

***My name is Grace Koznarek and I am 17 y. old.
I am from Chicago, USA, and i dance since I was 5y.***

Questions

How do you feel about the latest media news?

Has the atmosphere changed at SBB because of the journalism?

The news is mostly surprising. It is unfair and was written by people, who don't have any knowledge of dance or ballet in general.

Unfortunately it is a negative atmosphere. Everyone is very stressed out and concerned for the school's future.

Why did you come to SBB?

I came to SBB because it seemed to me an amazing chance to change my lifestyle on a high level and to come to Europe where there are more opportunities for dance and more companies

What do you like best?

I love that we have the opportunity to travel with the school and experience new places and stages. I am also very grateful that we have the chance to join rehearsals and performances of Staatsballett as audience or as active part.

By entering school have you felt welcome and comfortable with your mates and teachers?

Moving to Europe was hard. The language barrier was there, but everyone from my friends to my teachers always check in on me to see how I am.

What could be improved at SBB?

Mensa. The food tastes good, but it could be healthier.

What strengths and talents were you able to discover and develop at SBB?

I am pushed in a good way by my classmates and teachers to be better every single day. Too many good improvements have been made to count. I have grown a lot as person and dancer here.

Did anyone in particular help you with this? Who supports you the most?

My friends and teachers of course, but most of all my parents.

Do you always understand immediately what your dance teachers want from you when they explain it, or do you think it is important that they show it and make physical corrections?

Yes. Sometimes the physical corrections are essential for understanding movements better. I have never experienced a situation where I felt uncomfortable with these kinds of corrections at this school.

What do you know about the artistic director Prof. Gregor Seyffert as dancer and choreographer?

Still nothing.

What are your impressions of him? Have his comments been helpful during final rehearsals or performances?

In fact we don't have classes with him, i can't tell much.

What was the most inspiring experience at school so far?

Going to rehears ,Shadows' at the Staatsballett studios. Seeing the older, more experienced company dancers, how they work. This is very inspiring and shows me what I could be.

What does the National Youth Ballet mean to you?

The chance and an advantage to get more performances, also abroad, and to work with famous choreographers in comparison to many other ballet schools, which have only their school presentation in front of their mums and dads at the end of the year.

In how many countries have you had the opportunity to dance?

All over Germany and soon Switzerland.

Who is your favourite choreographer you had the chance to work with?

Eric Gauthier. He was just gorgeous!

Have you ever been on stage with a (ballet) star?

Not yet, but I had the chance to take ballet classes at the studios of Staatsballett next to Daniil Simkin and Iana Salenko.

How does it feel to dance on a theatre stage? (which productions?)

Amazing! The energy is amazing! Being with my friends backstage is so much fun. In general travelling all together to performances is also always very funny.

How do you imagine the everyday life of a professional dancer at the theatre?

Long and hard. Fighting your way tot he top of the company. But also fun and blessed working hard to achieve your dreams and aims.

Do you feel well prepared for professional life?

Yes. I am not ready yet, but this school definitely helps me prepare for it.

What was the most critical feedback you ever got at school? What do you think you still have to work on?

That I need to show off the things that make me special. And they are right! Every dancer has something special no one else has. You just need to find it and push it.

Has your body awareness changed since you started school?

I have learned so much about how to use my muscles and that I can achieve more than I think I am able to. My teacher, Mrs Nacheva, motivates me to grow, but also always checks in how my body feels.

Are you graduating (Abi)? Are you going for a bachelor's degree, too?

I am going for a bachelor.

What kind of job would you want to do if you hadn't chosen dance? Would that be an option after your dance career?

I would like to either be a graphic designer or serve in the church.

What was the most interesting role you have danced so far?

Being part of Barbara Gatto's piece. It was the first taste of European contemporary dance.

If you could choose, which ballet company would you go to?

I love America, but the opportunities in Europe are so good. That's why American Ballet Theatre (ABT) or Staatsballett. I also really like repertoire of Staatsballett.

What does dancing mean to you?

I love the feelings and emotions it brings up. I love working my mind and body. I love dancing for others.

If you could rewind time, would you choose the same way?

Yes. I am right where I am supposed to be.