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## **Bowie ballet student chosen to train at the Bolshoi**

### **Dancer will spend six weeks in Moscow this summer**

by Virginia Terhune | Staff Writer



Christopher Anderson/The Gazette

Taylor Fikes, 17, of Bowie dances in a May 26 rehearsal of "Swan Lake" at the Kirov Academy in Washington, D.C. Taylor won a scholarship to attend the Bolshoi in Moscow this summer.

A passionate student of ballet, Taylor Fikes, 17, of Bowie said she has always wanted to visit the world-famous Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, where many great dancers have performed. This summer she will.

"It'll be really cool to go see it ... and get to experience it," said Fikes, who will be one of 16 American students who will study ballet, along with Russian language, history, arts and culture, at the Bolshoi Ballet Academy for six weeks starting in mid-July.

Learning Russian is "a really great tool to have," because so many people in ballet around the world speak Russian or French, said Fikes, a junior at the Kirov Academy of Ballet in northeast Washington, D.C., who has her sights set on becoming a professional ballet dancer.

"We'll be taking art classes and learning Russian," she said about the summer trip — her first overseas — that will also include weekend stays with local families.

Free for students, the trips are part of the National Security Language Initiative for Youth Program, which is funded mostly by the U.S. Department of State.

Fikes and the 15 other students from around the U.S. were chosen from a pool of hundreds of students who have been accepted into the summer ballet program in New York run by the

Bolshoi Ballet Academy and the New York-based Russian American Foundation, which seeks to foster communication between the two countries.

"It's part of a reset between the countries on the presidential level where we know how to communicate in the language of arts and in the actual language," said Rina Kirschner, vice president of the foundation.

Fikes is scheduled to leave June 25 to dance for three weeks in the New York program before leaving for Moscow.

Students were chosen for the trip, now in its second year, based on grades, an interview, two essays and their level of dancing, which needs to be high in order to make it through the six weeks of intense training in Russia.

"They have to be able to succeed with the rigor of the Bolshoi training," Kirschner said.

Fikes has been dancing most of her life, getting an early start as a young child in Atlanta.

"I was always dancing around my mom's kitchen, putting on performances when she was in there cooking," said Fikes, whose interpretation of one song convinced her grandmother to sign her up for lessons.

She would later go to the Baltimore School for the Arts before switching to Bowie High School for the 2010-11 academic year, splitting her time between Bowie and the Kirov Academy before opting to go to Kirov full time when the scheduling got too complicated.

Last weekend she danced with two other students in a ballet piece and also in Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake" as one of the swans during the school's year-end performances.

"She has a lovely stage presence and an elegance, and she's charming in romantic lyrical pieces," said Martin Fredmann, deputy artistic director at the Kirov Academy, which serves about 76 students in grades seven through 12.

Fredmann has traveled the world working in ballet, and Fikes said she wants to do the same.

"I really enjoy dancing, the feeling, the costumes, working with the different teachers and choreographers," she said. "It's what I enjoy doing most, and I want to work to get on that level."