



Chasing a dream en pointe

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Emmakate Franz, 12-years old, has been dancing ballet since the young age of three. She began classes like most children, but she had the advantage of having a ballet instructor as a mom. Christian Franz is the director of the Fragrant Offering Dance Company based out of Covenant Church in Shepherdstown.

Emmakate not only danced with Fragrant Offering, but also at the Inwood Performing Arts Company, under the exceptional tutelage of Director, Denna Smith, and Assistant Director, Susan Banks, formerly a soloist in the Houston Ballet.



It became evident early on that Emmakate would excel at her art, dedicating many hours per week to practices and performance.

This past summer, after video audition and letters of recommendation, Franz received a scholarship to study with the Maryland Youth Ballet, recognized as one of the finest schools for classical ballet in the region. She took classes five days per week, at least three hours per day, learning the disciplines of classical ballet, pointe and modern dance.

"I love dancing with MYB (Maryland Youth Ballet)," said Franz. "The instructors are very nice and they believe in me."

And believe in her, they do. Franz is performing the coveted role of Clara in 16 performances of MYB's Nutcracker production this year.

"It's really quite a huge honor for a new student coming in to be offered a leading role," said mom, Christina. "We're very proud of Emmakate."

Franz has also earned other opportunities to compete in prestigious ballet events. Early this year she participated in the Youth America Grand Prix (YAGP) in Pittsburgh, the world's largest global network of dance. Franz took third place out of 60 in her age group, propelling her to the elite final competition that takes place in New York City each year.

She plans to compete again in Pittsburgh at YAGP in early 2016, performing two classical pieces, one duet and a contemporary piece. The judges will score based on a variety of factors such as control, turns, smile, performance and potential.

"It's exciting getting to compete in front of such great judges," said Franz. "It's scary, but it gets a little easier each time and I like getting the feedback."

In addition to the competition and performances, dancers at these events are able to participate in classes and workshops taught by experts in the field. There are opportunities to earn scholarships and win dance supplies as well.

Franz was selected this year "One to Watch" part of the ambassador program to represent Russian Pointe, a ballet apparel company.

"This is very exciting for Emmakate," said her mother. "She will be featured on the poster for the company."

When asked what she loves most about dancing, Franz replied, "I can just let myself go and not worry or think about things. I get lost in the music and motions."

As far as her future plans, Franz hopes to be able to continue to receive scholarships to study with MYB until she can one day achieve her ultimate goal of becoming a principal dancer at the American Ballet Theatre.

She's well on her way with an upcoming performance at the Kennedy Center in January in the American Ballet Theatre's production of Sleeping Beauty. Franz will be performing the garland waltz en pointe.

- See more at: <http://www.shepherdstownchronicle.com/page/content.detail/id/513965/Chasing-a-dream-en-pointe.html?nav=5089#sthash.zCqjxOU6.dpuf>