

SA ballet dancer wins gold

2015-09-21 16:56

Johannesburg - Messages of support are flowing in for 15-year-old Leroy Mokgatle who did South Africa proud by winning a gold medal at the prestigious Genee international Ballet Competition. "It's a very... big honour for me to get a gold medal," he told eNCA, adding that his goal had been to just get to the finals.

"And I did get that, and I got more," he said modestly after ending on top out of 76 contestants from around the world at the finals hosted by the Royal Academy of Dance in London on Saturday. In addition to winning gold, he was presented with the Margot Fonteyn Audience Choice Award.

The dancers rehearse about 12 hours a day, doing ballet and contemporary dance, as well as normal school work. Before the competition they had four days of intense training but he said he learnt so much even during the preparation period. They were trained by Christopher Montague, Sayward Harris, Angelique Harris, Heidi Wright and Angela Malan.



Mokgatle said he had been offered so many scholarships to dance with companies around the world that he decided to just "take it step by step" and pace himself. When he gets frustrated with himself and can't perfect a

move he has learned to be patient with himself, or speak to his coaches and friends. His dancing school Art of Motion was bursting with pride, with director Emma Harris saying on Facebook: "It is with great humility that I return to SA this morning with young Leroy Mokgatle bringing home the first ever Genee international Ballet Competition Gold medal for his country."

"Leroy with his engaging smile and sensitive controlled performance was most deserving of his accolade as Genee Gold medalist [seldom awarded] and the Audience Choice award," the director said, adding that he had delivered "at the highest international standards". According to a biography, he relocated to Pretoria to start training with Art of Motion in January 2013. Besides participating in many shows, he is currently studying Cecchetti Advanced 2, Royal Academy of Dance Advanced 2, Association of International Dance Teachers Advanced and Cambridge IGCSE/AS levels.

