

Orange County's Southland Ballet Academy students sweep Youth America Grand Prix finals in New York City

Youth America Grand Prix (YAGP) is the world's largest global network of dance and the biggest scholarship competition in the world. More than 50,000 dancers have participated in YAGP's workshops, scholarship auditions and master classes worldwide since 2000. In its 15 years, YAGP has awarded more than \$3 million in scholarships to the world's leading dance schools.

Fountain Valley, CA, May 10, 2016 | Eight Southland Ballet Academy students from Southern California competed at the Youth America Grand Prix in New York during the last week of April 2016. Lily Turner of Costa Mesa and Ashley Lew of Irvine both qualified for the final round of the competition, and were featured on Youth America Grand Prix's live online broadcast of the final round. Nathaniel Bowman-Sindt, Lucas Matzkin, Gavin Pike, and Ava Winer danced in the pre-competitive division (ages 9-11). Ashley Lew, Silvi Lybbert, Moorea Pike, and Lily Turner competed in the junior division (ages 12-14). To qualify for this final round of competition, each competitor needed to score 95 or higher in their classical and/or contemporary ballet solos during the regional YAGP competitions. YAGP NY also included workshops, master classes, and scholarship classes throughout its 10-day run.



Ashley Lew (age 12) ultimately placed first place in the Junior Classical Category for her classical variation from *La Fille Mal Gardee*. She competed against 131 other junior girl competitors, who were the highest-ranking dancers from the 24 regional competitions held internationally. This places Ashley among the top tier of nearly 2,000 other serious ballet

competitors in her age division. For more information about Youth America Grand Prix, please visit www.yagp.org.

Southland Ballet Academy dancers also received prestigious scholarships to internationally acclaimed ballet schools. Ashley Lew received a full scholarship to the Princess Grace Academy in Monaco and a short-term study at the Royal Ballet in London. Lily Turner also received a summer-long scholarship to the Princess Grace Academy and a one-week scholarship for Royal Ballet. Moorea Pike was granted a summer-long scholarship to Houston Ballet, as well as Princess Grace Academy. Her brother Gavin Pike also received a scholarship to Princess Grace Academy and to the Rock School in Philadelphia.

Salwa Rizkalla, Artistic Director and Founder of Southland Ballet Academy, noted, "I wish to acknowledge our amazing faculty. They deserve praise for their team effort as all of the instructors work together to produce the best dancer, and give the ultimate joyful and professional experience to our students."



About Southland Ballet Academy

Southland Ballet Academy (SBA) offers a comprehensive program to fulfill the needs of the serious dancer, as well as those who simply want to explore the artist within. Since opening its doors in 1983, Southland Ballet Academy has acquired a national and international reputation through training world-class dancers who have gone on to dance in companies around the globe. Under the direction of Salwa Rizkalla, esteemed Southland Ballet faculty provide excellent classical ballet instruction as well as classes in jazz, hip hop, and tap for students ages 3 through adult. Pre-professional ballet students also train in pointe, character,

conditioning, and partnering; Southland Ballet Academy boys have their own men's class. All Southland Ballet faculty are highly regarded in their own technique and artistry and understand how to properly cultivate strong, smart, and confident dancers of the 21st century.

Performance opportunities for Southland Ballet Academy students include an in-studio holiday show, a fully-staged June recital at the Irvine Barclay Theatre, and national competition opportunities through Youth America Grand Prix. Southland Ballet Academy is the official school of Festival Ballet Theatre (FBT), whose students have the opportunity to perform in children's roles in FBT's ballet productions, including *The Nutcracker*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Don Quixote*, *Swan Lake*, and *Coppélia*. www.southlandballet.com

About Salwa Rizkalla

Artistic Director Salwa Rizkalla has served the Orange County community for more than 30 years by presenting excellence in dance performance through Festival Ballet Theatre and providing top-tier classical ballet training at Southland Ballet Academy. During her professional dancing career, Ms. Rizkalla graced the stage in leading roles in well-known classical ballets as well as contemporary pieces. She had the privilege of working under the direction of world-renowned choreographers Leonid Lavrovsky and Serge Lifar. As a young dancer, Ms. Rizkalla trained in the Russian Vaganova method and studied with ballet masters of the Bolshoi and the Kirov. As the culmination of her training, Ms. Rizkalla completed a Bachelor of Arts degree in Ballet Pedagogy. She established Southland Ballet Academy in 1983, and debuted Festival Ballet Theatre in 1988. In addition to teaching and directing, Ms. Rizkalla was a faculty member of several local area institutions.

Salwa Rizkalla's contributions have been recognized by many local organizations. She was named Orange County Arts Educator of the Year Award for Secondary Dance (2003); Youth America Grand Prix awarded Ms. Rizkalla Outstanding Teacher accolades from 2002-2015, and Arts Orange County and also recognized Ms. Rizkalla with the Helena Modjeska Lifetime Achievement Cultural Legacy Award (2014).

Ms. Rizkalla is honored to have impacted the lives of hundreds of students and their families through her teaching, and is proud to be a dedicated educator, a tireless promoter of the arts, and an active participant in the cultural life of her community.

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