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### **BALLET TENNESSEE IMPACTS THE ARTS AT LOCAL, STATE, & NATIONAL LEVELS**

Seven local teens in Ballet Tennessee's professional training program have been accepted into nationally competitive Summer Intensive Dance Programs. Breanna Houston (16, Signal Mountain High School) of Soddy Daisy; Joseph Lynch (18, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga) of Chattanooga; Crystal Newson (14, Center for Creative Arts High School) of Brainerd; Jenison Owens (14, Lookout Valley High School) of Lookout Valley; Shavon Ransom (15, Center for Creative Arts High School) of Hixson; and Elizabeth Sanford (15, Girls Preparatory School) of Lookout Mountain auditioned for the New York City-based Ailey School program in Atlanta on February 14. Immediately following the audition class, the teens were informed that they made the cut. Emilie Cole (17, home-school) of Red Bank auditioned for summer programs run by the Joffrey Ballet School and Nashville Ballet and was accepted into four: Joffrey Midwest Dance Summer Intensive, Summer Intensive in New York City, Joffrey South Workshop, and Nashville Ballet Summer Intensive.

Hundreds of dancers show up for these national level auditions. Standing out among the throngs can be very difficult. Adjudicators look for the dancer who has knowledge of proper protocol, etiquette, and good technique, as well as talent. "It is exciting that all of the dancers we sent to audition were accepted," says Barry VanCura, Executive Director of Ballet Tennessee, "It is a testament to their dedication, motivation, and training and a special honor to Ballet Tennessee that so many dancers from our organization stood out at the auditions." Five of the seven dancers are scholarship recipients of Ballet Tennessee's Talent Identification Program which provides year-round training at Ballet Tennessee. Talent Identification Program students get their start in Dance Alive, an introductory program in partnership with Chattanooga Parks

and Recreation. All seven are company dancers who will be performing this April in the world premiere of The Red Shoes in Chattanooga.

The trainees of Ballet Tennessee benefit from the experiences, teaching philosophy, and leadership of Barry VanCura; Artistic Director Anna Baker-VanCura, and Associate Director Laurel Shastri. In addition to their work at Ballet Tennessee, these dedicated artists are reaching far into the community. This spring, Anna Baker-VanCura, co-Founder and Artistic Director of Ballet Tennessee and Barry VanCura are guest teachers for the dance conference, BalletFest in Atlanta. Ms. Baker-VanCura also is staging the classical ballet Les Sylphides for Nashville's Vanderbilt Dance Company and adjudicating the National Titles for Dance Masters of America. Mr. VanCura has joined the adjunct faculty of Covenant College where he is teaching theater movement classes and choreographing Bye Bye Birdie. Two new works by Mr. VanCura will be presented at BalletFest. In addition, he is choreographing a new full length ballet based on the tale by Hans Christian Anderson, The Red Shoes, to premiere in Chattanooga at the Tivoli Theater on April 23-24. Associate Director Laurel Shastri is providing artist residencies and professional development sessions for teachers across the state and at the Value Plus Summer Intensive in Dickson, Tennessee this June.

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