

# a Prodigy grows up

— By Amy Brandt • Studio photography by Nathan Sayers —

Budding ballerina Miko Fogarty has come a long way since *First Position*.



(Here and two right)  
The picture of poise at  
the 2013 Moscow IBC

*Miko* Fogarty doesn't buckle under pressure. Competing at the Moscow International Ballet Competition, one of the most prestigious dance events in the world? No sweat. Dealing when, en route to that competition, the airline loses her luggage, leaving her stranded with little more than her pointe shoes? Not a problem. Coping after the live orchestra botches her music during the same competition's final round? All in a day's work. Through everything, Miko kept her cool with the self-assurance of a seasoned professional—

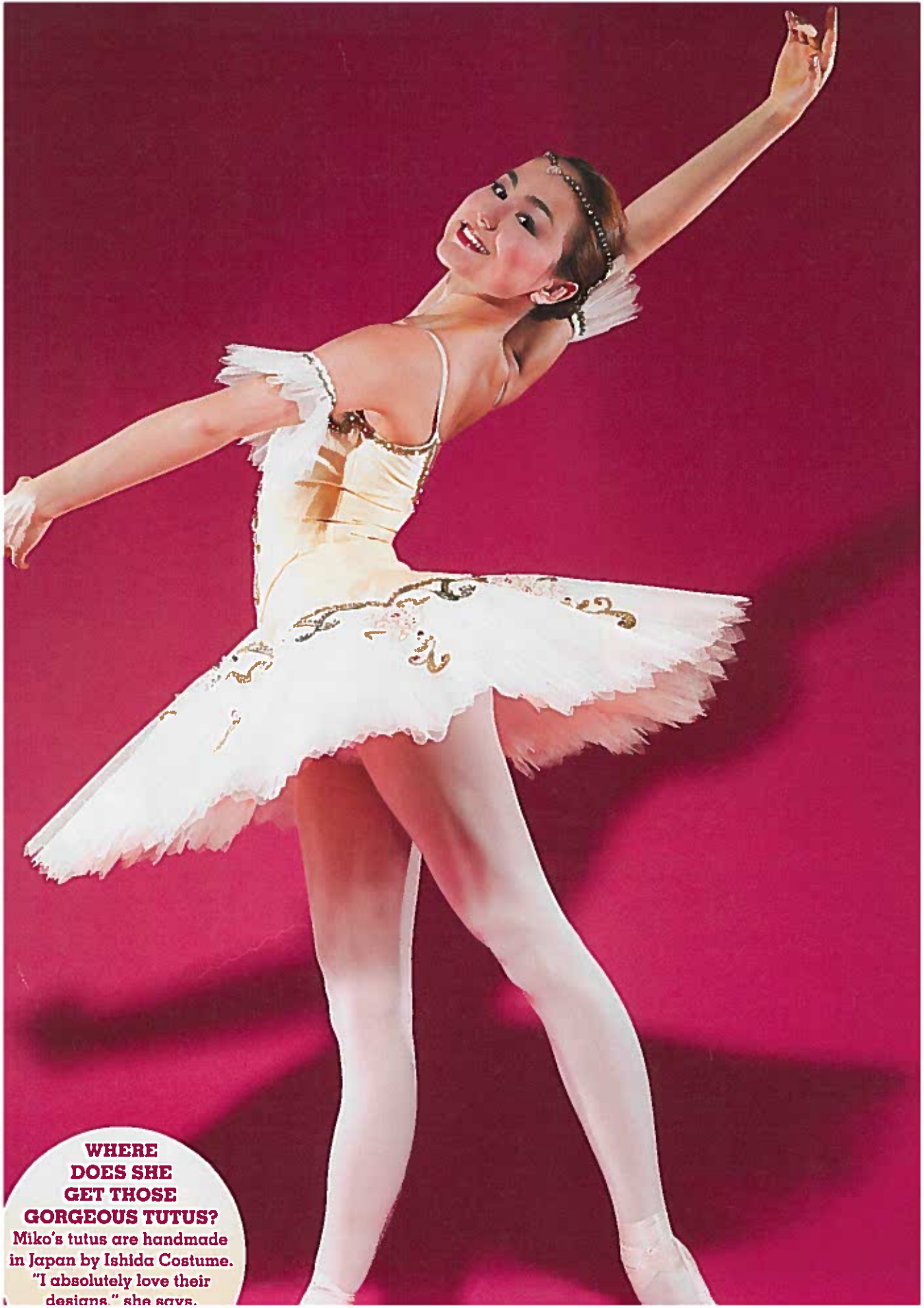
Of course, it wasn't just her level head that earned her the 2013 Moscow IBC'S top prize. Miko has pirouettes and extension to spare, though she avoids flash in favor of pristine classicism. Her turns are musical and perfectly placed, her développés beautifully controlled. Her confidence and artistic maturity make you forget she's still a teenager.

Miko's passionate commitment to ballet first turned heads in the 2011 Youth America Grand Prix documentary *First Position*, filmed when Miko was just 12. Since then, she's blossomed

fans—around the globe. She's handled it all with poise, allowing the world into her whirlwind life through her website, social media and various dancewear endorsements. As a result, she's achieved a level of fame most professional dancers only dream of. This spring, as 17-year-old Miko auditions for companies, all eyes will be watching to see where she ends up.

## The Determined Competitor

Born in London, Miko is part Swiss, part British and part Japanese. But



**WHERE  
DOES SHE  
GET THOSE  
GORGEOUS TUTUS?**

Miko's tutus are handmade in Japan by Ishida Costume.

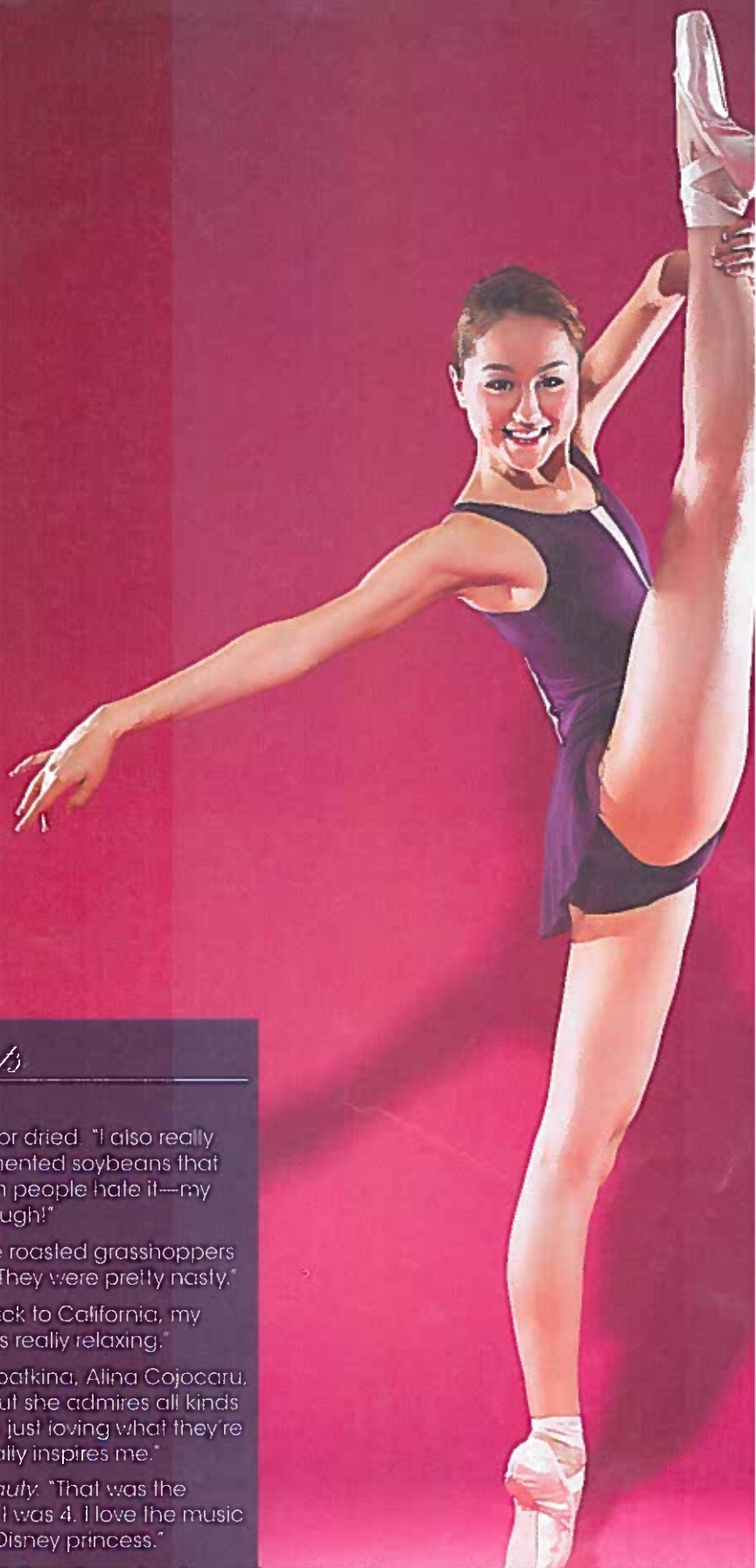
"I absolutely love their designs," she says.

moved to Berkeley, CA, when she was 2. At 4 she started taking ballet—and instantly decided to become a dancer. “Even at my preschool graduation I was saying, ‘When I grow up, I want to be a ballerina.’ ” she says.

By age 11, she was training every day with Viktor Kabaniaev at the Diablo Ballet Apprentice Program and attending summer programs at the Royal Ballet School in London. In seventh grade, she traded public school for homeschooling to accommodate her busy ballet schedule. That’s also when she started competing more frequently. “Some people don’t like competitions, but they’ve been really beneficial for me,” Miko says. “You can meet people and network, and they’re also good for stage experience and learning how to handle nerves.”

During the 2009 YAGP finals in NYC, a filmmaker named Bess Kargman popped into the theater just as Miko took the stage. Miko’s strong performance inspired Kargman to direct *First Position*, a documentary that follows seven contestants as they prepare for YAGP—and she asked Miko (and Miko’s younger brother, Jules) to be in it.

It took two years for *First Position* to make it to theaters. But once the film dropped, Miko became something of a celebrity. “I’d be somewhere random—at an airport or on a bus—and someone would say, ‘Are you from that dance film?’ ” she says. “It was kind of cool, because even



## Fast Facts

**BIRTHDAY:** May 23, 1997

**FAVORITE FOOD:** mangoes, either frozen or dried. “I also really like natto, which is from Japan. It’s fermented soybeans that you mix with soy sauce. A lot of Western people hate it—my dad can’t stand it—but I can’t get enough!”

**WEIRDEST FOOD SHE’S EVER EATEN:** “We ate roasted grasshoppers when we were on vacation in Mexico. They were pretty nasty.”

**FAVORITE WAY TO UNWIND:** “When I go back to California, my dad and I always go camping, which is really relaxing.”

**DANCE IDOLS:** Her list includes Uliana Lopatkina, Alina Cojocaru, Sylvie Guillem and Marianela Nunez. But she admires all kinds of dancers, not just stars. “If someone’s just loving what they’re doing or helping other people, that really inspires me.”

**DREAM ROLE:** Aurora in *The Sleeping Beauty*. “That was the ballet that inspired me to dance when I was 4. I love the music so much. Plus, Aurora was my favorite Disney princess.”

## Gala-vanting

Miko has been lucky enough to perform at galas in Japan, Peru, Taiwan, Moscow and Bulgaria, as well as all over the U.S. Dancing alongside some of the ballet world's biggest stars, she says, is a total thrill—and an invaluable learning experience. "It's fascinating to see how different professional dancers prepare and perform their pieces," she says. "I find it really inspiring and educational—and it makes me fall in love with ballet all over again."

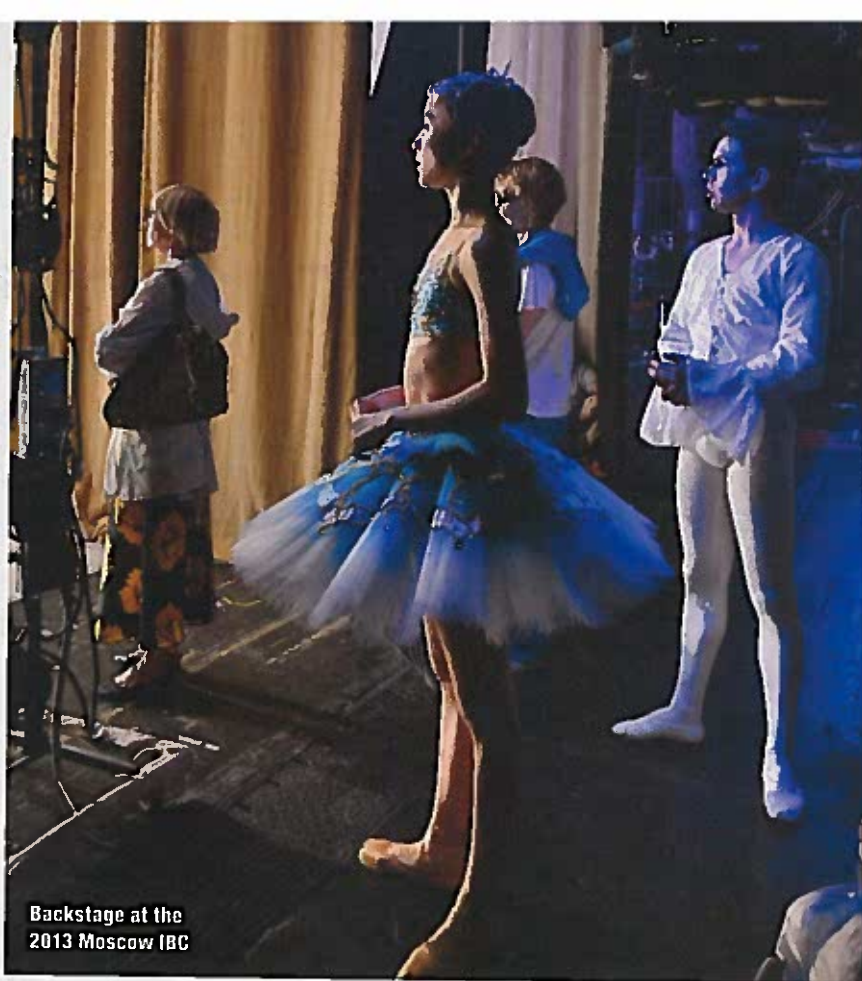
some professional dancers knew about me!" And her success on the competition scene in the wake of the film earned her even more fans. Since turning 15, Miko has scooped up the gold in Moscow, won silver and bronze medals at two Varna International Ballet Competitions and earned the Best Swiss Candidate at the 2013 Prix de Lausanne.

### The Dedicated Student

Shortly after the film came out, Miko and her mother moved to Indianapolis, IN, so Miko could study at the Indiana Ballet Conservatory, a Vaganova-based school she discovered during a YAGP regional competition. (Her dad and brother stayed behind in California.) "I was looking for a female coach and realized that there were some really good teachers in Indiana," she says, noting that faculty members Tatiana Pali, Alyona Yakovleva-Randall and Alexei Moskalenko have helped her polish her technique. Miko also spends one month each year training with Japanese teacher Jinushi Kaoru while visiting her grandmother in Osaka, Japan.

While Miko has been offered opportunities to attend large company schools, she's made a conscious choice to complete her training in Indiana. "I wouldn't have had as many performance opportunities if I'd gone to a larger school," she says. "Plus, I get a lot more individualized attention here, which has helped me improve faster."

These days, Miko's schedule is packed with schoolwork, technique classes and rehearsals for competitions or performances. "It's rare to find someone so passionate so young," says Pali, noting that Miko often comes in on her own time to practice. "Because of her pure desire to thrive, she'll



Backstage at the 2013 Moscow IBC

### The Social Media Maven

Like any 17-year-old, Miko is pretty much addicted to her smartphone. But her social media savvy has actually given her career a huge boost. "At first I used to just post pictures of my life," she says. "Then I started getting a lot of followers because of the movie and my YouTube channel. Now I use Instagram to connect with them—I message a lot of people back." Miko divvies up social media responsibilities with her mom, posting to Instagram, Twitter and Facebook while her mother manages her YouTube channel. "To have a voice in the world is really cool," she says. "I like being able to show ballet to other teenagers who may not have experienced it."


One of Miko's Cloud & Victory campaign images



Recently, she's gone beyond social media to connect with fans, launching her own website, mikofogarty.com, and signing endorsement deals with Gayn Minden, Discount Dance Supply and Cloud & Victory. "During photo shoots always try to keep her from pushing too hard," says C&V owner Min Tan. "But she's a perfectionist! She comes in with great attitude and wants to make sure she nails it. That speaks volumes about the type of person she is."

### The Aspiring Professional

As for company auditions, Miko has her eye on Europe—though she's still weighing her options. "I really like the choreography over there," she says. "And it intrigues me how much art is part of the larger culture. She's planning to meet with company directors at the Prix de Lausanne this summer.

Chances are, those directors are well aware of her already. "She'd be an asset to any company," Pali says. "She's talented and hard-working enough to be a leading ballerina." 

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