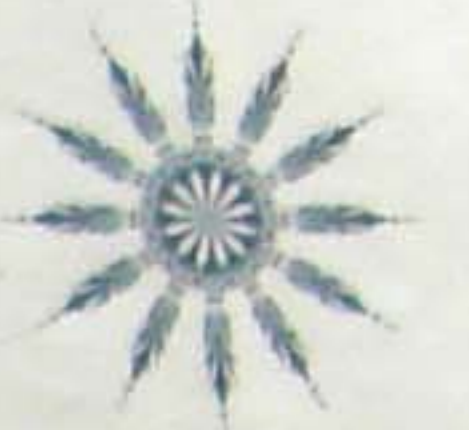


# Playing **THE RIGHT** Moves



After wowing millions of viewers with her dance moves every week, Arianne Caoili chats to LIZZA GEBILAGIN about singing, politics, and why she is giving up chess.



She has travelled around Europe, North America and Asia to compete against the best chess players in the world, been entangled in an internationally covered love triangle, and graced our television screens as she stylishly worked the dance floor as a grand finalist in *Dancing With The Stars*. And she's only 19. Yet, after all she has achieved and experienced, it comes as no surprise that Arianne Caoili speaks with a maturity beyond her years.

The number one ranked Women's chess player in Australia and the Philippines was relatively unknown outside the chess community until she became the youngest competitor in the 2006 series of *Dancing With The Stars*. Since her first fiery appearance on the show, Caoili has done a lot to sexy-up the image of professional chess. The show dubbed her "the Anna Koumnikova of the chess world" (although she has previously said in interviews that she'd rather be known as the Sharapova), and in the debut episode introduced her to the audience as the cause of a jealous brawl between British grandmaster Danny Gormaly and Armenian Levon Aronian.

Controversy followed her to the end of the reality TV series when judge, Todd McKenney, accused her of lying after she said she never had professional dance training. On Channel

7's *Sunrise* interview soon after, Caoili told hosts Mel and Kochie she felt like bursting into tears when she was put on the spot by McKenney. She said she misunderstood McKenney's question and had only ever had ballet lessons when she was a young child and four beginner salsa classes in the last few years. Caoili made it to the grand finals although it was her fellow finalist AFL star Anthony Koutoufides who walked away with the glittering disco ball trophy.

When I spoke to Caoili during the first weeks of the show, she admitted that one of the challenges of being on *Dancing With The Stars* was the difficulty in balancing chess, studying, practicing and interviews. Lucky for her, Sydney Dance Company teacher and Caoili's dance partner, Carmelo Pizzino, was very flexible with their practice times.

"We're working very, very hard. We practice about five hours a day. You're always with your partner - dancing, practicing. It's a hard job," Caoili said. "You're learning basically one dance in one week, which is really difficult, so I have to work pretty hard."

Are you enjoying it?

She hesitated slightly before answering. "Yeah, it's been a lot of fun." Then added as an afterthought, "At nights friends say, 'Do you want to go out?' and you want to but you also just want to sit down with a cup of

coffee and relax."

And sleep?

"Yeah exactly. Sleep. Seven hours is a dream for me."

CAOILI was born in Pasay, Manila to her Australian mother and Filipino father. She spent most of her childhood travelling between Australia and the Philippines as her father worked for the government and she became so used to moving around that now staying in one place for a long period of time seems foreign to her. Once, when she was still little and visiting her father in the Philippines for three months, she slept in a different room of the house every night because she wasn't used to being in one place for so long.

"I can't believe I did that," she laughs. "It was pretty eccentric. Apparently that's what I did. It's funny. It also showed that's just how I was."

"I don't think I'm the type of person to live in one place for a long time because I never have - really."

When she first moved to Australia from the Philippines Caoili was a bit shocked by the culture. Caoili says, "I remember I found the kids here very rough. In the Philippines the boys are very gentle, the women are very submissive and it's more of a family orientated

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culture. So moving back to Australia was like I was thrown into a pack of wolves. Everyone was very outspoken. It's just a different culture. I had to come out of skin a little bit, being this quiet Asian girl.

"And then moving back to the Philippines - again a culture shock because then I suddenly got the Australian way of thinking. When I went back [to the Philippines] I went to school in Alabang and everyone was commenting on my accent because they all speak American English ... I do find it easier to adapt to the Philippine culture."

One of her favourite aspects of the Philippine culture is the music. She says about the Filipinos love of music: "It doesn't matter

