

Alexis Collins Earns Scholarship to Dance with Bolshoi Ballet in Moscow and NY

By Helen Borland / Staff

The Russian American Foundation (RAF) has announced that 10 American high school ballet dancers have been selected for the prestigious National Security Language Initiative for Youth Program (NSLI-Y) this summer. Among the recipients is Alexis Collins, a 16 year-old student at Roswell High School. Marina Kovalyovv, President, and Rina Kirshner, Vice-president, of RAF, made the announcement.

Collins started dancing at age-two at Roswell's Tolbert-Yilmaz School of Dance. She has been a student there for the past 14 years, under the direction of Nancy Tolbert- Yilmaz and Mary Lynn Taylor. For six seasons Collins has been a dancer in the Pre-Professional program that prepares advanced students for a future life in a ballet company. Tracey Yanckello Bayly and Hye-Young Kim direct this program.

This will not be Collins' first



Alexis Collins

experience with famous dancers. She has had the opportunity to study dance with large companies around the United States, including the Joffrey Ballet, Kansas City

Ballet, and Harid Conservatory. She has performed in the Nutcracker, Sleeping Beauty, Paquita, Cinderella, and Le Corsaire, hosted by RDT.

Collins first heard about the opportunity with the Russian American Foundation after being accepted into the Bolshoi Ballet's advanced summer program. The RAF contacted the students that would be attending Bolshoi's program about the Moscow opportunity and its application process. The selection criteria for this tremendous honor was based on live audition, academic excellence, required essays, numerous recommendations, and demonstrated maturity through interviews.

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

Collins starts her dance odyssey in

New York for three weeks, during which she will attend an intense schedule of ballet classes during the day and will take Russian language/culture classes in the evening to prepare for the trip to Moscow.

While in Moscow, she and the other American dancers will live at the Bolshoi Academy with a US chaperone and continue to attend ballet classes, but the emphasis will switch to learning the Russian language. She will attend Russian class daily to learn how to write, speak, and understand the language. On weekends, she will stay with a home stay family who will take her on trips and do sightseeing to learn about Russian culture.

This scholarship is an all expenses paid trip for the ten US dancers. The U.S. Department of State and the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs fund NSLI-Y.

The program attracts talented young dancers from across the U.S. as well as other countries including Japan, Switzerland, Brazil, Kazakhstan and France. Students from ages nine to 15 and older spend six weeks from late June to early August training in classical Russian ballet technique with instructors and danc-

ers from the Bolshoi Ballet Academy.

With its 235-year history, the Bolshoi Ballet Academy is one of the oldest and most prestigious schools for classical ballet training in the world, and through the years has produced numerous world-class dancers, teachers, and choreographers. The Bolshoi Ballet Academy is steeped in a rich cultural tradition with a strong curriculum and a pedagogy that focuses on strength, musicality, clarity, and personal expression.

For additional information about the Bolshoi Ballet Academy and Russian American Foundation, visit www.russianamericanfoundation.org / www.BolshoiBalletAcademy.com.



Alexis Collins