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Trio at Waterdown studio ready for second tour of audition

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By Brenda Jefferies 

While most 11- and 12-year-olds are looking forward to some fun in the sun this summer, a trio of young dancers have their sights – and ambitions – set on working hard for a spot at the National Ballet School. Kate Doxey, Tess Pepetone and Madison Gallant have been invited to participate in the prestigious school's second tour audition – which is a feat in itself.

“They are all extremely talented, and they all work very hard,” said Dancemakerz owner Christie McKay-Hofland of their achievement. Ballet instructor Irina Egorova noted that all three girls have accomplished many dance goals over the past couple of years. Kate and Tess, both 12, danced in the Cuban Ballet production of *The Nutcracker* at Burlington Performing Arts Centre last year – Kate in the main role of Clara and Tess, who was also the Clara understudy, in the party scene.

All three are accomplished competitive dancers, said Egorova, and have taken the stage at some of the top showcases in North America, where they are seen by scouts from ballet schools from all over the world: Tess placed in the top 12 at last year's Youth American Grand Prix in Indianapolis, while Madison performed in a duet at the event. “They all love ballet and they are all advanced for their level,” said Egorova, noting that the month-long commitment at the ballet school will not only test the girls' dance skills but also give them a taste of what the training is all about – from the inside.

“I wish them the best,” she said. “They will get a sense if it's for them or not.” Madison, 11, is in Grade 6 at St. Augustine Catholic Elementary School in Dundas. She has already attended the NBS summer session, and knows she wants to return as a full-time student. Currently, she dances at the local studio seven hours each week, with a focus on ballet. Kate, a Grade 7 student at Guy Brown, and Tess, a Grade 7 student at Allan A. Greenleaf, both dance about 15 hours each week, and both take lessons in lyrical, contemporary, jazz and pointe. “Ballet is my favourite,” noted Tess. “It is fun to do.”

Egorova noted the month-long audition in Toronto is used to examine the students' work ethic and their ability to take and learn from corrections. “It's quite difficult for younger students,” she said. And, should they be selected to attend the National full-time, the dancers have to be prepared, in body and mind. “You have to be mentally ready to do that work,” said Egorova. “You get the professional education, as well as basic education, so it's double the load.”

