

14-year-old Adrian Oldenburger earns scholarship to School of American Ballet

By Ashlee Kieler
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At 14 years old Adrian Oldenburger may be a more accomplished dancer than many adults.

Adrian, a home-schooled sophomore from Altoona, received the opportunity of a lifetime when he was chosen for a full merit scholarship to train at the School of American Ballet in New York City for five weeks. “I’ve been dancing for 10 years now,” he said. “I started because I was in gymnastics and my sister started dance. My parents asked if I wanted to try it, so I liked it and did both.” Then the Oldenburgers moved and the new studio didn’t offer gymnastics.

While the family lived in Alabama Adrian performed with the Montgomery Ballet in Shakespeare on the Green, said LeAnn Oldenburger, his mother. “The director came to me and said we have a slight problem, they had never had a boy dance before so they didn’t have a dressing room. He asked if they could put him with the older men. After that it was all about ballet. They treated him like a prince and he’s loved it ever since.”

Adrian has concentrated mainly on ballet. “I just stuck with dance,” he said. “I’ve been coming to Capital City Dance Center for about three and a half years now since we moved to Altoona. “It just flows through me and the music kind of warms my soul,” he said. “It’s always amazing to me.”

LeAnn Oldenburger said Adrian has impressed her over the years not just with his dance abilities but his understanding and knowledge of dancing for the audience and himself. “He’s always loved it,” she said. “You can always see the passion in him. The way he dances you can see that’s what he wants to do. I’m impressed with his knowledge of what he needs and making sure he gets that.”

LeAnn recalled a time when Adrian fell on stage. “He was upset and I asked if he was embarrassed,” she said. “But he said ‘No, but people don’t come to see you fall, they come to see you dance.’ Those things impressed me over the years, knowing the audience.”

This summer Adrian Oldenburger has continued to dance at Capital City Dance Center for the two week summer intensive program. The program included 70 hours of ballet, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. He also performed in the studio’s summer production of “Sleeping Beauty & More...”

Adrian has performed as a Nutcracker prince for the past two years at the Civic Center, and was a Nutcracker prince and Rat King in a production of “The Nutcracker” at Stephens Auditorium in Ames.

“The studio is a wonderful place and the teachers are great,” he said. “It’s a smaller studio so it’s not as well known but it’s probably the best in the area.”

The skills Adrian learned from the studio helped him secure the scholarship to the School of American Ballet. “I auditioned in Kansas City,” he said. “I had thought the leader didn’t like me because she would correct me a lot and tell me what to do better. At the end she pulled me aside and said she wanted to give me a full scholarship.”

Adrian originally heard from his teachers at Capital City Dance Center about opportunities to attend summer training at other, well-known schools. “They told us about ones here and then some at other places that might give you jobs after school,” he said. “It’s good experience to go away and get your name known.”

This is the first time Adrian will be going away for training. “Everyday we’ll take classes and go to auditions and learn about the program,” he said. “We’ll dance and take trips on weekends to Six Flags, the Bronx Zoo and to see other professional companies perform. I’m really looking forward to the trip. The teachers and making new friends and to help me progress as a dancer and artist.”

Because the teacher in Kansas City tipped off Adrian, he was calm when notice came that he had been given a scholarship. “My mom was surprised how calm I was,” he said. “I was so calm and she was crying.”

The scholarship provides room, board, tuition and transportation, Adrian said. The camp began on June 27 and Adrian comes back July 30.