

Seneca Valley's Treu makes her mark on American Ballet Theatre's summer program



Veridy Treu was only 3 years old when she started taking ballet classes. Her mother, Kristen Treu, happened to be buying her first ballet slippers at All That Jazz when they ran into Kwang-suk Choi, a well-respected international dancer.

Choi knelt down and started talking to Veridy about her new ballet slippers, then gave them a flier for the Pittsburgh Ballet House, a new school he was starting in Cranberry Township. If Veridy was interested, he said, she should come there.

“He's very kind and has a very kind spirit,” Kristen Treu said. “I could sense that when he was talking to her and then me. I just took her there and registered her that September.” Veridy, 14, has been dancing ever since. She is a freshman and third-year dancer in Seneca Valley's Academy of Choice dance program where Choi is also the director. Last summer, she earned a full scholarship to the American Ballet Theatre Summer Intensive Program, a six-week ballet technique intensive in New

Most recently, Veridy's photo landed on the poster for the ABT's 2016 Summer Intensive Program. The poster is for advertisements and appears in two magazines, her mom said. “That was really an honor and a surprise. We had no idea,” Kristen Treu said. “I'm very grateful for the opportunity to be on it,” Veridy added.

Her main dance focus is ballet. In addition to Seneca Valley's dance academy curriculum, she dances six days a week at the Pittsburgh Ballet House — twice a day Monday through Friday and six hours on Saturday. “It's a unique way to raise a child,” Kristen Treu said, “but she's passionate about it so we're here to support her and lift her up in this world as best as we can.”

Veridy auditioned for the American Ballet Theatre each of the last three winters. When she was 12 and 13, she got accepted into ABT New York, but dancers are required to live there and there is no supervised housing. The family would have had to move there for the summer and pay for the tuition, which wasn't feasible for them.

This past year, circumstances changed when Veridy was awarded a full scholarship. Kristen and Steve Treu felt their daughter did her part, so they would do theirs. Her parents took turns every week staying in New York City and driving back home. Veridy's grandmother also took a week. Veridy also earned a full scholarship for a two-week summer intensive in classical ballet variations at Ellison Ballet in New York City. Because she was already in the city, her parents allowed her to do the additional two weeks, which offered supervised housing.

Veridy is currently a national merit scholar through the American Ballet Theatre and that pays for a portion of her training locally. She has to meet certain monthly requirements, which includes sending essays, her grades and performance pictures. Her training will be assessed next summer, when she returns to ABT again on a full scholarship to the summer intensive. Choi said they are very proud of Veridy's accomplishments. "She's a good girl and beautiful dancer," Choi said. "Everybody likes her very much."

Veridy won first place in March for classical variation and contemporary variation at the Pittsburgh Youth America Grand Prix. At the American Dance Competition in Daytona Beach last year, she also won gold for the classical variation and silver for her contemporary variation. Afterwards, she was also invited to compete in the international YAGP competition for a week in New York City, where she received two scholarship offers for summer intensives. Next year she plans to spend a few weeks at Ellison Ballet in New York City and at Houston Ballet.

"I really enjoy dance," Veridy Treu said. "Mostly because of how it feels whenever you can express yourself through emotions and through proper technique at the same time." Kristen Treu said the dance realm is a different type of lifestyle she didn't know existed. Her daughter has met friends from all over the world and because of social media, they can stay in touch so the friendships last. "My husband and I are pretty amazed. When we signed her up for dance, we didn't know about this world at all."

Veridy's dream is to become a principle dancer at a company. The hardest part is trying to stay balanced as a kid while dancing six hours a day, but her mom said she is a determined and focused child. Veridy said dance can be challenging at times, but spirituality helps her out. "I have been able to think of Bible verses, like 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me' in order to keep pushing myself through things that are very difficult."

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