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Teen dancer to spread her wings after leading local Swan Lake production

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As the prestigious Long Beach Ballet prepares for this weekend's production of Swan Lake, its star student, after performing in the lead role, is planning to take flight as she moves toward a promising future in her professional career.



Courtesy LB Ballet

Jordan De Pina, a 17-year-old Los Alamitos High School student, performed solo in April at Lincoln Center in New York City.

Jordan De Pina, a 17-year-old Los Alamitos High School student, was selected as one of 30 dancers from a worldwide group of 7,000 to perform solo at Lincoln Center in New York City. That performance was in April.

“[Jordan] started here when she was 9...where it’s pretty concentrated on ballet,” said David Wilcox, Long Beach Ballet’s founder and artistic director. “She did everything we told her to. She was always in class. She never missed class. She took every correction we gave her and fixed it. She’s very smart, and very humble, and very trusting and very respectful...and with her having this beautiful body that she was gifted with and doing everything we told her, she has become an exceptional ballerina.”

The high school senior will dance the leading part of Odette, the White Swan, as her last performance with the Long Beach Ballet before leaving to join Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet as a member of the Aspirant program later this summer.

"I'm hoping that one day I can become a principal dancer in a company, which is the dancer who gets all the solos and lead roles in ballets," De Pina said.



De Pina's main challenges were her hyper-extended legs that some teachers at some schools would not even deal with.

She said she first began dancing when she was 3, learning tap and jazz, as well as taking gymnastics lessons. When she "was 9, De Pina, at the suggestion of her dance instructors, began taking ballet classes at the Long Beach Ballet to help improve her jazz technique, and she said she "ended up falling in love with it."

Wilcox recalled her natural talent and "perfect body" for ballet even at a young age.

"She's got long limbs and hyper-extended legs, which make a beautiful, slightly curved line, a long neck, a beautiful face, wide shoulders, and she's the perfect weight, perfect shape and she has a very lyrical quality in her movements," he said.

De Pina's main challenges were her hyper-extended legs that some teachers at some schools would not even deal with. "It takes a lot of very special training, and very special care to learn how to use a hyper-extended leg for ballet...so we trained her very, very carefully and it paid off," Wilcox said.

After eight years of dedication and practice, De Pina competed at the Youth America Grand Prix, the world's largest international student dance competition, in front of a panel of esteemed judges from around the world.

Around 7,000 ballet students from across the globe competed in regional competitions to win a coveted position at the finals in New York. Of those 7,000, 300 of them, including De Pina and fellow Long Beach Ballet students Savannah Louis, Emma Sherman, Liberty Casper Downs and Anaissa Chirica, were chosen to head to New York City on April 10 for a grueling week of ballet classes and competition performances. After four days the competitors were narrowed to 30, and De Pina was among them.



Although she did not win the final round, De Pina was offered several scholarships by many directors to join their companies after her performance at Lincoln Center. Among them were Ballet West in Utah, The Joffrey Ballet in Chicago and Dresden Ballet in Germany. She chose to join Canada's Royal Ballet's Aspirant program, which is just a step away from full company membership.

"I'm really excited about my future," De Pina said. "I've been so lucky this year with everything that's happened, and I feel like I've actually reached my goal finally after so much hard work. I'm just very excited." ♦

Photos courtesy LB Ballet

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