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LATE CITY FINAL

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Competitive spirit

By LEIGH WITCHEL

GLITZ, meet glitches. Wednesday night's gala for the Youth America Grand Prix — a major ballet competition now celebrating its 10th anniversary — had its share of both. There were stars galore, although not always the ones in the program.

There were also musical mishaps and house lights that went out abruptly, trapping the audience in the aisles — all to shrieks from teenyboppers packing the gallery.

The gala was in three parts. First, the young contestants did their brief competition tidbits in rapid-fire succession, executing multiple pirouettes and air turns with the eerie precocity of a kiddie beauty pageant.

The pros, many of them Youth America alumni, took over the next two sections. There were plenty of Choreo

DANCE REVIEW

STARS OF TODAY MEET THE STARS OF TOMORROW

Youth America Grand Prix at City Center.

McNuggets, but Christopher Wheeldon contributed "The Prokofiev Pas de Deux," a substantial duet with the fluttering excitement of Macmillan's "Romeo and Juliet," which made its own appearance after the intermission.

The last section started with that Romantic paean to competition, "Le Grand Pas de Quatre." They knew how to compete back then. The four rival ballerinas are all smiles onstage and ground glass in the pointe shoes behind the scenes.

Copper-haired Yekaterina Kondourova from Russia's Mariinsky Ballet was senior ballerina and

showed them all what authority is. The American Ballet Theatre's sexy Marcelo Gomes danced a Bob Fosse number, and then the evening closed with a suite of dances from "Le Corsaire," in which ABT's Joseph Phillips and the Mariinsky's Vladimir Shklyarov went leap for leap.

Watching tidbit after tidbit has the frustration of a tasting menu: Nothing has a chance to develop, just dazzle. Even if you like something, it's gone after two bites. And so it was a relief to see choreography about dance rather than stunts as New York City Ballet's Jenifer Ringer glided onstage in Balanchine's "Who Cares."

Ringer, who wasn't even in the program, has 20 years on these students, and was a knockout. She didn't do any tricks but knows this beautiful dance inside out.

Watch her, kids — this is what artistry looks like.