

The Reality of Youth America Grand Prix 2013

The Youth America Grand Prix 2013 New York International Finals is over, and I am back home in California reflecting on my ten-day trip. Upon my return, I was ecstatic about all the events and surprises that I experienced during this incredible opportunity to go, compete, and learn in New York. Looking back at my expectations, I feel satisfied about what I set out to do and accomplished. I performed well on stage, I worked hard in the workshops, and I met and made new friends.

Let me begin by retelling how the actual day of competition played out. My dad and I took the subway from Grand Central Station to Washington Square in Greenwich Village where the Skirball Theater awaited my performance. My partner, Jasmine, and I warmed-up and rehearsed two and a half hours prior to our call time for open stage during which our choreographer, Viktor, ran through certain parts of the routine like the coda and adagio. At one point, once Viktor had left us back stage on our own, Jasmine and I became concerned about the recently waxed stage and whether it would cause her to slip if she attempted double fouteés. We then made a team decision to play it safe; the result was spectacular. When the announcer called out, “Tristan Brosnan and Jasmine Cruz performing a Pas de Deux from Flames of Paris - USA,” we took four steps out and posed, waiting for the music to start. A constant rush of adrenaline occupied the next three minutes and forty-five seconds along with two beating hearts and a roaring audience. We were very happy with our strong, clean performance, even on a slippery stage, but unfortunately, it turned out that we were judged against all 38 Pas de Deux routines, even the ones including senior dancers who, in the end, took the top three placements and awards.

Just performing that Pas Deux was an honor and a thrill, and although it was disappointing to not place in the Pas de Deux category, what happened exactly 33 minutes after we competed was extraordinary. A woman by the name of Deborah Hess, representing an internationally acclaimed ballet school, had observed me two days prior in the scholarship workshops and noticed my focus and potential. Then, once she saw my stage performance, she knew right away that she would like to offer me a scholarship. Later that night, as my dad

and I were in the subway station, we were looking at the Youth America Grand Prix Facebook page when we saw that my scholarship number had received “mail”. We decided that the next morning we would go back to the Skirball Theatre and collect the mystery “mail”. The good news was that the “mail” was two scholarship invitations! One of the offers was a fully paid tuition for a 6-week summer intensive to Houston Ballet in Texas, and the other scholarship offer was a 4-week fully paid tuition plus room and board to the Canadian National Ballet School in Toronto, Canada. I was beaming with pride knowing that two very highly acclaimed schools had recognized my potential and invited me to their academies. The director from the Canadian National Ballet School, Deborah Hess, said she liked my physical proportions and thought that I seemed like a really smart boy. We accepted her offer after having discussed the matter with Viktor, my Russian ballet teacher; furthermore, she told me that if they thought it was a good fit, I might even attend their 7th-12th grade school, so I am going to audition for their academic school in July. Basically, I am very happy with the way things turned out in New York and I would really like to experience the opportunity in Toronto.

Lastly, being exposed to *many* different dance styles and making new friends from around the world had a definite impact on my experience in New York. Throughout the week, I attended classes and workshops where I practiced classical variations from Bolshoi masters, learned classical technique from Misty Copeland who was one of the first African-American ballerinas at American Ballet Theater, and danced contemporary combinations. I had expected to attend workshops with ABT teachers and Paris Opera Ballet choreographers, but they weren't on staff this year. As for making new friends, I was surprised to have met more Italian girls than any other nationality. One Italian girl in particular named Alessia gave me a love note and wanted to dance with me at our “after party”! Two American ballerinos I met named David and Daniel were in my age group, and they were from San Diego and Florida respectively. In the end, I met and made new friends and was treated to a variety of rigorous dance classes.

Overall, I think my trip to New York for the international ballet competition was very successful and I am bursting with growing excitement over my upcoming opportunity. My hopes are that next year I might get the same chance for technical growth as I did this year.