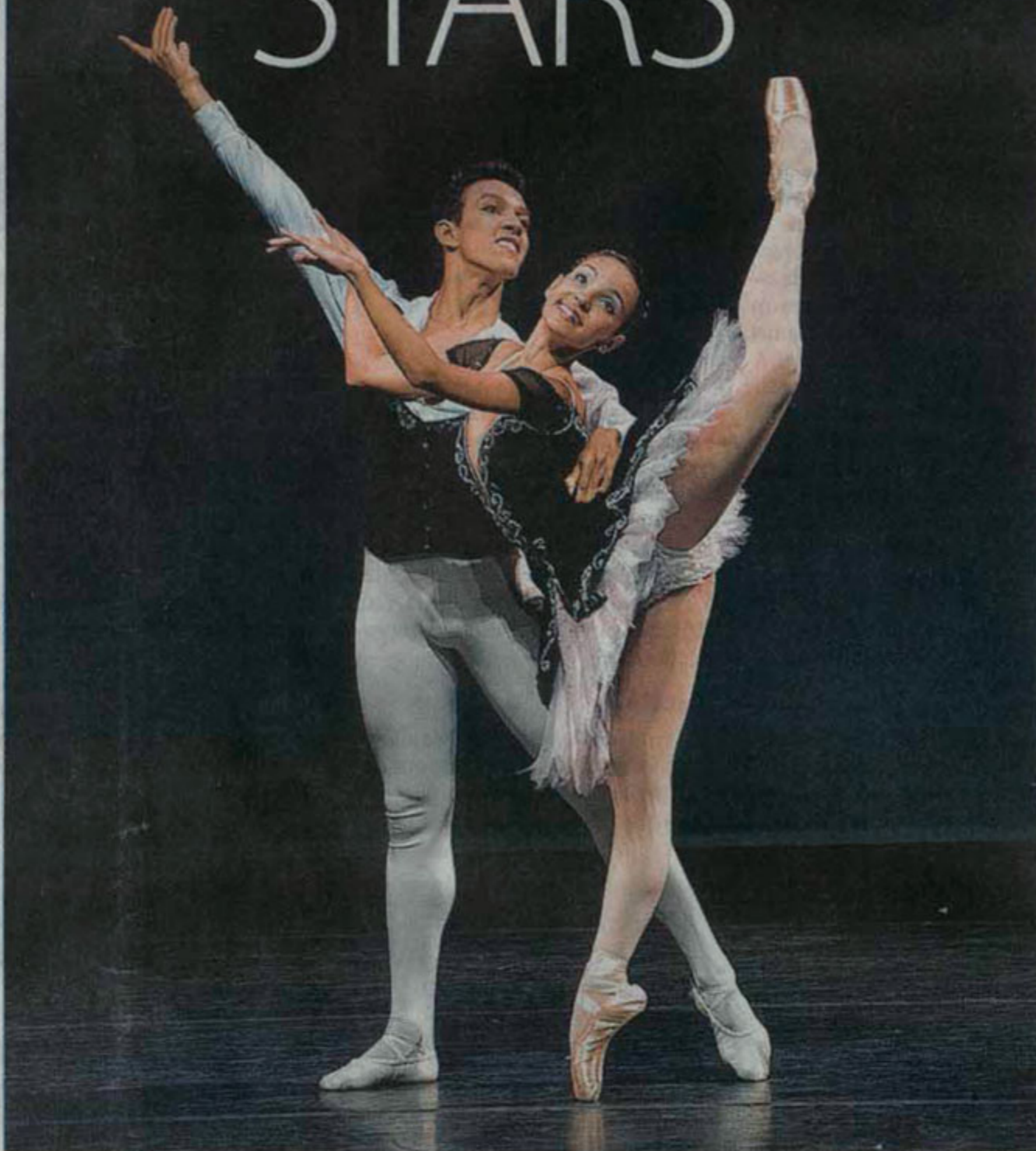


# Rising STARS



GENE SCHIAVONE

Irlan Dos Santos Silva (left), 17, and Carolina Neves Ribeiro, 16, perform at the Youth America Grand Prix competition finals in New York.

## Professional, next generation of ballet dancers to perform

BY BILL THOMPSON  
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Some established dancers might resist sharing the stage with a group of gifted but formative young talents. Michele Wiles, by contrast, considers it a noteworthy opportunity.

Principal dancer with the American Ballet Theatre in New York, Wiles will be among 11 professional ballet artists who will be joined by winners of the Youth America Grand Prix competition on Tuesday. This, for the Ballet Grand Prix at Gaillard Municipal Auditorium.

Billed as "The Stars of Today Meet the Stars of Tomorrow," and presented by the Charles-

### If you go

**WHAT:** Ballet Grand Prix.  
**WHERE:** Gaillard Municipal Auditorium (77 Calhoun St.).  
**WHEN:** Tuesday at 7 p.m.  
**TICKETS:** \$16-\$68. Call 800-745-3000, visit [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com) or go to the Gaillard box office.

ton Concert Association, Ballet Grand Prix is an inaugural national tour showcasing an evening of excerpts from ballets both renowned and new.

"I think it's wonderful," says Wiles, who spoke to The Post and Courier from her home in New York. "It is really inspiring to see the next generation of dancers coming up and discover

how talented they are. It's also a wonderful opportunity for me and my partner (Charles Askegard of the New York City Ballet) to perform in the Ballet Grand Prix."

Eleven guest artists will be joined by 17 Youth America participants at the Gaillard, with performances ranging widely across the ballet repertoire.

Founded in 1999 by two former dancers of the Bolshoi Ballet, Larissa and Gennadi Savelliev, Youth America Grand Prix has grown rapidly to become the world's largest student ballet scholarship competition, conducting annual competitions and galas in the United

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# Next generation of ballet dancers to perform

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States, Europe, Asia and South America.

"YAGP is the 'Internet of the dance world,'" says spokesman Sergey Gordeev, who has been with the program from the beginning. "It's a global network of opportunity for young dancers ages 9 to 19. As someone who has observed it from the first day, what is most amazing to me is how quickly all this has caught on, like a wild-fire. Initially, it started as a small ballet competition with eight students. Now it is a very prestigious thing to be selected."

Wiles, who performed at a previous YAGP Gala as a guest artist, has experienced her share of other dance competitions, and knows what they embody for a young hopeful.

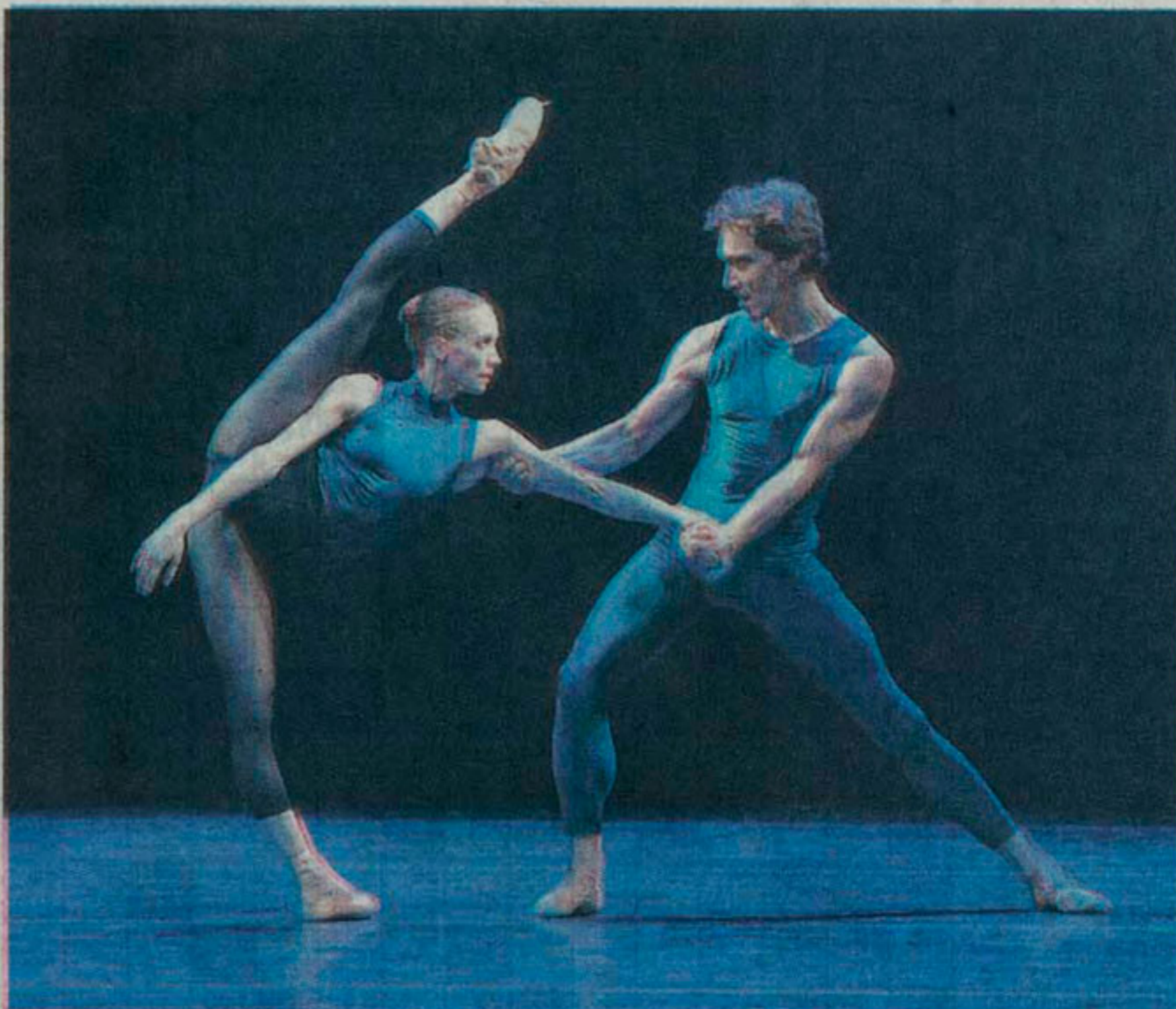
"I think this particular dance competition, YAGP, does help young performers because it enables students to get in there and perform under pressure," says Wiles, who will perform pieces by George Balanchine and Susan Jaffey on Tuesday. "And that really helps you learn how to deal with it later on."

Gordeev says this week's Ballet Grand Prix performance also reflects YAGP's mission: a mixture of contemporary and classical choreography that's not often offered, with several pieces being seen for the first time.

"We're always trying to present something new: new artists, new choreography, new combinations, never-before-seen pairings of artists and exciting new talents on the verge."

Most of the 11 professional dancers on view were past participants in the program, still guided by artistic director Larissa Saveliev.

The factor that sets YAGP apart from its predecessors, in Gordeev's estimation, is that the competition is not about evaluation of performance but about identifying potential and providing scholarships to



PHOTOGRAPHS BY HIDEAKI TANIOKA

Alicia Amatriain (left) and Mikhail Kaniskin impress at the Youth America Grand Prix competition gala in New York.



Miko Fogarty, 13, of California executes a dazzling maneuver.

the leading dance academies of the world, where this potential can be developed.

"These young dancers possess great physical talent and artistry, and an ability to dance that is viable," he

says. "The program runs year-round. In the fall of each year, we conduct international semifinals in Japan, Mexico, Italy, France, Brazil and Paraguay and some in the U.S. In spring, we hold 10

major semifinals in the U.S. All these competitions serve the purpose of giving people in local areas a chance to perform.

"The second purpose of the semifinals is to select some of the most promising young dancers to attend the finals in New York, held each March and attended by many of the directors of leading dance schools from all over the globe."

Usually, there are 5,000 student artists in the semis internationally, with 300 soloists (from which scholarship winners are drawn) making it to the finals in New York, says Gordeev.

"Besides just identifying the most promising dancers and giving scholarships, it's also about providing dancers at all levels an opportunity to experience their peers and take classes."

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