

Local ballerina selected for prestigious 2020 Prix de Lausanne

myvalleynews.com/local-ballerina-selected-for-prestigious-2020-prix-de-lausanne

Jeff Pack

27 décembre
2019



16-year-old Keara Nichols was selected to compete at the prestigious 2020 Prix de Lausanne in Switzerland in February 2020. Courtesy photo/Nathan Sweet Photography

Local ballerina Keara Nichols, who studies at Murrieta's Academy of Ballet Arts, was recently selected as one of 84 dancers from all over the world to compete in the 2020 Prix de Lausanne in Montreaux, Switzerland, in February.

"I'm like, super, super excited and in shock because this has been a huge dream," the 16-year-old Nichols said. "I didn't ever think I would get to this point, so I'm just super proud of myself and how far I've come and how much I've improved and I am super excited to go to Switzerland."

Nichols is one of 10 dancers selected for the competition from the United States. To put things in perspective, 377 dancers from 44 countries applied for a spot in the lineup and the majority applied via video submission. They were ultimately chosen by a jury of nine dance-world professionals.

The 84 selected competitors will be coming from 26 countries including Japan, Australia, Belarus, South Africa and Cuba.



Nichols is one of only 10 dancers from the United States and one of only 84 dancers in the world chosen to compete at the event. Courtesy photo/Nathan Sweet Photography

“So for her just to be invited to that, in the ballet world, it is like being invited to the Olympics, you know, so it’s a big deal as far as that goes,” Alyssa Chavez who owns ABA with her husband, Jose. “It’s only for ages 15 to 18, so only the older dancers that are kind of right on the cusp of their professional careers. They are the ones that are being looked out for scholarships, things like that. And it is an international thing, which makes it a really cool event also.”

ABA has had other dancers submit for consideration, but the dance company has never had someone actually be accepted. Jose Chavez said it's because of Nichols' work ethic and talent, of course.

"You hear the kids saying 'I love, I love, I love, I love ballet dance,' but a lot of kids have to also fall in love with the work ethic behind it," he said. "You have to love it just as much. You have to be as passionate to be with to achieve your dream.

"And Keara has it. Keara has had it from day one. You know, when I first saw her, she has this determination, you know, the personality for it. That's what was really impressive about her."

Nichols said she thinks she got her commitment to hard work from her parents.

"I think I always had that when it comes to dance because I know it's not easy and I know if I want to eventually be at the level I want to be, it was going to take a lot of hard work," she said. "Working on my own free time and taking all my classes and always giving my 100% and always trying and just working to improve. I feel like it just comes from my drive for dance that I want to improve and work hard to get to that point."

Jose, the director at ABA, also expressed admiration for Nichols' parents for their commitment toward their daughter.

"I want to emphasize also how in order to create this kind of a technical dancer, it's not just a relationship between myself and the dancer," he said. "It's also the willingness of the parents because a lot of the time the parents become fearful because it seems like such a long shot. I don't know how many times I've heard, 'Well, what if you don't make it?' And, 'It's just a dream.' I want to be very, very appreciative and thankful for her mom and her dad and all the parents were willing to trust in a dream. With being pretty willing to say, 'OK, you know, if that child can make it, why not my child?'"

Nichols and Jose are working every day on the piece that was provided by the Prix de Lausanne team.

"They send us a video of a contemporary piece ahead of time that we have to memorize," Jose Chavez said. "They tell us what classical variation that we can do. You pick one, and so we're coaching pretty much every day to clean her up, to get her ready, not only technical but stamina wise. A lot of people underestimate how tiring this is."

Alyssa Chavez said Nichols has been with ABA for about four years and is home-schooled, which allows her more time to train. She said competing at the event will open doors for Nichols like few other events can do.

"Just having been invited to the Prix de Lausanne, she'll be able to put that on her resume, and it's one of those things that once you've been accepted there, it kind of makes everyone look at you like, 'OK, they've accepted her, then she's got to be, you know, a beautiful dancer,'" Alyssa Chavez said. "It's kind of like saying, 'Oh, I was accepted

to Harvard or I was accepted to Yale,' Everyone in the ballet world knows what this means. Besides it just being a competition, there is a winner. There's a first, second, third place and all of that. But besides that, what they do is they bring in directors from all the major companies, all the major schools in the world.

"They know that it's going to be all of the best young dancers in the world," she said. "So basically they're looking for the new up and upcoming talent, and they offer right there on the spot. They offer scholarships to their schools for the dancers and even offer professional contracts right there on the spot. So, it really leads to a lot of connections and networking opportunities."

Nichols said she realizes the opportunity that is in front of her.

"I'm definitely nervous," she said. "Just because I want to do my best when I'm there, but honestly I think, I mean there's excitement because I'm proud of how far I come. I'm just going to go and learn as much as I can and take everything in and do my best. I'm just feeling super, super excited and grateful that I'm able to go and for all the help I've received from everyone, I'm very thankful."

ABA is holding a fundraising effort to help the Nichols family with the cost of the trip.

The GoFundMe account can be found at www.gofundme.com/f/support-a-dream-send-keara-to-switzerland?utm_source=customer&utm_medium=copy_link&utm_campaign=p_cp+share-sheet. The link can also be found on the ABA's Facebook page.

Jeff Pack can be reached by email at jpack@reedermedia.com.