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Entertainment News

A Dancer with a Flair for Winning

By Phillip L. Sciarillo

Twelve year old Anna Craddock of Stony Brook is a seasoned veteran of several ballet competitions. She has already established an enviable record of accomplishment. For her, 2008 has been a banner year.

The petite dynamo is one of the youngest members of Seiskaya Ballet's pre-professional group. According to Artistic Director Valia Seiskaya, "Anna is a rare combination of talent, focus and athleticism. She has an excellent ear for music and understands how to punctuate her dancing to create an excellent impression. She is very charismatic and has the innate ability to fill space on stage. She is the complete package."

Competition results confirm Mme. Seiskaya's observations. The Long Island Ballet Competition, held at SUNY Old Westbury on May 3 and 4, became a showcase of her talent. She not only dominated the Junior Division competition, but scored the highest overall point total recorded this year



Anna Craddock on stage at the Metro Talent Competition dancing the female variation from Grand Pas Classique.

photo courtesy of Kimberly Max Photography

among all three divisions. Flush from that success, Ms. Craddock competed in the Metro Talent Competition in Brooklyn which attracts students from the tri-state area. Her performance was again extraordinary. Although only 11 years old and registered in the 9-11 year old category, her pointe work and the difficulty of her selection got her bumped into the 12-14 year old category. She recorded the second highest overall scores in the competition for 12-14 year olds being nudged out by Seiskaya Ballet's Alexis Lucena, 14, of East

Patchogue.

June 1 brought on top honors for the third straight year at the Ballet Education and Scholarship Fund, Inc.'s annual Scholarship competition in June. Garnering an \$800 scholarship, Anna again had the highest overall scores in both junior and senior divisions. The following weekend she was off to Miami, Florida for the American Ballet Competition (ABC). The ABC attracts competitors from South and Central America as well as from across the United States. She finished second in the junior division with a very strong performance, Craddock was edged out by last year's second place winner at the ABC.

And what lies ahead for the diminutive dancer? "I am looking forward to the *Nutcracker* (at Stony Brook University's Staller Center for the Arts) this December. I am trying out for several roles and that is really exciting," concluded Anna. Her mentor and teacher Mme. Seiskaya added, "2009 will bring new opportunities for Anna. Watching her perform and compete will be a show in itself."