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LBT dancer to compete in New York

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Posted: Sunday, February 15, 2015 7:56 pm

Heather M. Goodwin, hgoodwin@starlocalmedia.com | 0 comments



Posted on Feb 15, 2015 by Heather Goodwin

Local dancers recently competed for a chance to earn scholarships to professional ballet

companies and to perform at David H. Koch Theater at Lincoln Center in New York.



LakeCities Ballet Theatre (LBT) sent six dancers to the 2015 Youth America Grand Prix (YAGP) Dallas competition. There, five made the top 24 soloists. Mackenna Pieper, who attends school in Lewisville, won first place in the senior division. Carly Greene made the top 12 in the junior classical division.

"There are more than 100 soloists in each category, so I think they did great," said Kelly Lannin, artistic director for LBT.

Two Russian dancers formed the 15-year-old competition, which awards \$250,000 in scholarships each year to dance schools within the United States and internationally. It is open to dance students 8-19 years old. There are

two rounds in the competition, a classical ballet variation and a contemporary variation.

"People who compete are primarily dancers who study ballet," Lannin said. "The prizes are scholarships to renowned ballet companies. Students also get to attend master classes."

YAGP exposes dance students to some of the most famous dance companies, including Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, American Ballet Theatre (ABT), Australian Ballet School, Canada's National Ballet School, Paris Opera Ballet and The Royal Ballet School.

"This whole competition has changed the way people are getting jobs," Lannin said. "Now there

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COMMUNITY UPDATES

Mesquite Rotary Inducts New Officers

Contributed

The Mesquite Rotary Club held induction ceremonies for the group's 2015-2016 officers

are young people dancing principals in major companies.”

Pieper, a 16-year-old LBT member, said she hopes to earn a scholarship to the San Francisco Ballet and Pacific Northwest Ballet (PNB). In the past she has attended master classes at PNB and ABT and The School of American Ballet, both in New York.

“I love going to different schools because I get to try different techniques,” Pieper said. “I want to improve, and I think it will be awesome to meet the great teachers at the different companies.”

This will be the first year Pieper will compete in the senior division, which is open to 15 to 19-year-old-dancers, in New York, but she has competed three times in the junior level at YAGP New York.

“I was very happy and surprised when I found out that I placed first,” Pieper said. “It was like getting recognition for not just myself, but the studio. All the hard work I put into this was worth it.”

This year, for the first time, YAGP is holding another competition in Texas. YAGP Austin will be held Feb. 27 through March 1. Lannin said 10 dancers from LBT would compete in Austin. The finals in New York will begin April 10.

“Those who make it to New York will compete against people from all over the world,” Lannin said. “We’ve had people go to finals for years, but YAGP only takes about six soloists from every city.”

YAGP will award anywhere from 60 to 70 scholarships at the finals where 200 juniors and 200 seniors will compete.

Lannin said her dancers have been preparing for YAGP since early September when the variations are chosen and dancers begin learning them. Once they know the variations, dancers practice everyday and rehearse in the studio once a week.

“They know they’re responsible for their variations,” Lannin said. “Once ‘The Nutcracker’ is over, they rehearse three days a week. Then in January, they rehearse everyday.”

Variations must be chosen from the YAGP pre-approved lists of dances for the classical round. Lannin said variations could come from “Sleeping Beauty,” or the white or black swan variations or another classical ballet.

“It’s pretty strenuous on their bodies, but the more they do it, they stronger they get,” Lannin said.

Pieper said in order to prepare for finals she will rehearse in a similar way she did to get ready for the Dallas competition.

“Mackenna is very elegant and mature in her dancing,” Lannin said. “I’ve seen her potential grow. She’s always had that natural artist, but she’s really improved a lot since coming to LBT about four years ago.”

New York is a weeklong event that culminates in the finals closing night “Stars of Today Meet the Stars of Tomorrow” gala, taking place at the David H. Koch Theater at Lincoln Center. It will feature the students showing “the most potential alongside the stars of today’s leading dance companies.”

Pieper began dancing at a young age. She said she hopes to be a professional ballerina but doesn’t yet know which company she wants to work with.

“In ballet I get to express myself in a way words can’t,” Pieper said. “I feel most myself when dancing I have an interest in contemporary, but I think my heart is in classical ballet.”

For information visit www.yagp.org.



and board members at their meeting on July 7th. All 33,000 local clubs in Rotary International change their leadership in July each year. This provides for fresh vision and energy throughout the worldwide organization of business and professional leaders, which was established in 1905.

Updated: 10:46 am | Comments

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