Oh Canada! My summer ballet intensive in Toronto at Canada's National Ballet School during the month of July was incredible. After arriving a few days early, my mom and I explored the colorful city and even made a trip to Niagara Falls. Once the program started, I knew I was in for an exciting month of dance and new experiences. Staying every night at the residence was fun, especially since our entire dorm floor housed ballerinos my age.

My daily routine began with ballet technique, followed by lunch. Next came pool conditioning, allegro, and finally modern. Pool conditioning was insanely hard; the teacher had us sit at the edge of the pool, legs out on the pool deck and the back of our torso in the water. Then, we would arch down underwater holding our breath with a weight above our heads, come back up out of the water, still holding the weight, and rise all the way up to kiss our knees! This exercise was repeated multiple times along with underwater push-ups and underwater running. The ballet studios were awesome, measuring 50'X70' with a live pianist for every class. I loved how involved and hands-on the teachers were for every student; they even choreographed our push-ups and sit-ups. My favorite class was allegro because we practiced the simplest to the most challenging spins, leaps and turns. I was truly inspired by the older male dancers and, in turn, felt that the guys my age and younger were inspired by me. The older, experienced male dancers brought out my competitive edge which motivated me to really try harder in every class. At the end of each full day, I felt like a tired but happy danseur.

The evenings and weekends were filled with trips to Baskin Robins, Splash Pads, an amusement park, a Toronto Blue Jays baseball game, laser tag, and a night at the theater to see "Anything Goes". I brought my ukulele and entertained my classmates, I read two sci-fi novels – my favorite genre, and made new Canadian friends. At 9:00 pm, I would FaceTime with my family, 6pm in California, so I never got homesick. At the end of July, the school offered me an invitation to attend year-round in their academic and professional ballet program. The director Mavis Staines, a former artistic director for the Prix de Lausanne from 2002 to 2009, and my ballet teacher, Deborah Bowes, were impressed with my skill level and overall potential.

When I came home in August, it took a week of long talks, arguments, phone calls, e-mails, many pro and con lists, and tears to finally come to the decision that Canada would be a great fit for me. Ms. Malu gave me her blessing and said that I would always have a home at WSPA. I love my Westlake family! She and Viktor were worried about the rigor of the program, but fortunately Canada has scheduled me in challenging technique classes with 10th grade boys because they know I'm coming from Viktor's demanding professional division. I think I will thrive there because I'll be surrounded by like-minded peers, especially other ballerinos, the academic course work is rich and intense, including 6 years of French and the history of ballet and the arts, and the homework time is scheduled and supervised with supportive staff. There is a physiotherapist and psychologist at the school five days a week to keep us kids injury-free and happy. The dance program is what I like best. My ballet, jazz, character, modern, and conditioning classes are all structured in such a balanced way as to foster a healthy 6 year path to my dream goal: to one day be a soloist and principal dancer for a world-renowned company. Please check out the school's website at www.nbs-enb.ca; it's a high-tech, state-of-the-art facility with a great program and great teachers. I'm super excited to begin a potentially life-changing opportunity! My first day as a 7th grader in Toronto begins September 4th. It's funny how the Flames of Paris pas de deux with Jasmine performed on stage for YAGP in New York back in April 2013 has spun my life in a completely different direction. Thank you Jane for inviting me to dance with Jasmine. Thank you Ms. Tina for your constant care of my well-being and for including me in your successful rebellion. Thank you Ms. Debbie for always looking out for me. Thank you Viktor for showing me how hard I really have to work to be a star, and thank you Ms. Malu; your constant support of my family and me has pathed the way toward a career in ballet.