

**Dance Europe**

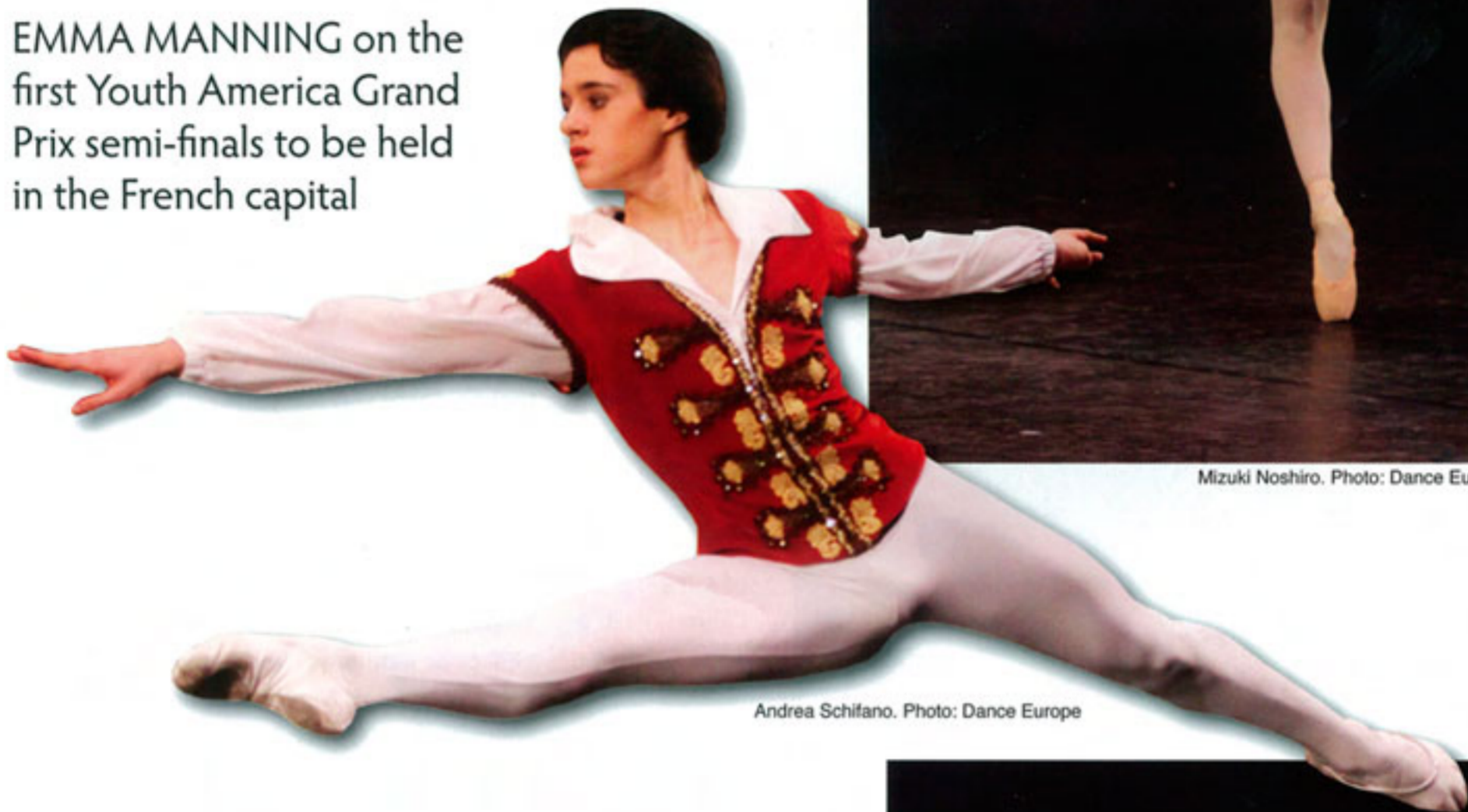
"YAGP in Paris"

January 2011 ■ Page 1 of 4



# YAGP in Paris

EMMA MANNING on the first Youth America Grand Prix semi-finals to be held in the French capital



Andrea Schifano. Photo: Dance Europe



Mizuki Noshiro. Photo: Dance Europe

Katrin Schrader. Photo: Dance Europe

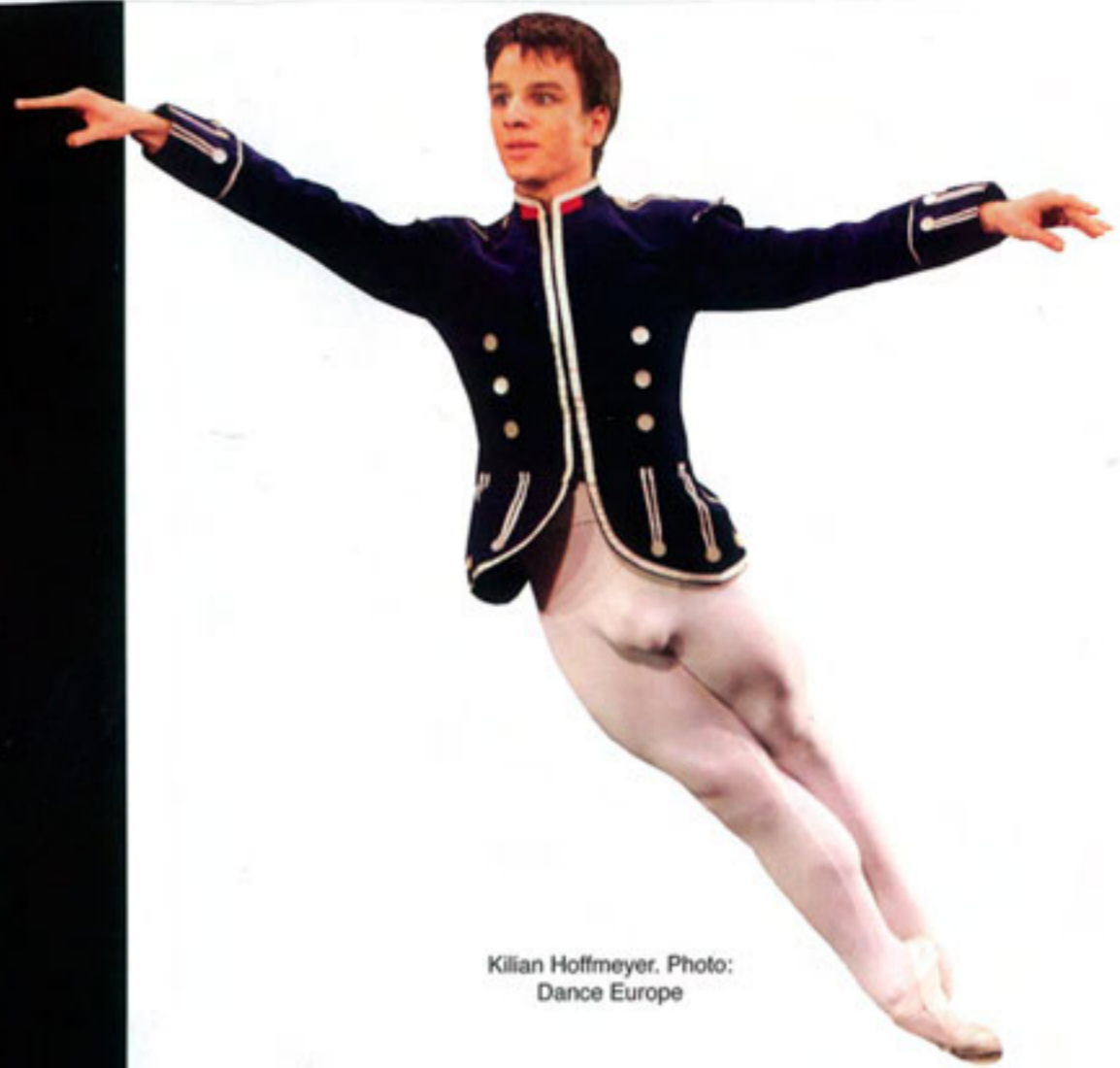
**A**fter three years in Italy, the Youth America Grand Prix moved its European semi-finals to Paris this year. The venue was the Théâtre du Vésinet on the outskirts of the city and not far from the Paris Opéra School in Nanterre, where some workshops for competitors were also held. Of the 500 or so entrants, the majority came from France, Italy and Spain, with lesser contingents from Belgium, Portugal, Romania and Switzerland. Whittled down to 29 juniors and 27 seniors, the finalists took the stage on 14 November in front of a jury comprising Raymond Lukens, Marianne Kruise, Tadeusz Matacz, Pedro Caneiro, Luca Masala and Gailene Stock, presided over by Elisabeth Platel, director of the Paris Opera Ballet School.

This being a preliminary round, the overall standard was predictably lower than that we have come to expect at the annual YAGP finals in New York. The weakest area, for a number of the young dancers, was the port de bras. In their effort to master technical feats, often well beyond their capabilities, arms were frequently stiff and tense, like implements engaged to force the body around, upwards or along, rather than used with feeling and aesthetic awareness. Classical ballet variations are an art, not an assault course, and arms and hands should not reveal any physical struggle the dancer is experiencing - otherwise the effect is far less watchable, if not painful. Another small gripe is that many of the dancers were, even at this young age, carrying too much weight to be serious contenders for a professional ballet career. Perhaps it was these factors, and maybe others, that led the jury to withhold





Noellie Coutisson. Photo: Dance Europe



Kilian Hoffmeyer. Photo: Dance Europe

the Grand Prix in both the junior and senior categories. Despite the shortcomings, though, there was still plenty of talent to be nurtured.

In the senior group, Sara Mambelli (Ateneo Danza, Italy), who came third in the classical category, gave a neat, precise *Flames of Paris*, and Mutsumi Matsuhisa (Royal Ballet School of Antwerp) and Ami Fukui (Ecole Supérieure de Danse de Cannes) each gave reasonably honed *Raymonda* variations. Anna Navarro (Jove Ballet de Catalunya) impressed with a technically accomplished *Walpurgis Night* that culminated in rock solid fouettés changing fronts; Alice Minoiu (Floria Capsali, Choreography High School, Romania) offered a secure *Paquita*;

Mizuki Noshiro (Royal Ballet School of Antwerp) etched a delicate Lilac Fairy; and the slender Louiza Avraam (Nadina Loizidou School, Cyprus) danced an able classical variation but excelled in the contemporary category that she won. Noellie Coutisson (coached by Céline Talon at the Conservatoire national supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris) won 2nd place in the classical group with her carefully measured *Grand Pas Classique*, while the 1st prize went to the very gifted Patricia Zhou (Kirov Academy of Ballet, Washington D.C.), whose *Grand Pas Classique* afforded a porcelain quality.

Of the senior men, Angelo Greco (Il Balletto, Castelfranco Veneto) scooped the first place with the Drummer Boy variation from *Graduation Ball*; Daniele Silingardi (Il Balletto) came second with a technically able if rather remote Siegfried; and Andrea Schifano (Il Balletto) and Razvan Florin Cacoveanu (Floria Capsali, Choreography High School, Romania) shared the third prize. In truth, though, there was not so much to distinguish the male winners from the other two senior men, Ryo Kato (Escola de Dança do Conservatório Nacional, Portugal) and Kilian Hoffmeyer (Basel Dance Academy, Switzerland); they all had their good and weak points.

Only two of the junior men were placed in the classical section: Aran Bell, a finely chiselled 12 year-old caught the eye with his quiet charm in a *Don Q* variation to win the group; and Giacomo Rovero (Accademia Domenichino de Piacenza) was placed second for his cleanly danced, and beautifully finished, Albrecht. The standard among the young women was very uneven, and a few looked so out of their depth that one felt for them. There were, however, some very promising candidates, including Katrin Schrader (Brussels International Ballet School), who won the section with her nimble *Dulcinea* variation, and Ana Maria Gergely (Floria Capsali, Choreography High School, Romania), whose carefully placed yet still joyously danced *Shade* variation - showing a lovely sense of épaulement - made her the obvious choice for *Dance Europe's* Outstanding Artistry Award. The Romanian dancer has also been selected to appear in the finals in New York in April 2011.



Anna Navarro. Photo: Dance Europe

SENIOR CLASSICAL

WOMEN

- 1st - Patricia Zhou
- 2nd - Noellie Coutisson
- 3rd - Sara Mambelli

MEN

- 1st - Angelo Greco
- 2nd - Daniele Silingardi
- 3rd - Andrea Schifano and Razvan Florin Cacoveanu

SENIOR CONTEMPORARY

COMBINED

- 1st - Louiza Avraam
- 2nd - Patricia Zhou,
- 3rd - Giulia Bresciani

JUNIOR CLASSICAL

WOMEN

- 1st - Katrin Schrader
- 2nd - Gaya Bommer
- 3rd - Arianna Marchior

MEN

- 1st - Aran Bell
- 2nd - Giacomo Rovero

JUNIOR CONTEMPORARY

COMBINED

- 1st - Gaya Bommer
- 2nd - Aran Bell
- 3rd - Clara Royer

ENSEMBLES

- 1st - Il Balletto Castelfranco Veneto
- 2nd - Ballet Studio Bergamo
- 3rd - Academie Americaine de Danse de Paris

# winners



Ana Maria Gergely. Photo: Dance Europe

## Ana Maria Gergely

Born in Romania on 17 May 1996, Ana Maria Gergely won Dance Europe's Award for Outstanding Artistry at the YAGP semi-finals in Paris

**At what age did you begin dance classes, and what was your inspiration to do so?**

I started to take ballet classes when I was five. I was inspired by a video, *Barbie and the Nutcracker*. I liked very much how the characters were dancing and I was trying to do the same thing. Then, one day, I told my mother that I wanted to do ballet, to be a ballerina.

**Do any other members of your family dance?**

Yes. My mother was a dancer, but more modern dance than ballet.

**At which school are you currently studying ballet?**

At the moment, I'm a pupil at the Choreography High School Floria Capsali in Bucharest.

**Who are your main teachers?**

My ballet teacher is Anca Mandrescu, but for this competition I was coached by Corina Dumitrescu, the principal ballerina of the National Opera in Bucharest.

**What is the most valuable advice that a ballet teacher has offered?**

To be myself on stage, to feel free on stage, and to never give up, and to follow my dream to be a ballerina.

**What made you decide to enter the YAGP in Paris?**

I was keen to know at what level I am, and to meet others from the world of ballet.

**What did you learn from the experience?**

This experience gave me faith in myself - that I'm capable of doing this and that I should never give up.

**Why did you choose the shade variation from *La Bayadère*?**

First of all, because I like it, and second because I considered that this variation would show off some of my skills.

**What is your favourite ballet?**

One of my favourites is *The Sleeping Beauty*.

**Who is your idol - perhaps a ballerina you admire?**

I don't have any one favourite ballerina, but I admire ballerinas from the older generation, because they took more care of the artistic side and did not just focus on the technical side.

**Would you like to further your ballet studies outside of Romania?**

Yes.

**Which ballet company in the world would you most like to dance with?**

I would love to dance with the Bolshoi Ballet and the Royal Ballet.



Angelo Greco. Photo: Dance Europe