

OAKBAYNEWS

ENTERTAINMENT

Dance en pointe for New York



Balance takes more than pointe shoes for ballerina Sasha Beardmore. The 14-year-old juggles near-perfect school grades, strenuous training and international competition. A former Monterey middle school student – and Oak Bay resident recently relocated inside City of Victoria borders – she self-directs her studies through South Island Distance Education. With the fully qualified teachers who “are really helpful” Sasha maintains a 99.9 per cent average. “My grades don’t have to suffer. School has always been really important to me. I want to excel in both areas,” Sasha says. “You have to keep yourself in the right frame of mind. All the time, I have my goals in mind.”

The teen dances five to six times a week, with 90-minute classes then multiple solo rehearsals for competition. “She works very, very hard,” says mom Kate Beardmore. “She does probably 20 hours a week of training and rehearsals and that sort of thing.” The hard work pays off. In May 2015 she earned a competition spot in New York for the Youth America Grand Prix finals where she won junior classical solo and was in the top 12 in contemporary.

Ballerina Sasha Beardmore balances a passion for dance with top school marks. She heads back to New York this spring for the Youth America Grand Prix finals in New York. Here she models the handmade creations of Pamela Martin of Matryoshka Rehearsal Tutus.
— Image Credit: David Cooper Photo

After the fierce competition, she was also offered three scholarships – from the Royal Winnipeg Ballet School, ROCK School for Dance Education in Philadelphia and the Princess Grace Academie in Monaco. Beardmore, then 13, also scored a full scholarship to the School of American Ballet in the Lincoln Centre, New York – the training school of the New York City Ballet. “She went for their summer intensive. It’s basically an audition and they do a draft pick,” Kate says. “She was picked after the second week and given a full scholarship to attend.” “I decided to stay (home) because of family. I wasn’t ready yet,” Sasha says, adding she already had high quality instruction in Victoria from Maureen Eastick at Pacific Dance Centre. “I have really good training here. I’m happy that I stayed.” It also meant another year of competition, something she enjoys immensely, and continues to see success.

Sasha recently won first in contemporary and second in classical repertoire during the regional Seattle junior YAGP competition that featured 130 contestants from as far afield as Hawaii, Alaska and New Zealand. “She really upped her game even from last year,” Kate says. Sasha earned a return trip to the finals of the Youth American Grand Prix this April. “I think she is one of the most talented dancers I have taught and I very much want her to experience the New York finals,” says Eastick. “She will have a chance to be seen by the directors of the world’s leading dance companies.”

Always striving, practical yet with dreams, Sasha is one of the hardest workers, according to Janie Keenlyside of Pacific Dance Centre, where Beardmore trains. “For what Sasha has accomplished she has to go this year,” Keenlyside says, adding they’re planning a fundraising campaign to help cover associated costs. Sasha also earned an invite for the summer intensive at the School of American Ballet again this year, and should a scholarship be offered she’ll again weigh the options. “She just wasn’t ready to leave home (last year), but she’s been saying for a while now she’s ready,” says Kate. The teen also strikes balance between dreams and reality as she reaches for a career en pointe and plans for post-dance possibilities. “Ideally I’d like to dance professionally for a few years,” she says. “I have my sights set on becoming a doctor ... maybe a pediatric surgeon or trauma surgeon. I like fast-paced.”