

Introducing the five Americans competing in the 2017 Prix de Lausanne

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The Prix de Lausanne is widely regarded as one of the most elite ballet competitions in the world. Taking place at the end of January/beginning of February each year, it welcomes carefully selected competitors to Théâtre de Beaulieu in Switzerland for a week of technique classes, absorbing repertoire and, eventually, competition.

In addition to the exposure each dancer receives to artistic directors and choreographers from across the globe, there are many prestigious scholarships and company contracts up for grabs.

Get to know the five American dancers selected to compete at the 2017 Prix de Lausanne below. Dance Informa asked them about their background, favorite dancewear and food, and how they're preparing for the competition.

Bret Coppa

Age: 17

Hometown: San Pedro, California.

School: University of North Carolina School of the Arts (UNCSA).

Previous training: San Pedro City Ballet 2004-08; Peninsula School of Performing Arts 2008-15; Marat Daukayev School of Ballet 2011-15; UNCSA 2015-17.

Awards and accomplishments thus far: YAGP Indianapolis Senior Men's Classical Second Place 2016; YAGP New York Soloist/Pas de Deux 2015; 43rd Prix De Lausanne Finalist 2015; Petit Oasis Foundation Scholarship Recipient 2012-17.

Top dance icon: "Carlos Acosta. He has such a beautiful mixture of elegance and strength, and growing up I would always watch videos of him and learned a great deal from them. I try and find the same combination in my own dancing."

Favorite dancewear accessories: "I love my FaB Dance Knitwear warm-ups. They keep me warm and are very easy to dance in. Also, another one of my favorite dancers, Steven McRae, wears them as well."

What we can find him doing on his off day: "Enjoying the outdoors. Being inside of a studio all day really makes you appreciate nature a lot more. I'm also getting more into photography and find it to be a good way to let the stresses of the day go."

Favorite meal to cook: "Steak and potatoes for breakfast. Personally, it's a great way to start my day."

Something people might not know about him: "When I was younger, I was a commercial actor and did a few larger films."

How he is training for the Prix: "I'll be in the studios working the majority of my time. I will also be cross-training, going to the gym and doing Gryotonic. Stretching a lot, too, will be a big part of my training to help my body stay limber with all the work I'll be putting on it. My dad also built a 10×10 raked platform so I can get adjusted to the stage in Lausanne. He did this two years ago as well when I went the first time."



What his Prix goals are: “My goal for the competition is to do the best that I can. I know that may sound cheesy, but in the end that’s all any of us competing can hope for. If I get there and do that, I’m not worried by the outcome.”

Most looking forward to at the Prix: “The experience to be on that stage again. I love performing, so it’s another chance to be on stage. It’s such a beautiful theater, and the whole week is full of wonderful opportunities and meeting new friends and more likely than not some of the future stars of ballet. I had a great time while I was there in 2015, and I’m sure this time around will be just as good, if not better!”

Max Follmer

Age: 17

Hometown: Born in London, grew up in Richmond for the most part.

School: The School of Richmond Ballet.

Additional training: 2014 and 2015 Houston Ballet Summer Programs.

Awards and accomplishments thus far: Two-time recipient of the Malcolm Burn Scholarship; youngest trainee ever in The School of Richmond Ballet’s history.

Top dance icon: “I think that’s tough because there are so many incredible dancers to be inspired by. I think if I had to name a few, I would say Kimin Kim of the Mariinsky Theatre or Daniel Camargo of the Dutch National Ballet.”

Favorite dancewear accessories: “I have a pair of Adidas warm-up pants that I wear quite a bit, so I guess those would have to be my favorite.”

What we can find him doing on his off day: “I really like playing video games and chess, as well as watching football (soccer).”

Favorite meal to cook: “I’d have to say pasta with chicken and broccoli and side of brown rice. Or maybe chocolate chip waffles. It’s a tough call.”

Something people might not know about him: “I worked in the kitchen of a local restaurant. It taught me a lot about hard work and not taking any situation for granted.”

How he is training for the Prix: “I rehearse the variations for the Prix with my ballet teacher Igor Antonov as much as possible.”

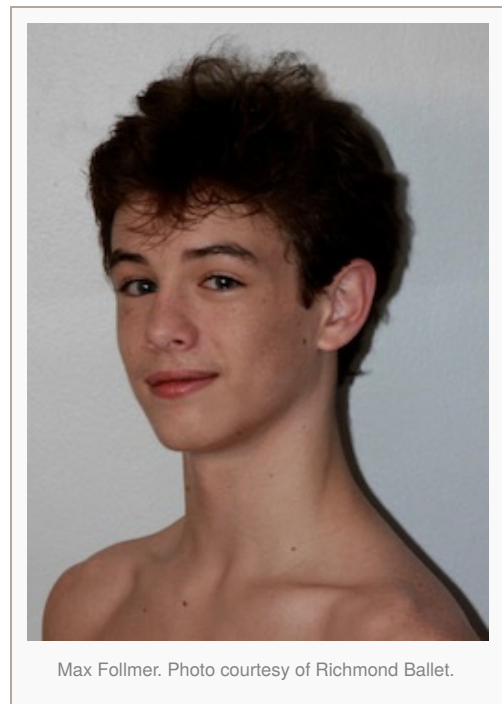
What his Prix goals are: “Of course, doing well at the competition would be nice, but more importantly, I hope to use the competition as a learning experience.”

Most looking forward to at the Prix: “I’m most looking forward to meeting so many new people and taking classes from such great teachers.”

Lauren Hunter

Age: 15

Hometown: Born in South Korea, later moved to Dallas, Texas, now in southern California.



School: Peninsula School of Performing Arts in Palos Verdes, California.

Previous training: Texas Ballet Theater School.

Awards and accomplishments thus far: 2016 YAGP Salt Lake City's Third Place Classical Prize; 2016 YAGP NY Finalist; Bronze Medalist at the 2016 World Ballet Competition in Orlando, Florida.

Top dance icon: "My dance icon is Natalia Osipova. She has everything I strive for – turns, jumps and extension. She also has a big character you can see on stage, which makes her all in all an amazing ballerina."

Favorite dancewear accessories: "I like to always wear something in my hair – either a bow, flower or sparkly pin."

What we can find her doing on her off day: "When I'm not dancing, you can find me shopping or doing some other activity, like swimming or Pilates."

Favorite meal to cook: "I love to cook! My favorite thing to make is pancakes because I feel like they are a blank canvas for you to put your own imagination into to make them unique. I personally like to add cheese and bacon right into the batter before cooking because it makes simple pancakes more interesting and, of course, tastes amazing, too."

Something people might not know about her: "Most people might not know that I used to be on a jazz competition team."

How she is training for the Prix: "I train on my competition pieces alone for two hours a day, then take another class or two hours each after. I usually have Pilates, stretch class and Gyrotonics in the day to help with my ballet training. My schedule changes weekly depending on the availability of classes and teachers, but I try to take as many classes as I can throughout the break to stay on track and to keep improving."

What her Prix goals are: "My goals for this competition are to perform my best on stage and enjoy the experience. I know there will be many talented students there and winning a prize will be extremely difficult, but I'm there to take home the experience of competing at the Prix de Lausanne."

Most looking forward to at the Prix: "I'm most looking forward to the classes we get to take and the coaching we get. I'm also excited to meet all the candidates from around the world and make new friends."

Caroline Perry

Age: 16. Turns 17 at the Prix.

Hometown: Orange County, California.

School: Houston Ballet Academy.

Previous training: Southland Ballet Academy and with Carolyn Lovett at the Lovett Dance Center.

Awards and accomplishments thus far: First Place in Classical at YAGP Regionals; Bronze medalist at the Indianapolis International Ballet Competition.

Top dance icon: "Marianela Núñez has always been an inspiration of mine. Her confidence while dancing always captures my attention and takes my breath away."

Favorite dancewear accessories: "Legwarmers. They are perfect for when my legs are extremely tired and



Lauren Hunter in Contemporary at WBC. Photo courtesy of Hunter.

need to stay warm during a long day. Luckily, they now come in many colors and lengths. It's difficult to choose a favorite."

What we can find her doing on her off day: "On days off, I love going to yoga, cooking or just hanging out with friends."

Favorite meal to cook: "My favorite meal to make would have to be any kind of curry. I love this spicy dish, especially if there are sweet potatoes in it!"

Something people might not know about her: "People may not know this, but I love to cook. I may not be very good at it, but the action of preparing an amazing, thought-out meal is extremely satisfying."

How she is training for the Prix: "Leading up to Prix de Lausanne, my schedule will be mostly the same as the rest of the year. A technique class every day is followed by rehearsals with my fellow HBII members for our upcoming tours, possibly some company rehearsals and adding in some private rehearsals for my variations."

What her Prix goals are: "My goals for the competition are to achieve my personal best and to present myself in the best way I possibly can. Also, I hope to absorb all the information thrown at me throughout the week, take it home with me and retain it for the rest of my career."

Most looking forward to at the Prix: "Meeting all of the incredibly talented candidates from around the world and working with some of the best mentors. I am grateful to be able to share this experience with [one] of my closest friends from Houston Ballet II, but also to make many new friends and connections while there."

Andrew Vecseri

Age: 17

Hometown: Houston, Texas.

School: Houston Ballet Academy.

Additional training: Houston Repertoire Ballet.

Awards and accomplishments thus far: C.C. Conner Scholarship Award; Full Scholarships to the Houston Ballet.

Top dance icon: "What I look for in dancers I like is the love to dance and hard work."

Favorite dancewear accessory: "Probably a unitard."

What we can find him doing on his off day: "I would be doing school."

Favorite meal to cook: "Chicken and dumplings."

Something people might not know about him: "I love rubix cubes and designing."

How he is training for the Prix: "I work with my teachers when we have time to work together. But when no teachers are available, I'll find a studio and practice."



Caroline Perry of the Houston Ballet Academy. Photo courtesy of Perry.

What his Prix goals are: “To do my best in the competition and to get what I can out of it.”

Most looking forward to at the Prix: “I’m most looking forward to working with the amazing students and teachers from all around the world.”

For more information on the 45th Prix de Lausanne, set for January 29-February 5, visit www.prixdelausanne.org.

By Chelsea Thomas of [Dance Informa](#).



Andrew Vecseri with the Houston Ballet Academy. Photo courtesy of Vecseri.