

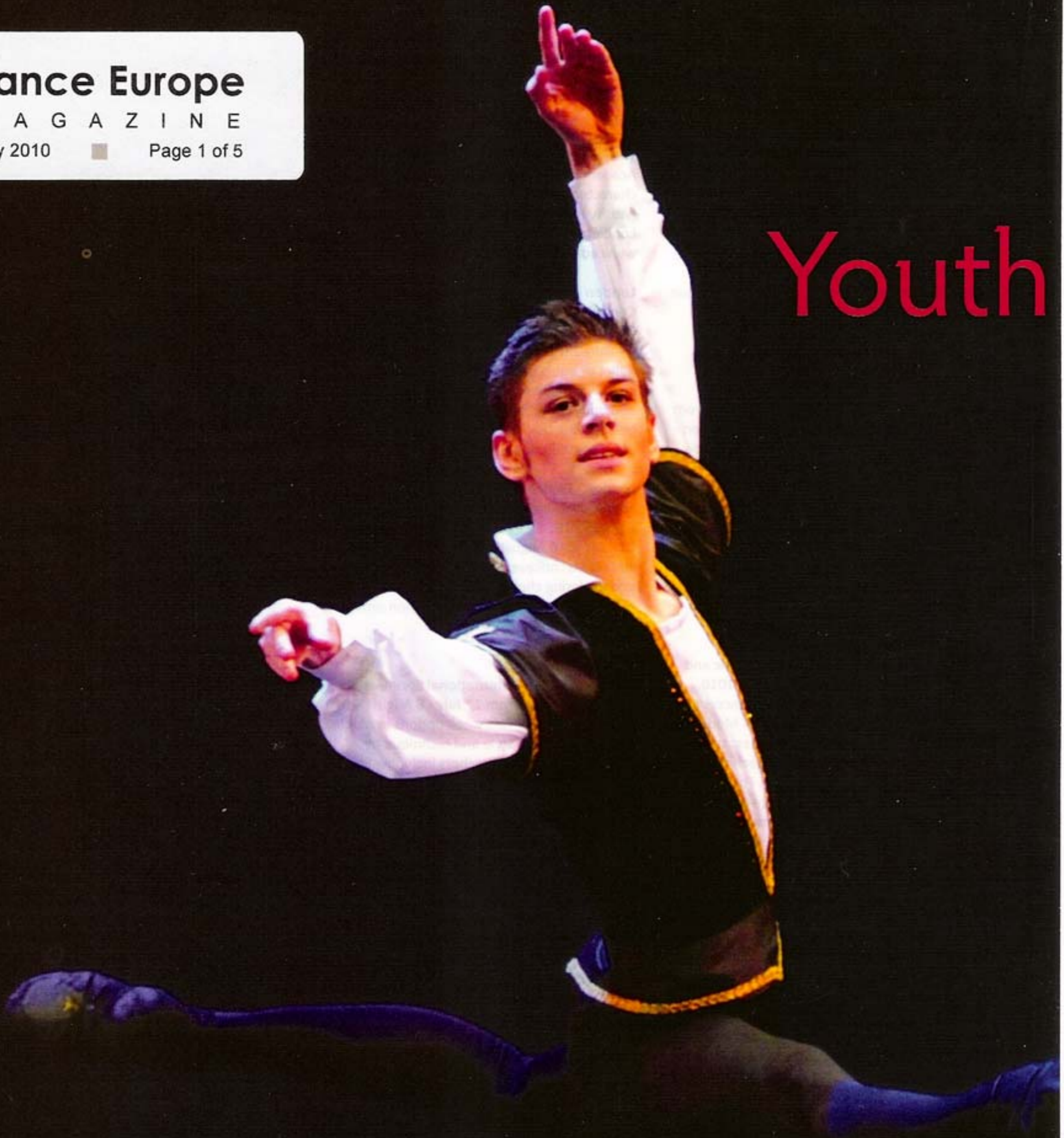
Dance Europe

M A G A Z I N E

May 2010

Page 1 of 5

Youth



America Grand Prix 2010

EMMA MANNING assesses this year's outstanding young dancers at the New York finals of the YAGP

There's nothing more disarming than watching a dancer execute multiple fouettés and other technical wonders that, in the whole of your own dancing career, you never got anyway near nailing. And then to discover that she's only 12 years old! But frequent any of today's global ballet competitions, and this is going to be the case. Held in New York City Center, the final round of this year's Youth America Grand Prix was no exception. The evening started off with 20 junior women (aged 12 - 14), some demonstrating quite awesome technical strengths, and it was impossible not to applaud them for their courage and commitment. Unfortunately, though, as ever there were a few competitors who had clearly been pushed beyond their physical capabilities.

It is always fascinating to see which variations are in fashion and which have been abandoned. Sugar Plum appeared to have been given her marching orders, and the lone Esmeralda in this group strove so hard to achieve impossible extensions that artistry had no chance whatsoever. This year's more popular variations included those from *Harlequinade*, *Satanella*, and *Grand Pas Classique*, along with evergreens like *Don Q*, *Black Swan* and *Diana and Acteon*. Dancing the challenging female variation from the latter, both Kennedy Kawai Liggett and Miki Akuta hit the split penchée at the start of the variation with striking ease, and were placed in the top twelve dancers in their group. The youngest competitor, Natsuka Abe, gave a very neat rendition of her *Harlequinade* solo, Alexandra Parsons and Isabella La Freniere both acquitted themselves well in their respective *Bayadères*, while two Koreans, Han-deul Oh and Sewon Ahn, gave fluid accounts of *Black Swan* and *Satanella*, the latter showing impressive cool after two false starts due to the wrong music. Talia Kester, meanwhile, coped admirably with a terrible tape played much too loudly for her *Paquita*. The section's medallists were Miko Fogarty, whose *Don Q*, impressive for its brilliant diagonal of multiple turns, won her the bronze medal; Kaho Ogawa, memorable for her blistering triples in her *Black Swan*, scooped the silver; and Leah Christianson, a petite soubrette with a big split jeté, won the gold with her unusual variation from *La Fille mal gardée*.

On to the junior men; just ten picked for this final round, which began with total charmer Takafumi Tamagawa - surely the smallest boy on the planet to tackle *Grand Pas Classique* with such brio. However the bronze medal went to David Navarro Yudes (one of just two competitors from Spain in the entire competition), who gave a razor-edged *Don Q* but tended to over-egg the drama. In turn, silver medalist Yuto Ideno was stylish without going overboard. The gold medal went to Derek Dunn for his commendable *Harlequinade* variation, and the Junior Grand Prix was awarded to Sam Zaldivar, who showed off his brilliant turns in a variation from *Coppélia*.

The female and male senior categories (ages 15 - 19) both fielded 20 finalists,

Dance Europe

M A G A Z I N E

May 2010

Page 3 of 5



Natalie Krakirian, 16 (Burbank School of the Ballet, USA) – The Sarah Chapin Langham Outstanding Contemporary Dancer Award recipient. Photo: Siggul/Visual Arts Masters.

and in the former group it was the younger entrants who tended to outshine their older peers. All five of the 15 year-olds were placed in the final 12, with Shang Yao Qian especially outstanding in her *Raymonda* solo, winning the bronze medal. Alys Shee also gave a very technically accomplished *Grand Pas Classique* - even if the choreography was a little different from the standard version. Just one year older, Natalie Krakirian was notably vivacious, and the tiny Sun Yi also impressed, but the gold medal went to Australian dancer Hannah O'Neill for her exemplary rendition of *Grand Pas Classique* – rock-solid grands fouettés, a cracking manège and clued-up enough to know that it is much more effective to start off the formidable relevé sequence with a low leg and build the height as you proceed, rather than bashing your nose with the first kick. From London, Claudia Dean etched a fine *Bayadère*, while Anna Ishii from New Zealand gave a beautifully gauged *Esmeralda*. Silver medallist Zhao Wan Ting also chose *Grand Pas Classique* - one of this year's most popular solos - but was notably less at ease with the technicalities than O'Neill. The section was completed with a fluid *Satanella* variation by Yurika Kitano.

In contrast with the women, none of the six youngest men were placed in the final dozen, although I thought Ka'imi Cambern showed much promise. From Columbia, 16 year-old

Joan Sebastian Zamora (now studying in the US) nailed the end of his *Don Quixote* with exceptional dexterity to win the silver medal. Russian Dmitriy Byakov was less fortunate - all was going swimmingly until he slipped at the end of his *Satanella*, but he was still placed in the final twelve, as were Shu Kinouchi, who demonstrated a lovely balon in his *Napoli*, Aaron Smyth with a spot-on finish to his *Don Quixote* and French Philippe Solano in a keenly danced *Flames of Paris*. Arata Miyagawa, showing off his fabulous batterie as *La Sylphide's* James, and Jong Suk Park, with his cleanly executed solo from *Coppélia*, were both deservedly awarded a bronze, while the Grand Prix went to the elegant William Bracewell for his exemplary Siegfried. For many, though, the most exciting man on the stage was Edo Wijnen, whose personality and exuberant account of the rarely seen male variation from *Esmeralda* won the Belgian both the gold medal and *Dance Europe's* outstanding artistry award.

Following the awards ceremony, the customary *Stars of Today Meet the Stars of Tomorrow* gala brought together some of this year's outstanding competitors with a cast of international guest stars on the New York City Center stage. Of the young dancers, who made up the first half of the evening, both Miguel Fernandez Vera (10) and Takafumi Tamagawa



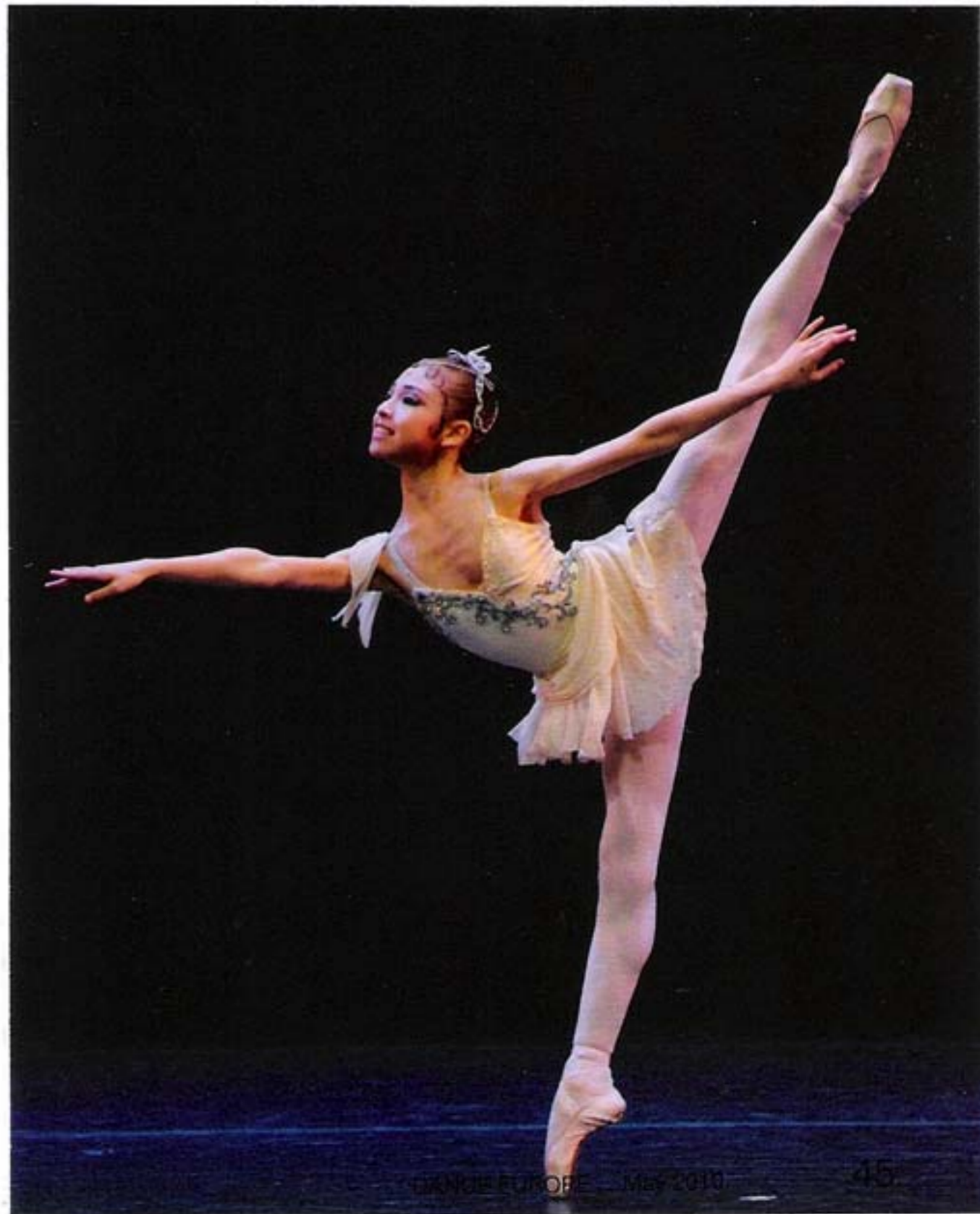
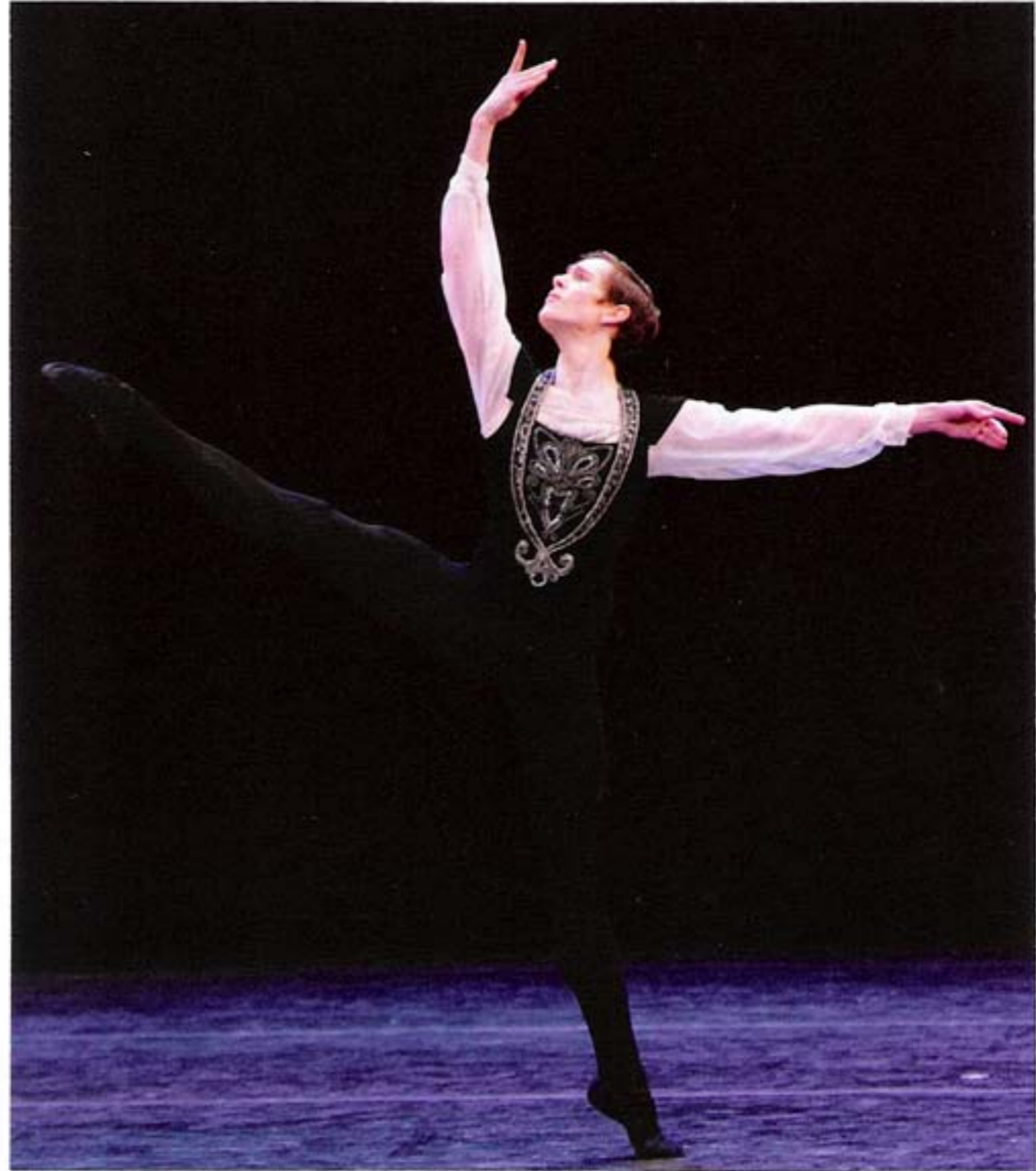
Hannah O'Neill, 16 (The Australian Ballet School, Australia) - Gold medal winner in Women's category of Senior age division. Photo: Siggul/Visual Arts Masters.

(12) made us smile - the first with his nifty double tours and the second, clad in an orange jumpsuit, with his jaunty *Mop 'n' Roll* routine to *Love Me Do*. In contrast, Natalie Krakirian, aged 16 and winner of the Sarah Chapin Langham Outstanding Contemporary Dancer Award, gave an intense rendition of her *Nightmare* solo. For sheer physical brio, four graduates of Orlando Ballet School - Jeffrey Cirio, Skyler Martin, Patrick Palkens and Christopher Revels - were unbeatable in *Unbreak My Heart*, choreographed by Fernando Bujones. The gala also gave us another chance to admire Edo Wijnen - this time in a more contemporary variation, *Right of Spring*, beautifully crafted by John Neumeier - and William Bracewell, now more relaxed with the Grand Prix in his pocket than in the competition itself, in his Siegfried variation.

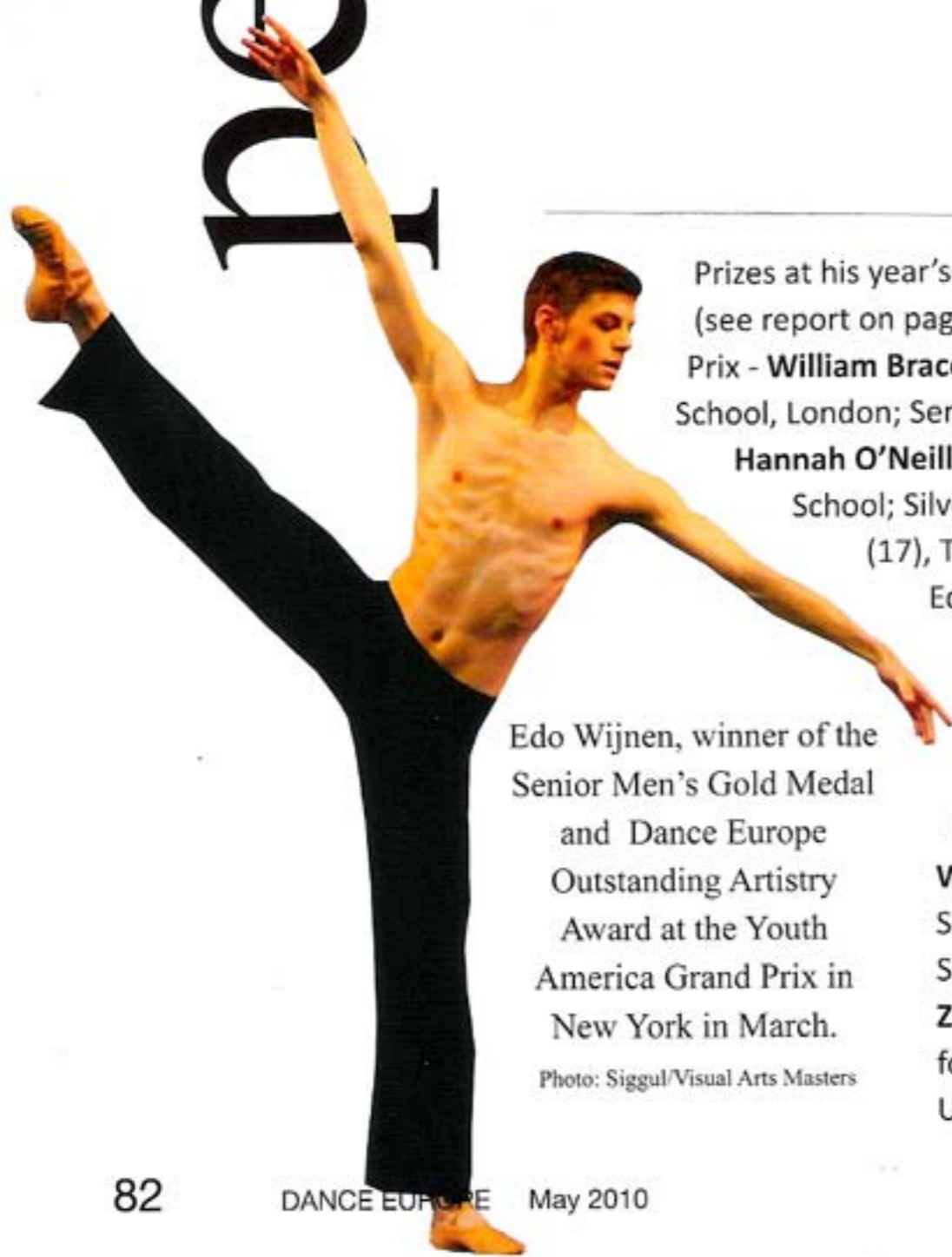
Act II offered three world premieres no less: Ma Cong's *In the Moment*, sensitively danced by ABT's Michele Wiles and Tulsa Ballet's Wang Yi; Susan Jaffe's *Sognato*, performed by ABT dancers Isabella Bolston and Blaine Hoven, and memorable for its bold acrobatic lifts and her spidery clinging to his body; and Anabelle Lopez Ochoa's *L'effleuré* with the extraordinarily bendy, ever charismatic Rubinald Pronk. *Sognato* forms part of YAGP's Emerging Choreographer Series, as does Yuri Smekalov's *Parting*, a domestic drama involving a chair and an apparent parting of ways, slickly presented by the Mariinsky choreographer and Yevgenia Obraztsova. Anna Melnikova and Slavik Kryklyvyy lightened the mood with a wacky, stop-start jive, and New York City's Joaquín De Luz rattled off tricky turns with nonchalant charm in David Fernandez's *Five Variations on a Theme to Bach*. De Luz also partnered Tiler Peck in an excerpt from *Stars and Stripes*, and the couple probably had more fun than anyone else on the programme.

And Peck scored more than a couple of Brownie points for her gargouillades - a step that very few dancers seem to get their legs around these days.

From the Paris Opéra, Mathilde Froustey and Mathias Heymann appeared uneasy away from their home ground, and the *Giselle* pas de deux looked lost without any ensemble. The couple fared rather better with Manuel Legris' *Donizetti*, in which Heymann delivered a spectacular diagonal. Despite a ridiculously small bed, Berlin's Polina Semionova and ABT's Marcelo Gomes went for the jugular in their *Manon* pas de deux. Closing the gala, Royal Ballet guests Sarah Lamb and Sergei Polunin (a former Grand Prix winner) danced the *Diana and Acteon* pas de deux - a divertissement that is not innately in Lamb's domain. American she may be, but she is far more of an English rose than a virtuoso. Nevertheless, she gilded the variation with a lovely quality, while Polunin muscled through the pyrotechnics thrillingly.



People



Edo Wijnen, winner of the Senior Men's Gold Medal and Dance Europe Outstanding Artistry Award at the Youth America Grand Prix in New York in March.

Photo: Siggul/Visual Arts Masters

Prizes at his year's Youth America Grand Prix (see report on page 42) are as follows: Grand Prix - **William Bracewell** (18), Royal Ballet School, London; Senior Women: Gold Medal - **Hannah O'Neill** (16), The Australian Ballet School; Silver Medal - **Zhao Wan Ting** (17), The Rock School for Dance Education, USA/Beijing Dance Academy, China; Bronze Medal - **Shang Yao Qian** (15), Beijing Dance Academy, China; Senior Men: Gold Medal - **Edo Wijnen** (17), Royal Ballet School of Antwerp, Belgium; Silver Medal - **Joan Sebastian Zamora** (16), The Rock School for Dance Education, PA, USA; Bronze Medals - **Arata**

Dance Europe

M A G A Z I N E

May 2010

Page 5 of 5

Miyagawa (17), Tsubota Ballet School, Japan and **Jong Suk Park** (18), The Washington School of Ballet, DC, USA; Youth Grand Prix - **Sam Zaldivar** (14), Dmitri Kulev Classical Ballet Academy, CA, USA; Junior Women: Gold Medal - **Leah Christianson** (13), Joffrey Ballet's Academy of Dance, IL, USA; Silver Medal - **Kaho Ogawa** (14), Ballet Academy Releve, Japan; Bronze Medal - **Miko Fogarty** (12), Diablo Ballet Apprentice Program, CA, USA; Junior Men: Gold Medal - **Derek Dunn** (14), The Rock School for Dance Education, PA, USA; Silver Medal - **Yuto Ideno**, (14), Mie Hatanka Ballet School, Japan; Bronze Medal - **David Navarro Yudes** (13), Escola de Dansa Marisa Yudes, Spain; Ensembles: Gold Medal - Ateneo Danza, Italy Taratata; Silver Medal - Escuela Superior de Musica Y Danza de Monterrey, Mexicoa Doscientos; Bronze Medal - Opera Ballet, Brazil Alvorada (Spring); Special Awards: Grishko Model Search - **Anisa Scott** (16), International Ballet School, CO, USA); Dance Europe Outstanding Artistry Award - **Edo Wijnen** (17), Royal Ballet School of Antwerp, Belgium; The Sarah Chapin Langham Outstanding Contemporary Dance Award - **Natalie Krakirian** (16), Burbank School of the Ballet, CA, USA; Mary Day Artistry Award - **Jack Bertinshaw** (17), Tanz Akademie Zurich, Switzerland; Outstanding School Award - Beijing Dance Academy, China.