

Balletic leap for local teen

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DARLINGTON: Lincoln Sharp, 17, has been a student of ballet for about six years. Currently enrolled full-time at the prestigious Tanya Pearson Academy (TPA) in St Leonards, the former student of Darlington Public School and Newtown High School of the Performing Arts, is preparing his classical variation and contemporary solo pieces for two elite competitions in early 2020 – the Prix de Lausanne in Montreux, Switzerland and the Youth America Grand Prix (YAGP) in New York.

Throughout his years in primary school, Lincoln had always been creative and active, from being in a rock band to enjoying sports such as swimming, karate and football. It was just a case of finding the path he wanted to go down. After having started ballet part-time from the age of 11, Lincoln's Year 8 ballet teacher suggested he audition for the Sydney City Ballet's production of the *Nutcracker*. After the audition, the artistic director, Lucinda Dunn, the longest serving principal ballerina in the Australian Ballet, excitedly asked Lincoln's mother, Mary Ellen McCue, "Is that your son? I'd like him full-time!" The family decided to hold off putting Lincoln into full-time ballet for another few

years until he finished Year 10. He only started full-time at TPA at the beginning of this year and by August he had made it into the final of the Sydney Eisteddfod Senior Ballet Scholarship, dancing on the Opera House Concert Hall stage.

In September, with the great support of his teachers at TPA, Lincoln auditioned for the Prix de Lausanne, a ballet competition held annually in Switzerland. Lincoln was selected to compete along with two other students from TPA. Out of 84 who have been selected from all over the world, there are eight Australians who have made it into the 2020 Prix de Lausanne taking place in Montreux from February 2-9. "I've always wanted to at least try and see if I could get in," he said. "I wouldn't have thought three years ago that I'd actually be doing it, though."

Applicants were due to be notified of the outcome on November 1, but information was leaked early on October 31. Lincoln and his family found out through friends, who texted congratulations. "I didn't really know what they were talking about until I looked and saw that the Prix de Lausanne had posted online their list of successful candidates. I was very surprised but filled with joy and excitement."

Lincoln will be accompanied to Switzerland by his proud parents, Mary Ellen McCue and Colin Sharp. The family, long-time volunteer distributors of the *South Sydney Herald*, look forward to sharing a wonderful experience.

Through the YAGP semi-finals held in Melbourne in October this year and the Sydney Eisteddfod final, Lincoln has also been awarded various scholarships and internships. After the Prix de Lausanne, Lincoln will travel to Amsterdam and Stuttgart to take up short-term scholarships with the European School of Ballet and the John Cranko Ballet School. At the YAGP in Melbourne he also won a place in the finals to be held from April 10 to 17. So, on returning home from Europe, Lincoln will have one month to prepare for the preliminaries in upstate New York. The final will be held at the Lincoln Center Plaza, Manhattan. When the competition is over, Lincoln will attend the American Ballet Theatre Studio Company to take up a short-term internship.

It's certainly been an exciting year for Lincoln. As well as all this recent news and having danced at the Opera House in August, back in February he attended short-term scholarships at the English National Ballet School in London and the Dutch National Ballet School in Amsterdam.

"What they say about Lincoln is that he's got 'facility'," Ms McCue said. "He's got the physique, the look, the height, the artistry and musicality. He has the 'turnout', meaning his legs can swivel out at the hips."

When asked if he was nervous about the competitions, Lincoln said: "When I get closer to the date, I'll start to get more stressed about it, but for now, I'm just focusing on my preparation. Because they're such highly regarded competitions, it's daunting in a way, but as long as you're prepared, it will make it much easier."

Competition prizes include ballet scholarships at schools in Europe and the United

States. "I really want to go to the John Cranko School in Stuttgart," Lincoln said. "The training there is amazing. But anything can happen.

"My goal is to be a principal artist with a ballet company, but that's such a hard thing to achieve ... I'm just going to enjoy it, give it my best, breathe, and show them what I can do."