

# ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

## Artists of the Week: Tate Lee and Louisa Forney

2016-01-12 12:48:20



Two ballet students from the Dmitri Kulev Classical Ballet Academy have each been presented with a prestigious opportunity this year.

After spending a few weeks in New York last summer participating in a Bolshoi Ballet summer intensive, Louisa Forney was invited to train for six months at the Bolshoi Ballet Academy in Moscow. She will leave at the end of the month and spend the second semester of her sophomore year in Russia. The Bolshoi is considered to be one of the premiere ballet companies in the world, and a spot in its academy is highly coveted among young ballet dancers.

Tate Lee has been selected to compete at the Prix de Lausanne in February. Out of more than 290 candidates representing 36 nationalities applying via video to participate, 71 were invited to travel to Switzerland to compete in the weeklong event, which will be seen by members of more than 30 of the top international ballet companies. Lee was the only male from North America selected and one of only four Americans.

**Name:** Tate Lee

**School:** home school

**Grade:** 11

**Hometown:** Mission Viejo

**How did you get involved in ballet?** My mother took my sister to enroll in a parks and recreation program. I asked her if I could participate. She agreed but was reluctant to let me without talking to my dad and was afraid of what his reaction might be. Fortunately, when my mom did talk to my dad, his only concern was for my happiness. I loved it from the beginning! From there, I started training with MacKinnon Dance Academy in Oxnard and found my way to Dmitri Kulev in 2009.

**What is your favorite ballet? What is your dream role to dance?** "Giselle" is my favorite ballet. It was the first professional production I saw. I would love to dance the lead role of Prince Albrecht

**Who have been your influences?** Initially, I was drawn to dance because of Gene Kelly. Right now, my favorite principal dancers are David Hallberg of the American Ballet Theatre and Bolshoi Ballet, and Guillaume Cote of the National Ballet of Canada.

**Did you have a mentor in your development as a ballet dancer? If so, how did they help you?** I looked up to my brother, Bryce, who now dances for Colorado Ballet, and his best friend, Sam Zaldivar (now with Boston Ballet). Bryce started later and had to learn to work really hard to catch up and achieve his dreams. Sam was a prodigy who worked hard, was a great dancer and still remained humble and acted like a normal teenager. Being around them kept me wanting more and challenged me to work hard to become like them.

**What inspires you?** I try to set personal dance-related goals each year. It may be a competition like Prix de Lausanne. Sometimes it's for the opportunity to perform a role. And sometimes the goal is just personal – to

perfect a step or element of my technique or enhance my artistry.

---

**Name:** Louisa Forney

**School:** Crean Lutheran High School

**Grade:** 10

**Hometown:** Aliso Viejo

**How did you get involved in ballet?** I first started ballet when my mom enrolled me in an after-pre-school ballet and tap class since she could not pick me up right away due to her work.

**What is your favorite ballet? What is your dream role to dance?** My favorite ballet is "Swan Lake," and my dream role is to dance the lead in Swan Lake, Odette/Odile.

**Who have been your influences? Did you have a mentor in your development as a ballet dancer? If so, how did they help you?** Dmitri and Jennifer Kulev have been my biggest mentors. When I first started Dmitri Kulev Classical Ballet Academy, Ms. Jennifer was my first teacher, and she helped form a strong base for me. Mr. Dmitri also really pushes me technically and artistically each day, and I would be nowhere without them.

**What inspires you?** Dancers that push themselves everyday and work 110 percent inspire me. Going to company performances also inspires me because I will forever have that child in me that watches in amazement, and when I go back to the studio I have something new I want to work on.

**Other than ballet, are you involved in any other activities? If yes, what are they?** I have liked photography for a while, and I even took a class my freshman year, which was a great learning experience. Modeling is also something I do other than dance. My first time modeling was in 2013 for OC Fashion Week and I still occasionally model for them.

**What do you get out of dancing?** Dancing has really taught me about self-discipline. I constantly have to push myself and can never let myself slack off, which has helped me in my outside life and at school.

**How do the arts figure into your long-term goals?** I want to become a professional ballet dancer in a good company and then later open my own dance studio. I am also interested in designing leotards, so that might be in my future as well.

**What is the best advice you have received?** Work for it, plain and simple, until you actually do it.

**Do you have any other thoughts about being a ballet dancer that you would like to share with us?** Being a ballet dancer is a huge commitment, and I have to give up most things other teenagers take for granted, like free time. My schedule is always busy but I still have amazing friends outside of dance so I don't feel like I have missed out on anything.

**Contact the writer:** 714-796-2258 or [varsityarts@ocregerister.com](mailto:varsityarts@ocregerister.com)