

# Nanaimo News Bulletin

## ENTERTAINMENT

### The perfect exhale

Fluid movements are tied to breath. A slow continuous exhale as an arm is raised and lowered like a small wave touching the shoreline. The flow and grace of the body is an ever-evolving quest for perfection 11-year-old Ladysmith ballet dancer Kayla Henry strives for.

“You have to make it look easy... that’s one of the hard things. There is so much going through your mind,” said Henry. She’s inspired by prima ballerina Svetlana Zakharova, principal dancer of the Bolshoi Ballet.

“She’s so amazing. She has the best technique I have ever seen,” said Henry. Another idol is Misty Copeland. Henry said Copeland possesses a muscular build, one not usually typical of ballet dancers, but that hasn’t stopped her from becoming a dancer. She was the first African American female principal dancer with the American Ballet Theatre. “When she steps on stage she is so beautiful,” said Henry. “She made it and no one would have expected that.”

Henry said dancers like Copeland make her believe she can achieve her dream of becoming a principal dancer for a ballet company. Henry makes another step in her journey to achieving that goal Friday (April 22) when she attends the Youth America Grand Prix International Ballet Competition in New York City, which runs April 22-29. The competition features dancers from around the world.

“The YAGP is one of the world’s foremost dance competitions, with hundreds of competitors from all over the globe. Just attending the semifinals competition is an achievement in itself, so placing top 12 or being invited to New York is a massive achievement for any aspiring dancer,” said Chantelle Norris, a dance instructor at Kirkwood Academy of Performing Arts.



Henry has studied at Kirkwood for the last five years under Norris's tutelage, the last two of those in the pre-professional dance program. "Kayla has a natural aptitude for classical ballet; that along with her intelligence and determination make her a very successful young dancer," said Norris. Henry qualified for the competition because she placed second in both the classical and contemporary categories at the regional competition in Seattle. Henry's sister Meghan also qualified for the competition. She won't be doing a solo performance, but will attend the workshops. Kirkwood senior student Mikaela Kos also qualified, but she will not be attending this year.

*by Rachel Stern - Nanaimo News Bulletin  
posted Apr 20, 2016 at 4:00 PM*