THE GLOBE AND MAIL

BALLET

So you think you can dance?

Ballet dancers wait backstage to perform during the 2017 Youth America Grand Prix regional semi-finals, where hundreds of young ballet dancers audition for scholarships, in Toronto.
MARK BLINCH/GLOBE AND MAIL

Hundreds of dancers, from the ages of nine to 19, travelled from all over the country to audition for a chance to compete at the Youth America Grand Prix

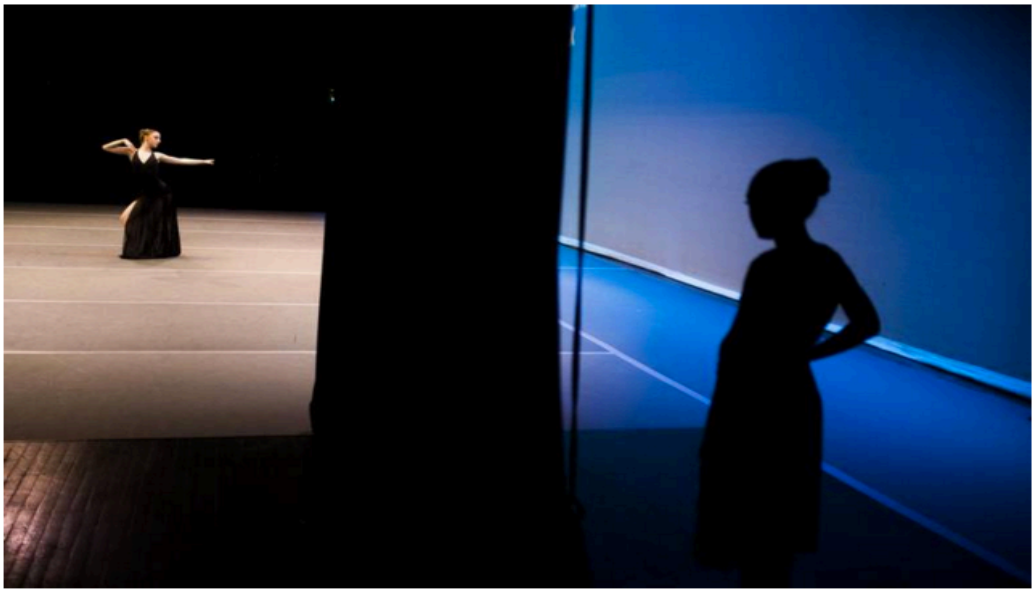
MARTHA SCHABAS

THE GLOBE AND MAILLAST UPDATED: SUNDAY, FEB. 12, 2017 7:22PM EST

Hope soared as high as the grands jetés at Toronto's Metro Convention Centre this weekend. Hundreds of dancers, from the ages of nine to 19, travelled from all over the country to audition for a chance to compete at the Youth America Grand Prix, which takes place in New York in April. For 18 years, the YAGP has been the gateway to many young dancers' dreams, offering more than $250,000 a year in scholarships to the best dance schools, and contracts with leading companies around the world. The competition has already completed its international regional semi-final, landing in Europe, Asia and South America, before it made its only stop in Canada this weekend.

Donning pointe shoes and tutus, the dancers hailed from little-known mom-and-pop schools and prestigious academies to perform solo and group variations for a panel of judges that included noted Canadian choreographer Peter Quanz and YAGP founder Larissa Saveliev. The competition became a known quantity beyond the ballet world with the acclaimed 2011 documentary First Position, which tracked several aspiring ballet dancers from around the globe as they prepared for their big day in New York. The top prize awarded in April is the Grand Prix – the winner just might have been pirouetting in Toronto on Saturday.

Dancers warm up back stage.
MARK BLINCH/GLOBE AND MAIL



A dancer watches another performer on stage.
MARK BLINCH/GLOBE AND MAIL

The dancers hailed from little-known mom-and-pop schools and prestigious academies to perform solo and group variations.
MARK BLINCH/GLOBE AND MAIL

Donning tutus, the dancers had some colourful and dynamic routines.
MARK BLINCH/GLOBE AND MAIL

The stakes are high but the dancers stayed calm and loose in the dressing room.
MARK BLINCH/GLOBE AND MAIL

These teenaged dancers performed a beautiful duet.
MARK BLINCH/GLOBE AND MAIL

The competition has already completed its international regional semi-final, landing in Europe, Asia and South America, before it made its only stop in Canada this weekend.
MARK BLINCH/GLOBE AND MAIL

This duet was still warming up before their audition.
MARK BLINCH/GLOBE AND MAIL

The top prize awarded in April is the Grand Prix – the winner just might have been pirouetting in Toronto on Saturday.

MARK BLINCH/GLOBE AND MAIL