

Sarasota dancer to join london's royal ballet

Francisco Serrano, the 19 year-old son of Ariel Serrano and Wilman Hernandez, the husband/wife founders of The Sarasota Cuban Ballet School, Inc., will join London's world-renowned Royal Ballet when it opens its 2016-2017 season this September. Francisco has been training at The Royal's London school, where he is on full scholarship, for the past year and a half. He will graduate from that program in May.

Known by his nickname, "Panchi," to family, friends and Sarasota ballet enthusiasts who have been following his progress, Francisco began his ballet training just six years ago with his mother. Ms. Hernandez, who with her husband danced with ballet companies in their native

Cuba, in Mexico and with The Sarasota Ballet when they came to the U.S. in 1992, said her son's interest in the family profession began when his younger sister, Camila, began lessons. It was not long after that he abandoned his previous dream of becoming a baseball player to pursue a career in dance.

After training in The Sarasota Cuban Ballet School's pre-professional program directed by his father, Francisco came to the attention of the Royal Ballet in New York in 2013 when he competed at the Youth America Grand Prix, a prestigious international ballet competition. A top 12 finalist in the senior boys group, he was invited to train at the company's school. His parents, however, requested that The Royal extend the offer to the next year when he would be 17

In addition to the Youth America Grand Prix, Francisco has won many other awards at ballet competitions, including the Gold Medal at the International Student Ballet Competition in Havana, Cuba in 2014. He also was selected, as a student, to dance with The Royal Ballet Company over the past year's holiday season in "The Nutcracker."

Before beginning his first season as a member of The Royal Ballet Company, Francisco will return to Sarasota to participate in The Sarasota Cuban Ballet School's Summer Intensive and will dance in the school's "On Stage" performance at the Sarasota Opera House on July 30, 2016. Tickets may be reserved by calling the school at 941-365-8400.



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