister, she gradually grew in confidence and started to enjoy dancing. "My parents dedicated all their time and effort to support me and it can't be done without that when you are young," she says. "I'll always thank them for giving me what they didn't have in life. I sometimes feel guilty, but I guess they must have enjoyed it."

Initially, she attended classes for three hours each Saturday. As she became more proficient, she started to have a private lesson once a week which increased in number as the years went by.

About the age of 12, one of the top teachers from her dance school suggested that she move from the medalist side of dancing to finding a partner and starting to compete. Unfortunately, Flavia has little recollection of her early competitions which she puts down to nerves. There were never the dreams of making a career out of dancing. "It was kind of decided for me," as she puts it. "Dancing kind of turned into an ambition without my knowing it at the time. Life has evolved and changed, even in recent years, and will possibly continue to do so in the future."

Vincent was Flavia's third partner and that is when she really started to get into competitions. They started dancing together when their teacher introduced them just after Vincent had arrived from Southern Italy. The early years were quite hectic, with Vincent maintaining his teaching commitments back in Italy, and Flavia studying for her 'A-Levels'.

She and Vincent had successes right from the start of their partnership, and Flavia warmly remembers competing at an open event at the Tower Ballroom in Birmingham (the first or one of the first competitions in their partnership) when they came first.

