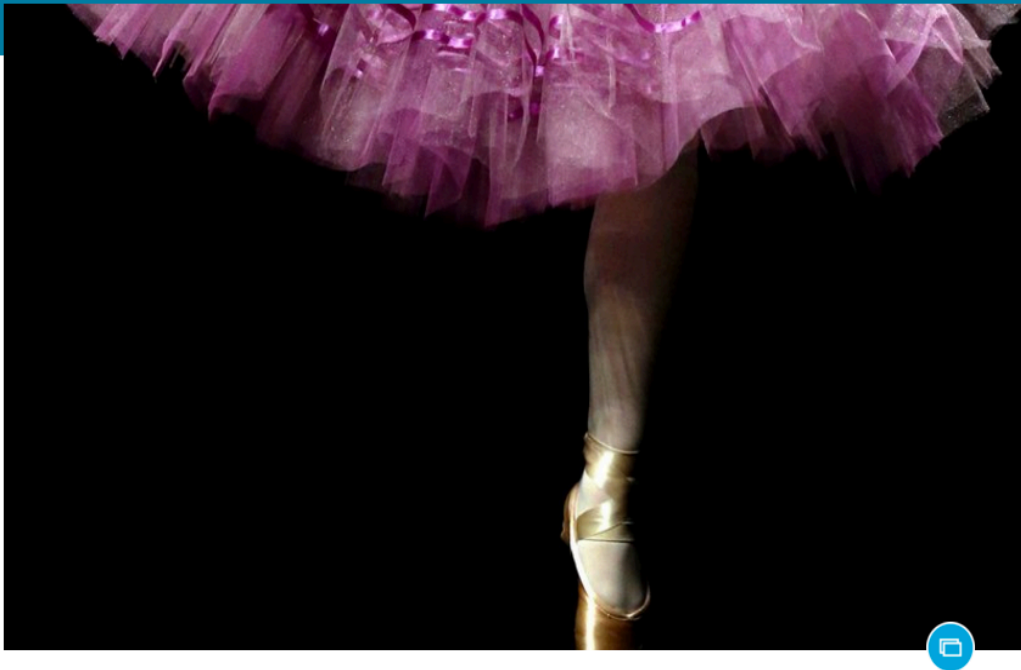


AP

Ballet

AP PHOTOS: Talented young dancers compete in Chicago.



CHICAGO (AP) — Hundreds of ballet dancers between the ages of nine and 19 auditioned in Chicago at the Youth America Grand Prix regional semi-finals this weekend.

Chicago is one of 12 cities around North America selecting finalists who will compete at New York University's Skirball Center for the Performing Arts and at Hunter College's Danny Kaye Playhouse in April.

Other cities are Las Vegas, San Diego, Toronto, Houston, San Francisco, Dallas, Salt Lake City, Indianapolis, Denver, Boston and Philadelphia.

Throughout the weekend in Chicago, the students attend workshops, competitions, and dance classes. The organization awards more than \$250,000 a year in scholarships to send young dancers to leading schools and dance companies to continue their training.

The Grand Prix also conducts auditions in several other countries including Belgium, France, Italy, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Japan.