



LOCAL TALENT: DANIEL ULBRICHT AT YAGP

Daniel Ulbricht was attending Bay Point Middle School in St. Petersburg when he signed up for a class at the Judith Lee Johnson Studio of Dance. With the help of instructor Lenny Holmes, he soon realized dancers aren't anonymous figures wearing uniform-like leotards.

"I wore shorts, hooded sweatshirts and a backwards baseball cap," said Ulbricht, 32, now a principal dancer with the New York City Ballet. "My level of intensity increased. Now it's a fire."

In 2008, Ulbricht founded a program to pass that fire on to a new generation. Stars of the American Ballet tours internationally, bringing top-level ballet performers to a wide variety of audiences, but especially targeting the young. He is also a consultant to the **Youth America Grand Prix** ballet competition, which will bring hundreds of young dancers to the Straz Center this weekend. On Saturday, the YAGP Gala brings the winners of that competition together with visiting ballet professionals. Ulbricht will participate in this event, "Stars of Today Meet the Stars of Tomorrow."

"Tampa Bay is a very tough market for art," Ulbricht said. "There have been at least a half-dozen attempts to start companies there. It just doesn't work, outside of the *Nutcracker* format. We need to cultivate a sense of ownership."

The Youth America Grand Prix competition runs Friday through Sunday. The YAGP Gala starts at 8 p.m. Saturday at Ferguson Hall. Tickets start at \$35. (813) 229-7827. strazcenter.org.