

Long Beach Ballet Dancer Hits It Big

By Sarah George

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Last year, Los Alamitos High School senior and Long Beach Ballet dancer Jordan DePina had her doubts about going professional.

But that was before April, when she was selected for the first time to perform for the final round of the Youth American Grand Prix (YAGP). DePina was one of 40 dancers in the world to perform for final round of the world's largest and prestigious ballet competition for pre-professional dancers. The competition took place at Lincoln Center in New York.

"It was an amazing accomplishment," DePina said. "Being able to perform in front of that many people made me feel like a professional. It really boosted my confidence."

The ballet dancer said her most memorable experiences from the competition came not only from her performance, but also from a poster of herself outside of Lincoln Center.

"I didn't know it was me on the poster at first, until I saw the clothing and then I realized it was me," DePina said.

DePina was excited to take a picture next to the poster, which shows a young girl smirking and posing in a red and black lace costume. In the picture, DePina stands on the tiptoe of one leg, while the other extends out behind her body.

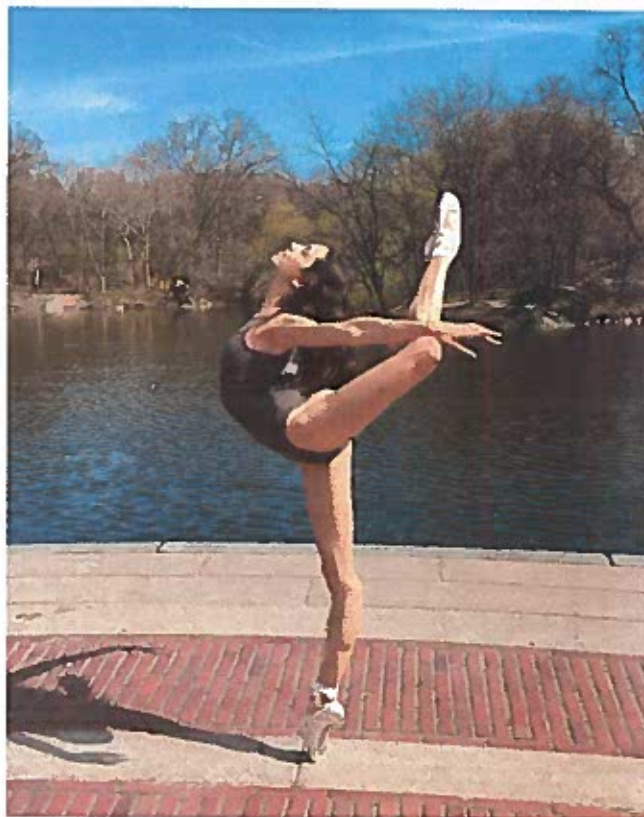
It wasn't long before DePina started gaining a fan base. After her performance, DePina saw little girls taking pictures next to her poster.

Although, she didn't place in New York, DePina was offered two full year-round training scholarships to Ballet West in Utah and The Joffrey Ballet in Chicago. Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet also invited her to their Aspirant Program. The program is one step before full company membership.

Professionals who have worked with DePina, like David Wilcox, artistic director of the Long Beach Ballet, finds her well deserving of her recent accomplishments.

"She is one of the most gifted dancers I have worked with in 34 years," Wilcox said. "Her exceptional physical form and her loving heart combine to make the perfect ballerina."

DePina said her love for ballet started at the age of 9 when she enrolled for ballet classes at the Long



Jordan DePina

DePina poses for the camera at Central Park in New York.

Beach Ballet. The dance company is one of the largest professional ballet academies in Southern California. The company is known for its annual “Long Beach Nutcracker.” DePina said she loves ballet because it is fun and believes it to be her calling.

Now that the YAGP competition is over, DePina has been focusing on her lead role as “Odette” the White Swan in the Long Beach Ballet’s performance of “Swan Lake.” The show will take place at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. on June 6 and 2 p.m. on June 7 at the Richard and Karen Carpenter Performing Arts Center.

It’s a performance DePina said she has been rehearsing for since March, but had to take some breaks because of other competitions.

“It’s my first main lead, so it’s really exciting and a little scary,” DePina said. “With the lead role, I have to tell the whole story through my performance.”

DePina said her ballet takes up a good part of her free time outside of school. She rehearses six days a week for two to five hours depending on the day.

Outside of dancing, she also plans on graduating from Los Alamitos High School on June 11.

“It’s very exciting to be graduating, but also a little sad to be leaving friends,” she said. “But now I can focus more on dancing.”

Shortly after her high school graduation, DePina will be leaving to Chicago for the Joffrey Ballet’s Summer Intensive. DePina said she wants to see how long and far she can go with a professional ballet career before focusing on college.

“I really just want to become a professional ballerina,” DePina said. “I want to dance as long as my body will allow me.”

Tickets for “Swan Lake” are \$36. To purchase tickets, visit www.longbeachballet.com/Swan%20Lake%202015.html.

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