“Gabriella is a star in the making. Her potential is very clear. She’s always giving 100 percent and her desire to be onstage drives her to be who she is. When she performs, she gives everything she has—her soul.” —Anel Sarrano, co-founder of the Sarasota Cuban Ballet School

Gabriella STILO

Gabriella Stilo’s ballet technique is beautifully polished. Her grande jetés seem to float through the air, her pique assautes are perfectly aligned to the music and her endless examinations optimize classical purity. But it’s her artistic approach that convinces you she’s on her way to true ballerina status. “I love ballet for the acting,” says the 15-year-old, “I’ve been trained by Cubans my whole life, and that tradition becomes a lot on technique. But I really like to portray a character onstage and inhabit the role, too.”

Gabriella lives in Tampa, FL, but trains at the Sarasota Cuban Ballet School in Sarasota, FL, an hour-long commute each way. She’s homeschooled to accommodate her intense schedule, which consists of five to six hours of class each day—and that’s when she doesn’t have a competition on the horizon. “We do a mix of technique, poiéses, variations and partnering, along with core strengthening,” she says. “I take a modern or contemporary class once or twice a week but I’m 100 percent focused on ballet.”

This focus has paid off. In 2014, Gabriella won the gold medal in the pas de deux category at the Youth America Grand Prix finals in NYC and placed in the Top 12 in the Junior Women’s Division. She was also chosen as the Outstanding Model Search winner. “I like competitions because they get you noticed,” says Gabriella. “And I just love the opportunity to perform. If I could, I’d perform every day.”

Gabriella has only recently recovered from a stress reaction in her foot. She missed audition season due to her injury, so she plans to train at her home studio this summer. “I think it was my body’s way of telling me to rest,” she says. Now that she’s back in class, Gabriella will continue to pursue her goals with her usual discipline. “I’m obsessed with American Ballet Theatre,” she says. “I love the elegance of classical ballet. And some day I’d like to dance the title role in Giselle, or Juliet in Romeo and Juliet. That’s been my dream since I was little.”

Fast Facts

Birthday: September 28, 1999
Favorite Food: Frozen yogurt
Favorite Dance Movie: Center Stage. It’s a classic.
Arias or Petit Allegro? Pas de deux
Contemporary or Classical? “Classical. But I do love Wayne McGregor’s choreography.”
Dance Idol: Mary Hecheleova. She’s flawless. And Christina Ricci, because she’s so strong and sweet.

VOTE FOR Gabriella at dancespirit.com!