

Nervous?

She was too thrilled to be scared

It's every performer's right to be nervous on stage and Maya Ergas Shwayder is no different. But once on her toes on the stage, the dancer who performed in Michigan Ballet Theater's "The Nutcracker" at the Lake Orion Center for the Performing Arts, relaxes and has fun.

The daughter of Aimee Ergas and Tor Shwayder of Farmington Hills, the East Middle School sixth grader danced as one of the maids in the "Mother Ginger" scene and enjoyed the performances so thoroughly that in spite of dancing in four shows in two days, she was reluctant for the experience to be over.

"Once you get out on stage, you're having so much fun, you forget that you're nervous. You just have to smile."

Maya Ergas Shwayder
—dancer

"After the last performance of the last 'Nutcracker,'" recalls Maya, "I wanted to go back out there and do it again. It was so much fun. Before the performance, there's so much going on and everybody's nervous and excited. Then once you get out on stage, you're having so much fun, you forget that you're ner-

vous. You just have to smile."

While taking part in such a major holiday performance, the dancers receive adulation, attention, flowers and candy. However, Maya bypasses these details and instead concentrates on the more sustaining benefits.

"I don't work hard just for the reward. I work for the experience and for the love of ballet. And some of the steps that we work on, some of them are a lot of work, and then some of them are really a lot of work. But overall, think it's a great commitment."

Maya's mother remembers a little girl who couldn't wait to dance. She started taking creative movement dance lessons at age five, and by third grade her parents thought Maya ready for the rigors and mental acuity that ballet training required.

It was then that she was enrolled in Cornelia's School of Dance in Keego Harbor for lessons once a week. She has currently increased her training to three sessions a week and has been on pointe for a year, an advanced form of ballet in which the dancer performs many movements up on the point of the foot

in special toe shoes.

While at Cornelia's School of Dance, Maya has also danced in past performances of "The Nutcracker" and in last spring's production of "The Sleeping Beauty."

Other interests of Maya's include cello lessons from four years of age, which enables her to join in during family music sessions with her father, a violinist with the Birmingham Bloomfield Symphony; brother Kobey, age 14 and a pianist; and Ari, age 13, a violinist.

Additionally, Maya spends four weeks out of the summer at Interlochen Music Camp to enhance her studies in cello, musical theater and choir; and also enrolls in the summer day camp at Marquis Theater in Northville, where she is enjoying increasingly difficult theater roles.

At East Middle School, Maya favors social studies and science, and plays percussion in her school's band. She is a member of the Mosaic Club, a group which promotes peace, prevails prejudice, and highlights acts of kindness. She is an avid reader, and will "read any kind of book, as long as it has pages in it."

Notably, the undertaking of advanced ballet training hasn't deterred Maya from other interests. Still, her most serious commitment? "Ballet," is Maya's resolute reply. "It strengthens you in your back, in your mind, and in your soul."

She's a star: East Middle School sixth-grader Maya Ergas Shwayder performs in Michigan Ballet Theater's "The Nutcracker" at the Lake Orion Center for the Performing Arts. She is the daughter of Aimee Ergas and Tor Shwayder of Farmington Hills.



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