

Article on former Ballet Society student and Colorado's Classical Youth Ballet member, Angela Wood.

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Ballerina Learns to Stretch

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It's boot camp for ballerinas.

It's better known as The Royal Ballet School.

Springs dancer Angela Wood, 17, went on a quick audition trip to the London school in January. She was accepted, effective immediately. Good thing she packed enough dancing shoes.

"It was rough at first," she said on a recent visit home. "The teachers are very strict, they need to be strict. It takes students where they are and pushes them to where they can be."

Where Angela wants to be next is the big Royal Opera House stage. "Ever since I started ballet, that was in my 'Dreams of Things I Want to Do' book. It's the epiphany of classical ballet."

Angela was into soccer with her twin brother, Alex, when she started ballet at age 10 to get skills for worship dance with the church.

Tricia Wood says the ballet teacher took her aside after the first lesson and said her daughter was special. She figured all the moms of new dancers were told that.

But that was the end of soccer for Angela. The 5-foot-6, 114-pound teen with brown flowing hair and floating walk lives and breathes ballet.

"It's exhilarating," she says. "You bring it all together by how you're breathing. It is magical to be on stage with the lights and to really give yourself to the audience."

A tutu is a beautiful thing. In the right hands, it can also be a dangerous thing.

"The boys carry the girls on their shoulder. It can be a little bit bloody because you can accidentally scratch them because you are moving so fast," Angela says. "My tutu rubbed up against a guy and it kind of left little beads of blood. There's been a few nosebleeds, too, because the girl is spinning and accidentally hits the guy's nose really hard."

She's had a rib pop out and a few close calls falling.

It doesn't interfere with her focus. "I've always been a perfectionist. That helps. Mom would always tell me to not push it too hard."

She attended The Classical Academy until last year, when ballet took her on the road. She was homeschooled and earned a GED.

She's the only American in her class of 15 girls and 15 boys at the London school.

"The boys are very good. There's one from Scotland who has the most amazing wit and charm. They are easy to get along with. They understand that it's hard."

With hair in bun and leotards, she takes "the Tube" from dorm to school. It's quite the stoic subway.

"No one really talks; that's the etiquette, I learned. They're so serious. I wasn't used to people not being happy. It's sad weather, it's foggy. After a while, it's like, 'Oh, I want sunshine.'"

Ballet is her worship dance.

"Working hard and pushing yourself as hard as you can go until you're exhausted, that's how I worship."



Photo by: Dave Black