

# The Smithtown News

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Dimensions of

# Living

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## Stepping into the spotlight

Dancer groomed at Seiskaya in midst of a 'coming-out' party

By DAVID AMBRO

**M**ariana DeMarco has been dancing for 10 years, but never like this.

Over the past two months, the 15-year-old Smithtown High School West ninth-grader, who performs with the Seiskaya Ballet in St. James, has stepped into the spotlight.

At the Metro Talent Competition in Brooklyn May 20, a diverse dance contest featuring ballet, tap, jazz, and lyrical styles, Ms. DeMarco won the Platinum Award (first place) in ballet solo. She also captured the Judges Award "for her beautiful technique and excellent turns," for her variation of La Fille Mal Gardée.

"It was really a nice accomplishment for me," Ms. DeMarco said during an interview in **The Smithtown News** office Monday, June 18. "It was nice to compete there because it featured many forms of dance and you could appreciate them all. I've been working on this piece for a year and finally got it up to the point where I can perform it at a caliber I want it to be at."

At a competition at the Seiskaya Ballet on June 3, Ms. DeMarco finished third in the senior division to win an \$800 scholarship to the Ballet Education Scholarship Fund Inc.'s 28th annual Intensive Summer Workshop. The BESFI Intensive is a six-week classical dance course held during July and August by renowned instructors in classical and character ballet and modern jazz. This year's instructors include Eleanor D'Antuono, Rhodie Jorgenson and Eileen Houghton—all former dancers with American Ballet Theatre—and acclaimed former Bolshoi Ballet dancer Alexei Moskalenko.

"The BESFI program attracts a standout faculty in no small part because of the talented students these instructors have an opportunity to work with," said Valia Seiskaya, artistic director of BESFI and founder of the Seiskaya Ballet. "This program is an unparalleled learning opportunity for those students looking to stay on Long Island this summer."

Ms. DeMarco next traveled to Miami June 7-10 for the American Ballet Competition, and international ballet event, and it was one of her finest moments as a dancer. On the strength of her performance on opening day, Ms. DeMarco advanced to the finals. She did not place in



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**-MARIANA DeMARCO**

On her performance at the American Ballet Competition in Miami

the top three but received the Judge's Award and walked away with a gift certificate.

Ms. DeMarco said she did not expect to make it to the finals and was just performing in Miami for herself. "It's a lot more fun when you just go out just to enjoy it and tell your story to the audience," she said. "It went really well. I came off the stage so happy. I felt really strong and really good about how I performed. When I heard I made it to the finals, I was overjoyed. It was great to know all my work paid off, and it was worth it."

In Miami, Ms. DeMarco competed against, performed with and was coached by dancers from Paris, Brazil and across the United States. Ms. DeMarco attended sessions in the morning, during which she was coached by Kee-Juan Han—the competition's founder and a teacher at the North Carolina School of the Arts. She then competed in the afternoon.

"It really gave you a finishing touch," she said. "It was an honor to be coached by such

very distinguished teachers and ballet mistresses and masters."

Ms. DeMarco has been dancing at Seiskaya Ballet since she was 5 years old, coached by Ms. Seiskaya and Dimitri Papadakos. Ms. DeMarco said they have instilled in her the passion to become a dancer. "They have supported me and guided me throughout my dancing career and taught me all the basics," she said.

Ms. DeMarco wants to pursue a career as a dancer; however, she is a realist and knows that it is a very competitive field. If she does not make it to center stage, she hopes to pursue a career as a dance teacher or as a physical therapist for dancers.

"I just want to be involved in dance and in ballet," she said.

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Space is still available for the BESFI Intensive Summer Workshop. For more information, call 631-862-6925.