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Celebrating 35 Years of Serving the Bath Community



Graceful Dancer

Experiencing the Bolshoi Ballet in Russia

2015 Interior Design & Remodeling Section Inside!

Bolshoi Ballet Academy welcomes Bath ballerina

by Kathleen Steele Gaivin

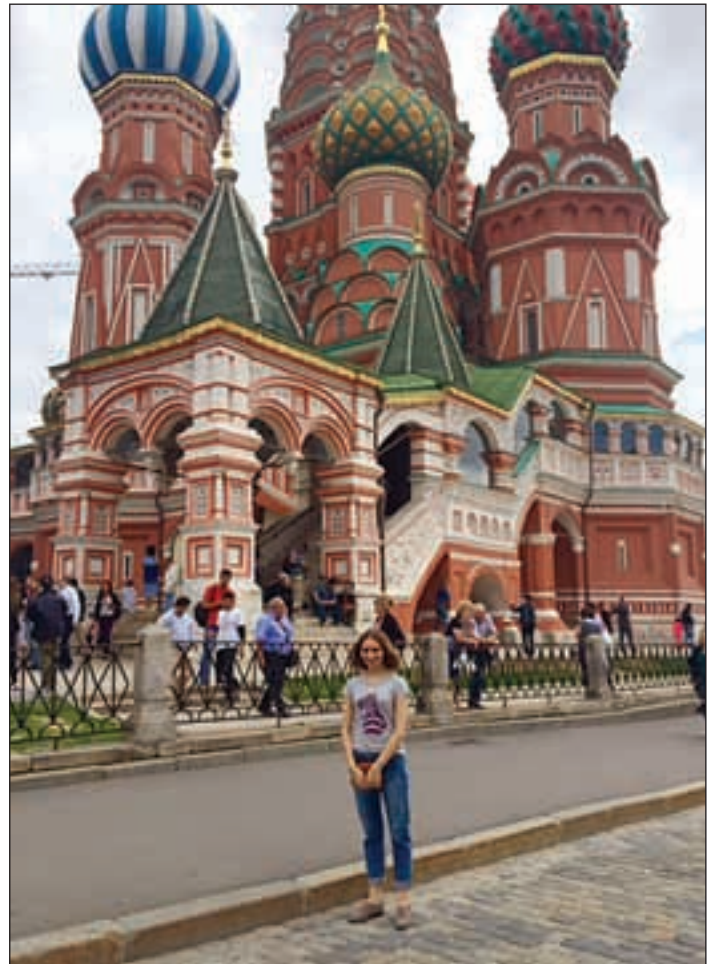
Instead of kicking back and relaxing for her summer vacation, Bath ballerina Anne Lewandowski had the adventure of a lifetime, immersing herself in Russian culture and dancing with the world-renowned Bolshoi Ballet.

Lewandowski has been dancing for 11 years. She said she learned of the Bolshoi

Ballet Academy last year from a classmate at the Ohio Conservatory of Ballet.

The Hathaway Brown School sophomore was one of 15 young people (13 girls, 2 boys) selected to participate in the State Department-funded program to study at the Bolshoi Ballet Academy in Moscow. There they honed their dance skills and learned the Russian language. The six-week session followed three weeks of intensive instruction by Bolshoi teachers in New York.

Participation in the New York program was mandatory for Moscow participants, but few of the New York participants headed to Moscow. Lewandowski said more than 1,000 dancers



Bath ballerina Anne Lewandowski in front of St. Basil's Cathedral at Red Square in Moscow during her six-week stay at the Bolshoi Ballet Academy.



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applied for 200 New York workshop openings. From that pool, only a select few received the full Moscow experience. The application process included an audition, good grades, teacher recommendations and essays. Once chosen, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. State Department paid 100 percent of the costs.

Thanks to the New York workshop, the students knew each other before going abroad. In Russia, they lived during the week in dormitories at the Bolshoi academy. They spent weekends with host families, where they practiced speaking Russian, enjoyed authentic Russian meals and soaked up the local culture.

"I spoke no Russian going into it. Coming out, I could hold a conversation," the 15-year-old Lewandowski said. "I learned so much."

She said her favorite part of the immersion experience was learning of the deep appreciation the Russian people have for the arts.

"Moscow is culturally rich," she said. "They took such pride in it."

Lewandowski also liked the expectation of maturity she experienced at the academy.

"It felt like a lot of freedom," she said. "We were treated like responsible young adults."

At the end of six weeks, the Americans performed a concert of variations from classical ballets for their host families.

Lewandowski, the daughter of Dr. Phil and Abby Lewandowski, said she is unsure if she will pursue dancing as a career, but she values the experience of the Bolshoi Ballet Academy.

"I think it enriched me as a person," she said.

Lewandowski studies locally with Inna Stabrova at the Ohio Conservatory of Ballet, according to her mother. She added Stabrova is a tremendous teacher and inspiration to Lewandowski. ∞

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