

Tokyo-born star scoops ballet 'Oscar' at Benois de la Danse

By SHOKO FUJISAKI/ Staff Writer

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Hannah O'Neill (Jun Takaku)

Tokyo-born Hannah O'Neill has won the ballerina prize in the Benois de la Danse competition in Moscow, one of the most prestigious awards in ballet.

O'Neill, 23, whose mother is Japanese and father is a New Zealander, was honored in the competition--said to be ballet's equivalent of the Academy Awards--for her performance as Paquita's eponymous character.

Currently principal dancer with the Paris Opera Ballet, O'Neill moved to New Zealand at the age of 8.

Her earlier achievements include winning the Prix de Lausanne in 2009 and the first prize at the Youth America Grand Prix in 2010.

O'Neill became a full-fledged member of the Paris Opera Ballet in 2013 and has since been promoted to the position of first soloist.

The winners of Benois de la Danse competition, which began in 1992, were selected from professional dancers and choreographers who are thriving in dance troupes around the world.

In 2014, Mariko Kida of the Royal Swedish Ballet became the first Japanese winner of the top prize in the Benois de la Danse competition's ballerina category.