

POINTE

ballet at its best

Pointe magazine

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THE
COMPETITION
ISSUE

BEHIND THE
SCENES
At YAGP

ABI STAFFORD
On Feeling
Competitive

BEYOND
THE PRIZES
COMPETITION'S
HIDDEN
REWARDS

MARIA
RICCETTO
SPIRIT
AND
SOUL

June/July 2010



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BEHIND THE SCENES

At Youth America Grand Prix

By Jennifer Stahl • Photography by Rachel Papo



The tension backstage at the final round of Youth America Grand Prix was unmistakable. Frantic relevés alternated with quiet prayers. Each dancer anxiously waited to take her turn alone in front of the judges, knowing that if she did well, it could change her career.

Over 5,000 students from six continents compete in regional YAGP semifinals every year. The 300 finalists invited to the main event in New York City have a chance to make their dreams come true. Even if a dancer doesn't place in the coveted "Top 12," the opportunities and connections she can make are unmatched: Over \$250,000 is awarded in scholarships annually, and more than 250 YAGP alumni now dance professionally in top companies around the world.

Makensie Howe, from Alexandra School of Ballet in Missouri, leaps across the stage at New York City Center. This was her first competition.



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Brazilian dancer Aniele
Gomes Moura Ribeiro
finds a secluded corner
behind the cye to pray.

*"I know I shouldn't be,
but I'm very, very nervous.
I'm surrounded by the
best ballet students from
all over the world!"*

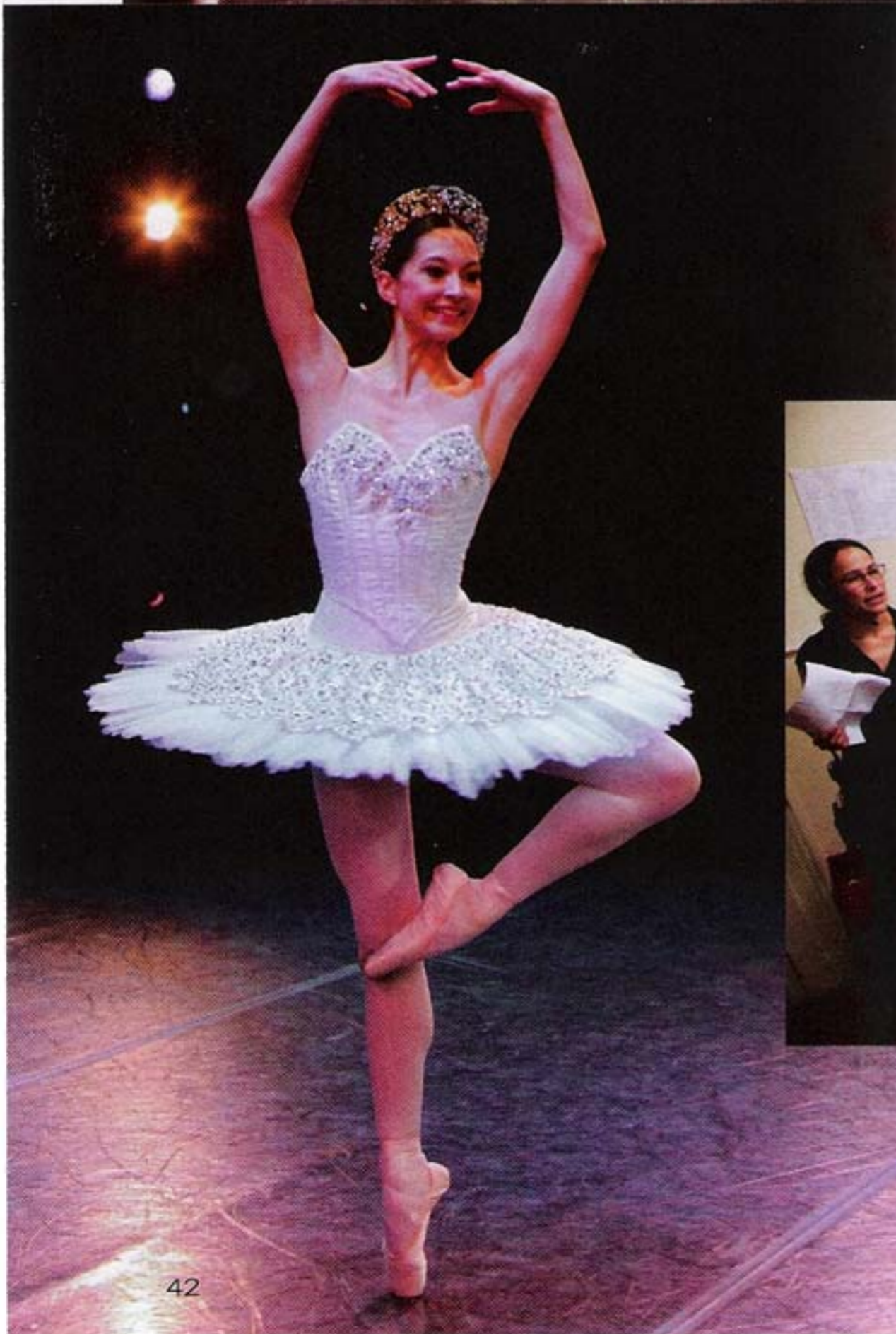
COURTNEY RAE McCOWEN,
INDEPENDENT FROM GEORGIA



The top 40 senior women and men share the stage during intermission to run through their steps one last time.

"I enjoyed every second onstage—to find out I won was extraordinary! But it has not made me think for one moment that I'm good enough."

HANNAH O'NEILL



Hannah O'Neill (left), 16, from The Australian Ballet School, performs a variation from *Grand Pas Classique*, which won her the gold medal for senior women. The seniors (above) wait with glittering tutus and jittery energy in cramped backstage hallways. Natalie Krakirian (right), from Burbank School of the Ballet, checks herself in the mirror as she gets fastened into her costume.



"I've been practicing this variation for three years. It's all about the chutzpah."

NATALIE KRAKIRIAN ON KITRI'S ENTRANCE FROM *DON QUIXOTE*

The Royal Ballet School's Claudia Dean (above) uses an empty staircase to stretch. A section of the judges table: (from left) Garry Trinder, New Zealand School of Dance; Adam Sklute, Ballet West; Mavis Staines, Canada's National Ballet School; Gailene Stock, The Royal Ballet School.

