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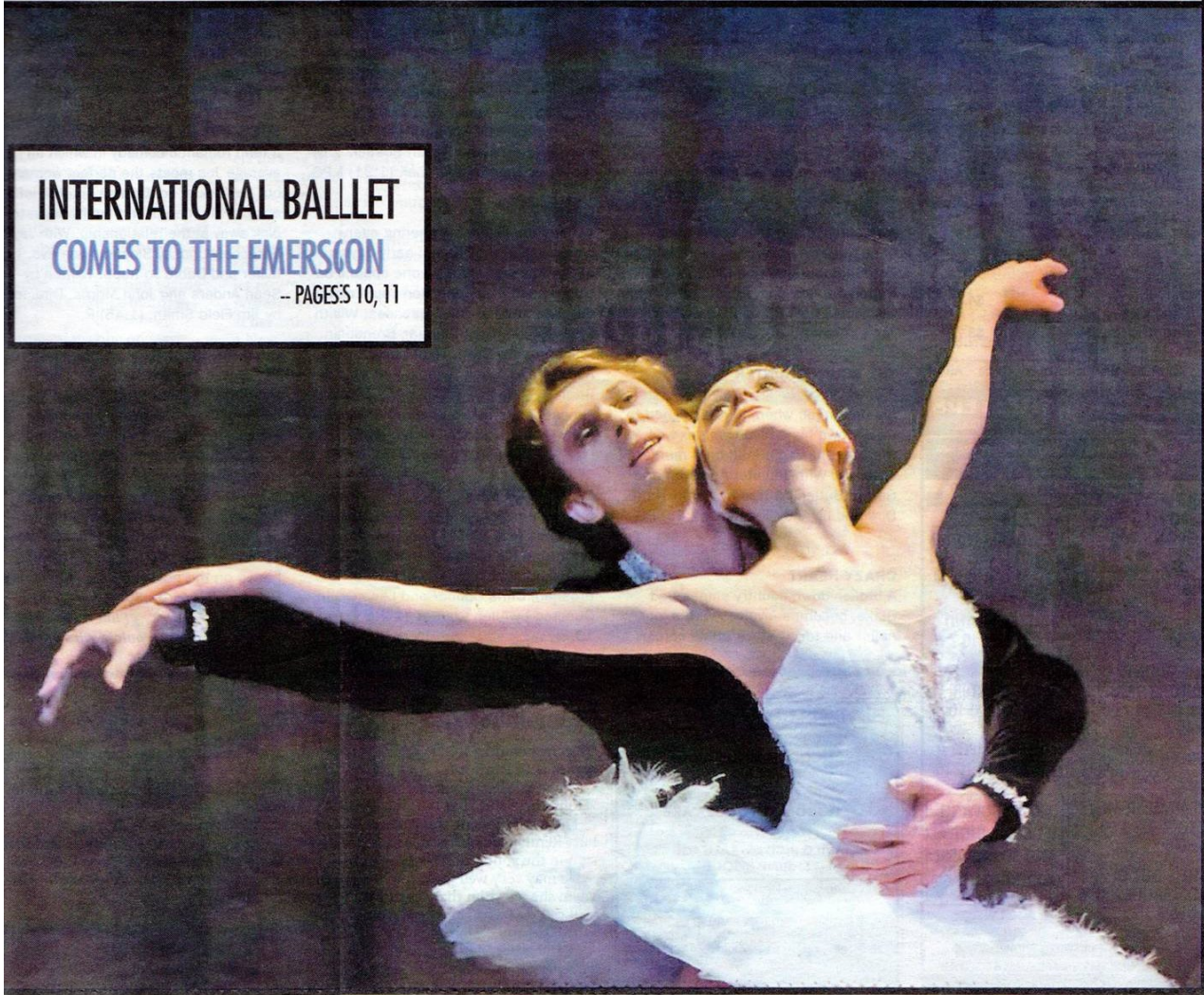
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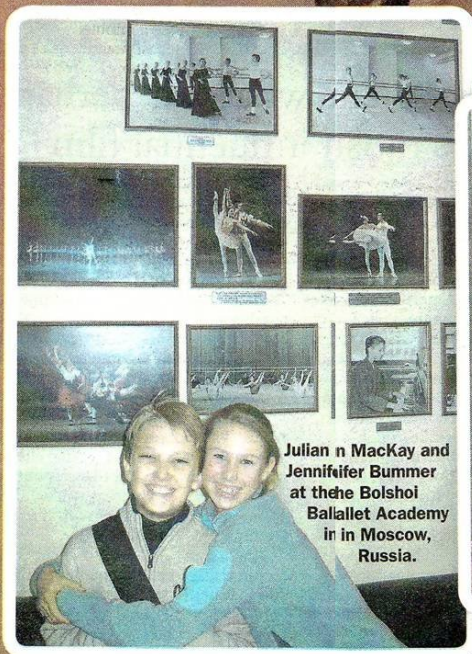
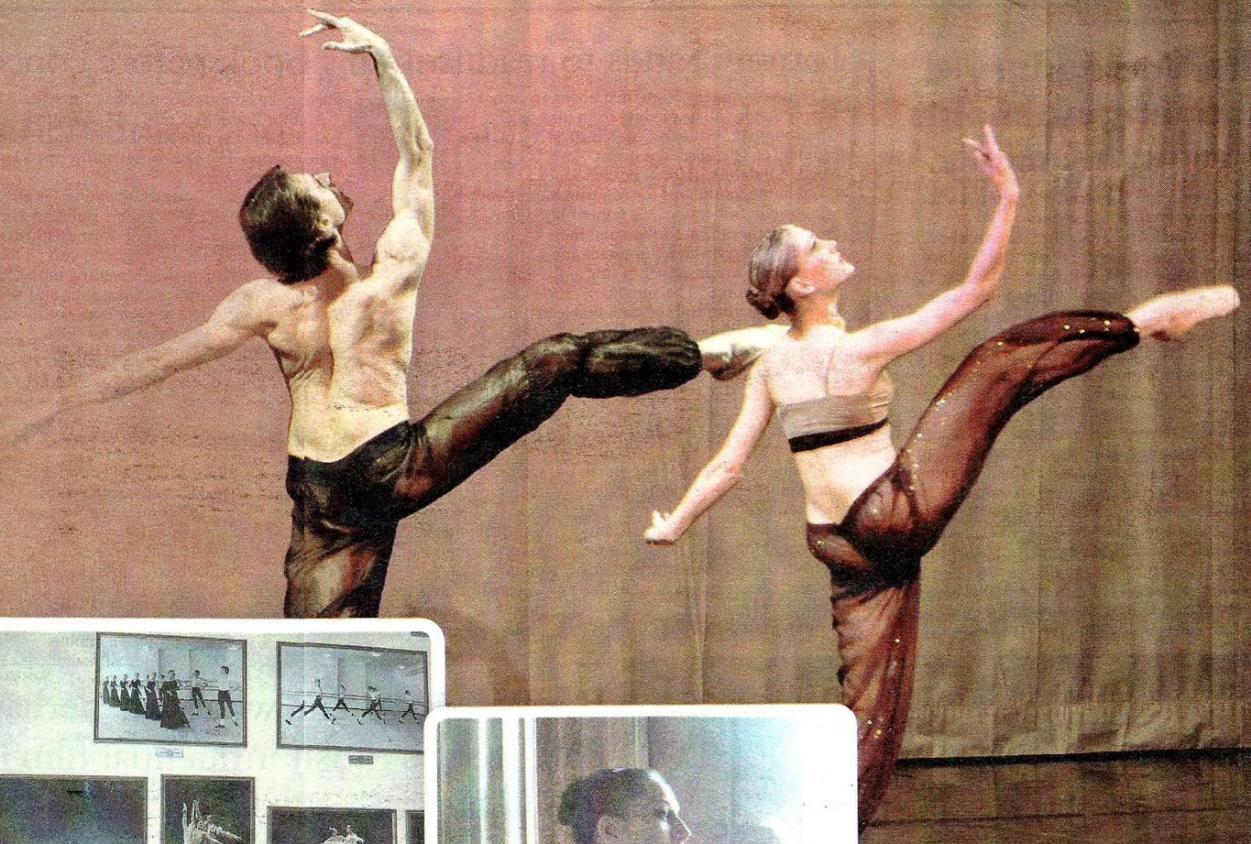
INTERNATIONAL BALLET COMES TO THE EMERSON

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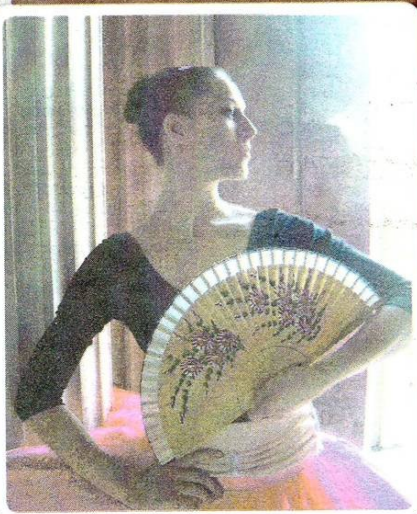


Love of ballet brings Berlin's best to Bozeman ... and changes the lives of a Bozeman family

MARCH 19, 2010, Big Sky Publishing TW9

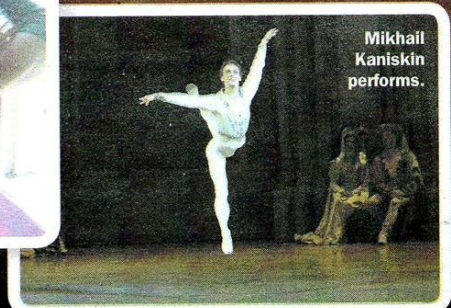


Julian n MacKay and Jennifer Bummer at the Bolshoi Ballet Academy in in Moscow, Russia.



Nadia Khan rehearses "Don Quixote"

Above and on the cover, Maria Sascha Khan and Wieslaw Dudek perform in the Staatsballett Berlin.



Mikhail Kaniskin performs.

Julian MacKay sounds like any 12-year-old boy from Bozeman who likes to go sledding, play with yoyos and hang out with his dog, Shakespeare.

But lately Julian has been doing his sledding in Moscow, hanging out in Red Square and learning Russian words for things like yoyo.

Since November, Julian has been living in Moscow with his mother and younger brother so he can attend the Bolshoi Ballet Academy and learn to dance at one of the most famous ballet company schools in the world.

In February, Julian became the first American so young to perform with the Bolshoi Ballet Company. He danced the part of a young page in "La Esmeralda" on the Moscow stage.

"The classes are really amazing," Julian said in a phone interview from Moscow, 10 time zones away. Classes are challenging and meet six days a week.

"I wish it was seven," Julian said, "because I love to dance."

Julian said the Bolshoi Academy is great because it teaches boys to really leap. It feels like flying. "Jumping through the air is one of the funnest things you can do."

The love of ballet will be celebrated in Bozeman next week when professional dancers from the Berlin State Ballet (Staatsballett Berlin) travel here to perform on Wednesday, March 24.

The dancers will also teach workshops for young Montana dancers and invite some of the area's best young dancers to join their performance on stage at the Emerson Cultural Center.

This is the second year that "Les Danses de l'Amour" has been staged here. It's made possible by Youth Arts in Action, a nonprofit started by Julian's family. It has raised \$33,000 over the past several years to provide scholarships for young people in ballet and other classical arts.

The performance is also made possible by Julian's 21-year-old sister, Maria Sascha Kahn. Born in tiny Pine Creek, she is now in her third year as a dancer with the Berlin State Ballet.

She's the one who's bringing her dancer colleagues and friends from all over the world to Montana. She's the one who got her whole family hooked on ballet.

"Les Danses de l'Amour" should be a rare treat, both for the audience and for the dancers themselves, most of whom are donating their time to make it possible, said Teresa Khan MacKay, Julian's mom.

"The level of artistry is at the international level," she said. "They're doing it because they want the art form to exist, not just in the upper class," but also for people who live in small communities.

Audience members last year told MacKay they couldn't believe such world-class dancers had come to Bozeman. The dancers were equally moved, she said, and enjoyed the close connection with the audience. Many stayed in local families' homes.

"The dancers were overwhelmed with the outpouring of love," MacKay said. "They cried."

Among those performing from the Staatsballett Berlin this year will be Bolshoi-trained principal dancer Mikhail Kaniskin of Russia and his wife, soloist Elisa Carrillo Cabrera of Mexico. Also coming are Berlin dancers Emi Harayama of Japan, Ulian Topor of Moldova, Iana Balova of Russia, and French-born Alexandre Hammoudi from the American Ballet Theater.

Maria Sascha Kahn will perform, as will her younger sister, Nadia Kahn, 19, who has trained with dancers from the Bolshoi and London's Royal Ballet School. Nadia will dance with award-winning Brooklyn Mack of the Washington Ballet.

Two days before the main performance, the professionals will teach a workshop for about 25 young dancers from all over Montana. Some of the best young dancers from Bozeman's The Dance Center and Helena's Queen City Ballet will also perform Wednesday night.

One of the main goals of the event is to inspire young dancers and show them that even if they come from Montana, they can aspire to professional careers.

That's certainly been true for the MacKay siblings, who sometimes astonish their parents with the path they've chosen.

"They just really enjoy pouring their hearts out on stage and performing," said dad Gregory MacKay, a Bozeman computer consultant.

Julian said he got excited about ballet around age 6, watching his two older sisters do "amazing" things. His mother tried to tell him how hard it would be. But then he saw young male dancers perform leaps, which seemed to hang in the air for a minute.

Julian last year attended the Bolshoi Ballet Academy's summer training program in Connecticut, operated by the Russian American Foundation.

From there, both Julian and 13-year-old Jennifer Bummer of Bozeman were invited to train at the Bolshoi Academy in Moscow, the first young Americans invited in the academy's 236-year history, Gregory MacKay said.

Jennifer stayed a few weeks and then returned to train in California, closer to her family.

Julian is thriving in Moscow, his mother said. The other kids have accepted him, his Russian is good and his teachers say he's progressing well. One teacher announced, "I love Americans because they work so hard."

Julian said he hopes to be invited at the end of the year to stay on at the Bolshoi Academy.

"I really love it and I want to do it as long as I can," Julian said. His goal is to "be in one of the top companies in the world and inspire kids - You can do this!"

Younger brother, Nicholas, 9, appears to be following in his footsteps. He just won a scholarship to the Bolshoi summer program in Connecticut.

"Here we go!" his mother said.

Tickets for "Les Danses de l'Amour" 7 p.m. at the Emerson Cultural Center, are \$45 for adults, \$30 for ages 65 and up, \$15 for ages 12 and under. They are available online at www.YouthArtsInAction.org or Cactus Records in Bozeman.