

Graceful Teens Sweep Local Competitions

Ballet Society Students Placed Well In Both City And Statewide Competitions



L to R: Hillary MacPhee, Mariah Plutt, Paige Hupy, Joshua Allenback, Amanda Townley, Juliana Bicki, Charlotte Coltrin

By Kate Jonuska

While most people look back on their teenage years as the awkward and clumsy interval between childhood and adulthood, local teens at The Ballet Society of Colorado Springs can instead be proud of the elegance of their teen years. The school swept three of five available awards at the recent Colorado Springs Dance Theatre's Esther Geoffrey Dance Scholarship Competition and eight of 37 awards at the Denver Ballet Guild's Young Dancer's Competition.

"It was amazing that so many people won or placed in competitions," says Charlotte Coltrin, who placed in the Top 10 in Denver and said, "I'm not exactly sure why I placed. I think it's just all the great training that I've had. I was actually really shocked, but really happy."

Joshua Allenback credits "practice, really good motivators" pointing to his friends and fellow dancers "pushing me, and really good teachers showing me how to express ballet and how to present yourself on stage" he said. Rather than learning ballet only through class work, these dancers regularly brave competitions of this nature, which challenge their skills and reveal the world of ballet past their studio's walls.

“I always come back from competitions motivated,” says Hillary MacPhee, who among other dancers, fought injuries to compete. “We put in so many hours a week and when you place in competitions, it’s really gratifying.”

“When you’re competing, you learn more about judges and their ballets,” Allenback continues. “They also bring in master teachers and you take really fun classes from them. You learn about what an actual ballet company is like.”

That’s helpful knowledge among a group where all are striving toward a career in dance or dance instruction. In addition to their professional aspirations, these graceful and dedicated teens are treasuring their dance experience while it’s unfolding, knowing they’re experiencing something unique.

“When I look back, I think it will show that I’ve grown as a person and matured,” Julianna Bicki. “I think once you get into dance, you learn how to schedule your time better. You have more discipline. That matures you as a person.” Sure, most teens might not gravitate toward dancing, let alone ballet, as a hobby or a career path, but these dancers whole-heartedly endorse it.

“It’s a fun way to exercise,” MacPhee assures, and Allenback agrees, saying, “It helps with sports because it gets you more fit. It also gives you advantages in football and basketball.” But again, the rewards are also emotional. “You gain confidence in yourself,” says Bicki. “You start dancing everywhere.”

Therefore next time you see a teenager dancing down the aisle in a grocery store, the kids joke, you’ll know that it’s competition season yet again.

The Ballet Society of Colorado Springs, founded in 1997, trains young dancers and often performs with the Colorado Springs Philharmonic. For more information, call 272-7078 or visit www.danceinthesprings.com.

Ballet Society award winners Joshua Allenback, 16, of Pueblo: \$1,500 scholarship from Denver Ballet Guild, second place, Senior Men’s Division; \$250 scholarship from the Esther Geoffrey Competition. Julianna Bicki, 17, of Monument/ Palmer Lake: \$500 scholarship from the Denver Ballet Guild, fifth place, Senior Women’s Division; \$500 scholarship from the Esther Geoffrey Competition. Charlotte Coltrin, 13, a homeschool student from Wolf Ranch: \$200 scholarship from the Denver Ballet Guild, Top 10, Junior Girls’ Division. Tyler Gum, 18, of Falcon: \$2,000 scholarship from Denver Ballet Guild, first place, Senior Men’s Division. Paige Hupy, 17, a student at Air Force Academy High School: \$250 scholarship from the Denver Ballet Guild, Top 10, Senior Women’s Division; \$100 scholarship from the Esther Geoffrey Competition. Hillary MacPhee, 17, a homeschool student from Stetson Hills: \$250 scholarship from the Denver Ballet Guild, Top 10, Senior Women’s Division. Mariah Plutt, 15, a student at Timberview Middle School: \$200 scholarship from the Denver Ballet Guild, Top 10, Junior Girls’ Division. Amanda Townley, 13, from Woodland Park: \$200 scholarship from the Denver Ballet Guild, Top 10, Junior Girls’ Division.