

# Two Southern California dancers to compete in prestigious Prix de Lausanne ballet competition

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Kaitlin Wright

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Jordan Coutts, 15, has been selected to compete in the 2018 Prix de Lausanne international ballet competition in Switzerland in Jan. 2018. She will compete against 76 other ballet students from around the world. (Photos courtesy of Erinn Coutts)

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Two aspiring Southern California ballet students, Jordan Coutts, 15, and Aviva Gelfer-Mundl, 16, recently received news that could make their dance careers.

The teen dancers were selected to compete in the Prix de Lausanne international ballet competition in Switzerland next year — a first for both.

“This is unbelievable to me. It’s surreal,” said Gelfer-Mundl, a Tustin resident who studies at V & T Classical Ballet Academy in Laguna Hills. “When I found out, I was in the biggest shock. I started crying I was so happy.”

Coutts and Gelfer-Mundl are two of seven American dancers chosen from a pool of nearly 400 dancers worldwide. They will join 76 other ballet students ages 14½ to 18 from Jan. 28 to Feb. 4 for a week of technique classes, repertoire rehearsals and, eventually, competition.

Widely regarded as one of the most elite ballet competitions in the world, Prix de Lausanne gives young dancers a chance to be seen by artistic directors and choreographers from around the world.

Prizes include paid apprenticeships at a Prix de Lausanne’s partner company of the dancer’s choosing, free tuition at one of the companies’ schools and more. Affiliated companies include the ABT Studio Company, Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo, The Royal Ballet, Houston Ballet, Stuttgart Ballet, San Francisco Ballet School, and [several others](#).

“It is such an honor to be chosen,” said Coutts who lives in Simi Valley.

Like Gelfer-Mundl, she trains at V & T as well as with a private teacher, Alla Khaniashvili, in Los Angeles.

“I’m most excited to work with teachers from around the world.”

Both Coutts and Gelfer-Mundl have had previous success in the dance competition world at events such as the Youth America Grand Prix and the Music Center’s [Spotlight Awards](#).

But something about the Prix de Lausanne feels more significant.

“I would say it is higher stakes,” said Coutts. “It seems that way because the judges look at you in class instead of only your variations.”

The dancers will prepare one classical variation and one contemporary variation. The candidate’s are evaluated on artistry, technique and musicality among other things with the jurors’ primary focus being on the student’s potential to succeed as a professional ballet dancer.

“(Prix de Lausanne) is an incredible atmosphere that will help me grow my artistic self. That’s my goal for the competition,” said Gelfer-Mundl. “Now that I’m 16, I need to start showcasing myself to artistic directors.”

To someone not involved in ballet, choosing a career as a teenager might seem early, but serious ballet students on track to join ballet companies enter professional schools by age 15 or 16. Prix de Lausanne is a step on the way to that goal.

“I don’t think many people understand how competitive ballet is,” said Coutts. “You have to work really hard, but then when you finally get to the stage the feeling of performing is worth it.”