

A life devoted to dance

By **ABBY WEINGARTEN CORRESPONDENT**

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If the ballet slipper fits, Christina Koinis is ready to give it a whirl and see how far it takes her.

At 17, the home- schooled senior has been studying a full spectrum of styles for nine years at the Florida Dance Workshop in Port Charlotte, under the tutelage of workshop owner/director Michelle Labousier.

As a member of the school's charitable performing troupe, the Florida Dance Company, Christina participates in its "Ovations" competition team.

"I enjoy the discipline and work ethic that ballet takes. I love that you can emote through every movement," Christina said. "I like that after all the sweat and time you put in, there's still more to improve on."

In December, Christina was chosen for a production of "Nutcracker" with the Moscow Ballet Company at the Barbara B. Mann Performing Arts Hall in Fort Myers. Her portion was the "Spanish" solo, which she skillfully completed in pointe shoes.

She recently completed a summer intensive program called "Ballet Florida" in West Palm Beach, and dedicated four weeks (six hours a day) to the study of classical ballet (en pointe), modern dance, jazz, Pilates and tap. Christina is also currently enrolled in **Florida Virtual School** and takes classes at Edison Community College.

After she graduates in June, she intends to pursue a dance major in college, with an emphasis on ballet.

"I've been fortunate to have a good, supportive environment, as far as teachers and family go, and to be able to dance every day," she said. "I love that God has blessed me with this passion."

Susan Kickbush, who is a Charlotte County teacher and Labousier's mother, founded the dance workshop in 1991 for recreational and preprofessional pupils.

One of Kickbush's alumni, Port Charlotte's Marcus Bellamy, was accepted into the Juilliard School, debuted as a soloist in "Tarzan" on Broadway and appeared in the film "Across the Universe."

Other graduates have gone on to become cruise ship performers, professional dance company members, college dance majors, title winners and choreographers.