

Dancing Profile

Michael Stylianos and Lorna Lee

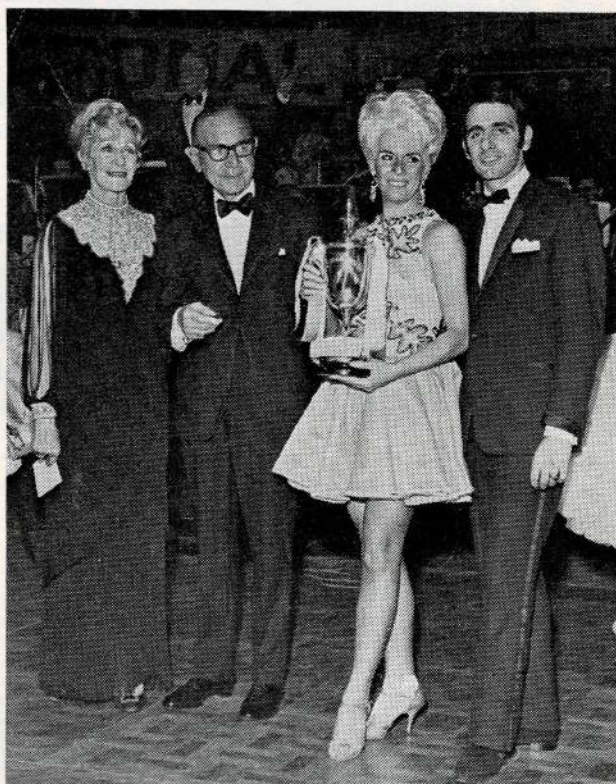
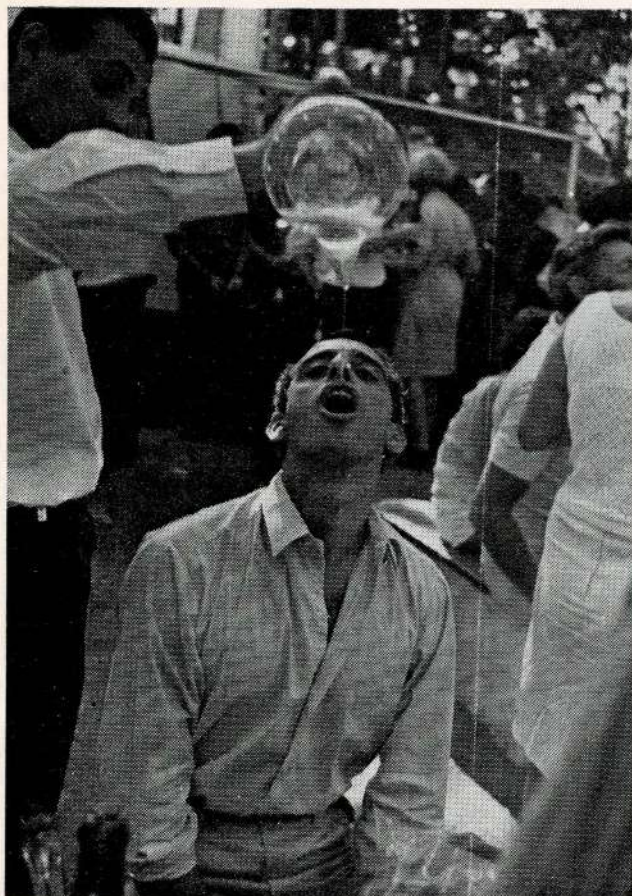
by

GRAHAM PERKINS

At the foot of the page, Michael demonstrates another kind of dexterity while on holiday in Spain; below, after winning the International at the Royal Albert Hall, London.

WITH A NAME LIKE Stylianos, Michael ought to have come from a sun-drenched Greek island. In reality, he was born in Birmingham where his parents, who had emigrated from Cyprus several years earlier, ran a fish shop. Not that Michael remembers anything about that, for he was only one year old when they moved to London, living first in Wandsworth and then in Stockwell.

His schooldays were uneventful and he admits to being no good at anything except technical drawing and football. The latter very nearly became his career for, on leaving school just before his sixteenth birthday, he had a trial with Chelsea Football Club. He passed



the trial but did not join the club because he would have needed a certain amount of financial support and his father was not particularly well off.

Instead he joined an electrical firm in Clapham as an apprentice maintenance engineer. It was at this firm that Michael met a lad who was keen on dancing and went with him to a school in Balham. Michael was then eighteen—a late starter by today's standards.

Lorna—yes, Lorna Lee is her real name—was also born into a family of shopkeepers. Her parents ran a tobacconists and confectioners in Kingston, later moving to similar businesses in Mitcham and then Merton.

From the age of about five, she attended a stage school in Carshalton, studying tap, ballet and acrobatics and for a long time harboured an ambition to teach in such a school. When

she was twelve, she started to take ballroom lessons, along with several other girls from the stage school.

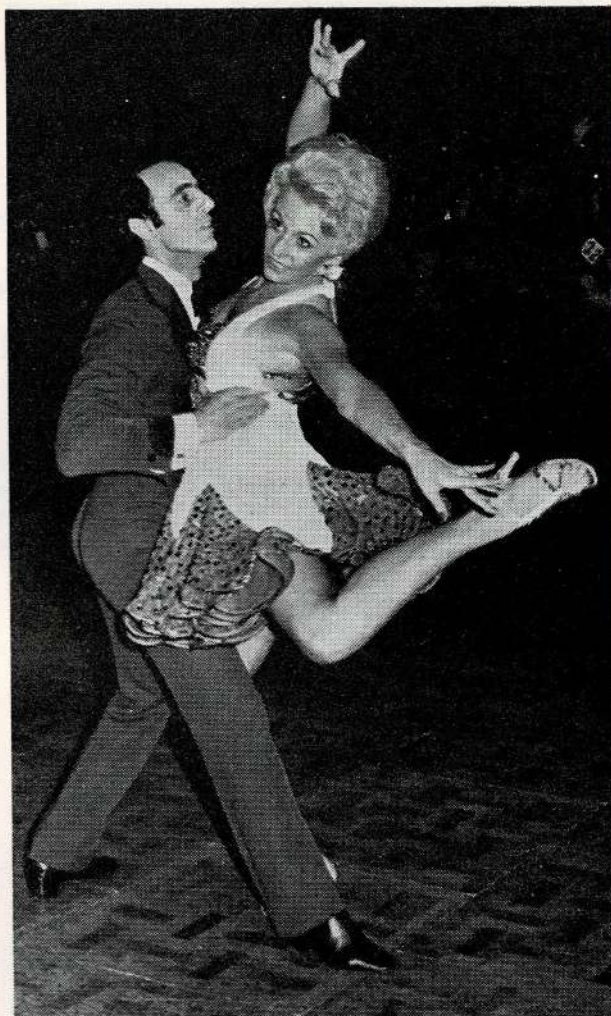
She became so keen on ballroom that when, a year later, she had an offer to appear in pantomime with Charlie Drake, she turned it down—because it would have meant missing her ballroom classes!

We all know how easily ballroom dancing can become an obsession and that is exactly what happened to Lorna. So much so that, when she left school at fifteen, she became a full-time student teacher. Initially she worked in Kingston, then she transferred to another branch of the same school in North Cheam. She had not been working at Cheam for long when the manager left. His replacement came from a school in Balham.

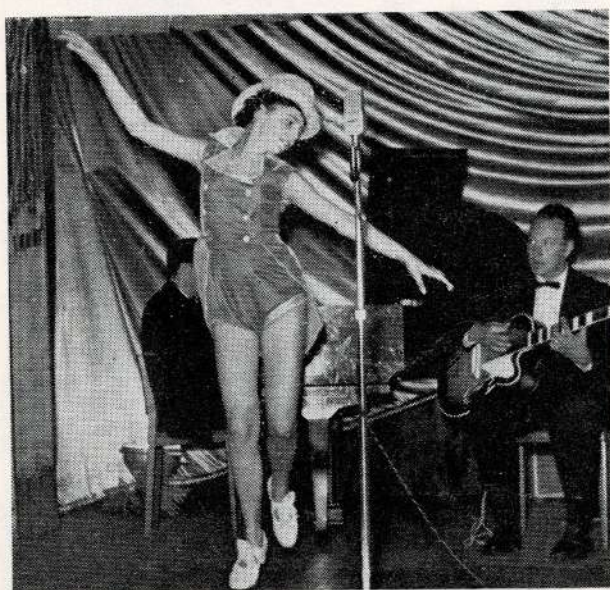
Needless to say, that school was the one Michael attended and so it was that he ultimately arrived at the studio where Lorna taught, originally calling in to see his former teacher.

Lorna's first impression of Michael could not have been worse. She still remembers going home and telling her mother about the horrible, conceited boy who had turned up at the studio that evening. In spite of that, when Michael asked her out to the pictures, she accepted, soon changing her opinion of him.

In the beginning, their relationship was purely a romantic one. Then Michael suggested that they should have lessons together in Latin.



The champions in action, a photograph by Ron Self.



Linda at stage school showing a tap routine—note the elegant use of her arms even then.

Since the school at which Lorna taught specialised solely in Ballroom, she had not done any Latin American at that time. Furthermore, because Lorna was a student teacher, she was technically a professional which meant that they could not enter for amateur competitions.

The first event they entered, after five months of lessons and hard work, was the South East of England Championship at Penge. With such names as Wally Laird and Bob Burgess amongst their rivals, it came as no surprise when they were knocked out in the first round. In fact, it was nine months later, in October 1964, before they got their first ever recall.

This was also the month in which their engagement took place. Michael's mother nearly went through the roof when Lorna showed her the ring, for he had said nothing about it and his parents, as is the fashion in



Wedding day; even this gained the couple some kind of record as they had first a Church of England wedding and then another service in a Greek Orthodox Church.

the Greek-Cypriot community, had a nice Greek girl lined up for him.

By this time, Lorna had given up her teaching job and was employed as a receptionist in a hairdressers. It had been impossible to get enough practice in with Michael working during the day and Lorna being at the studio all evening.

Jobs were a constant problem until the time they reached the top and could make a real living from dancing. Both of them had to change their jobs, as employers became fed up with

the amount of time they needed to take off for dancing. Lorna went on to be a beauty consultant whilst Michael worked for several different firms in window dressing and in supermarket management. At one time they both became full-time teachers but even this did not solve the problem for they then had difficulty taking time off to do demonstrations.

In July 1965 their wedding took place, a complicated affair involving first of all a Church of England service and then another service in a Greek Orthodox Church. The first ceremony began at lunchtime but it was five o'clock before they finally arrived at the reception.

For the next six years, they lived with Lorna's parents, having barely enough money to pay for their lessons, let alone buying property. Cars were a problem too. No professional dancer can manage without one but they do swallow up the cash. Michael and Lorna had barely finished paying for their first car, purchased by means of a loan from Lorna's parents, when Michael was involved in an accident which left the vehicle in no fit state for anything but the breakers. From then on, motor cars were a constant financial millstone around their necks.

Eventually their finances improved and they moved into a maisonette in South London where they lived for two years before buying the stylish modern Surrey home which they now occupy.

Just as they had to work hard for a house of their own, so they needed all their determination and perseverance to get to the top in dancing. It was not until 1970 that they first reached the final six of the British. Since then they have never failed to make the final of a major event and it must surely be only a matter of time before the World's and British titles fall to this talented and immensely likeable couple.

**COOL PASTELS AND STRIKING
FLUORESCENTS TO SUIT EVERY TASTE**

Reavely's Nylon Net

**Matching Taffeta, Crystal, Aurora and Coloured
Rhinestones. Diamante Straps.**

GLITTER CHIFFON

— Send 7p stamp for super free Shade Card —

JACK REAVELEY

**2 PILRIG ST., EDINBURGH EH6 5AQ
031-554 2445**