

## Ballerina takes big step forward

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SAN FRANCISCO — While many of her friends prepare for the combined anxiety and excitement in anticipation of their first year at college, Alexandra Martin will travel to Russia to study ballet, culture and language.

For Martin, it's the chance of a lifetime. The 18-year-old San Francisco native has been invited to study at Russia's Bolshoi Ballet Academy, a prestigious school that only the world's best are invited to.

"It's definitely a confidence booster," Martin said. "I'm definitely amazed and happy, especially as an American, knowing I have the potential to train with some of the best teachers in the world."

The invite to study abroad is part of the Security Language Initiative for Youth program, funded by the U.S. State Department and Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Martin is one of 10 high school students nationwide who will spend six weeks, from July to August, studying the Russian language, culture and ballet. Rina Kirshner, vice president of the Russian American Foundation in New York, said Martin is a very talented dancer. "We are excited to hear that she has a sincere interest in Russian culture," Kirshner said. "Our impression is we believe her to be a very talented dancer."