

Film Review: Ballet is a Fierce, Youthful Art in ‘First Position’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on May 20, 2012 - 9:13pm

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CHICAGO – In general, one of the essential rites of passage for girls in childhood are ballet lessons and costumed recitals. What about those exceptional talents who stick with the art? Director Bess Kargman creates a documentary about the elite youth within the beauty and truth of the dance, “First Position.”



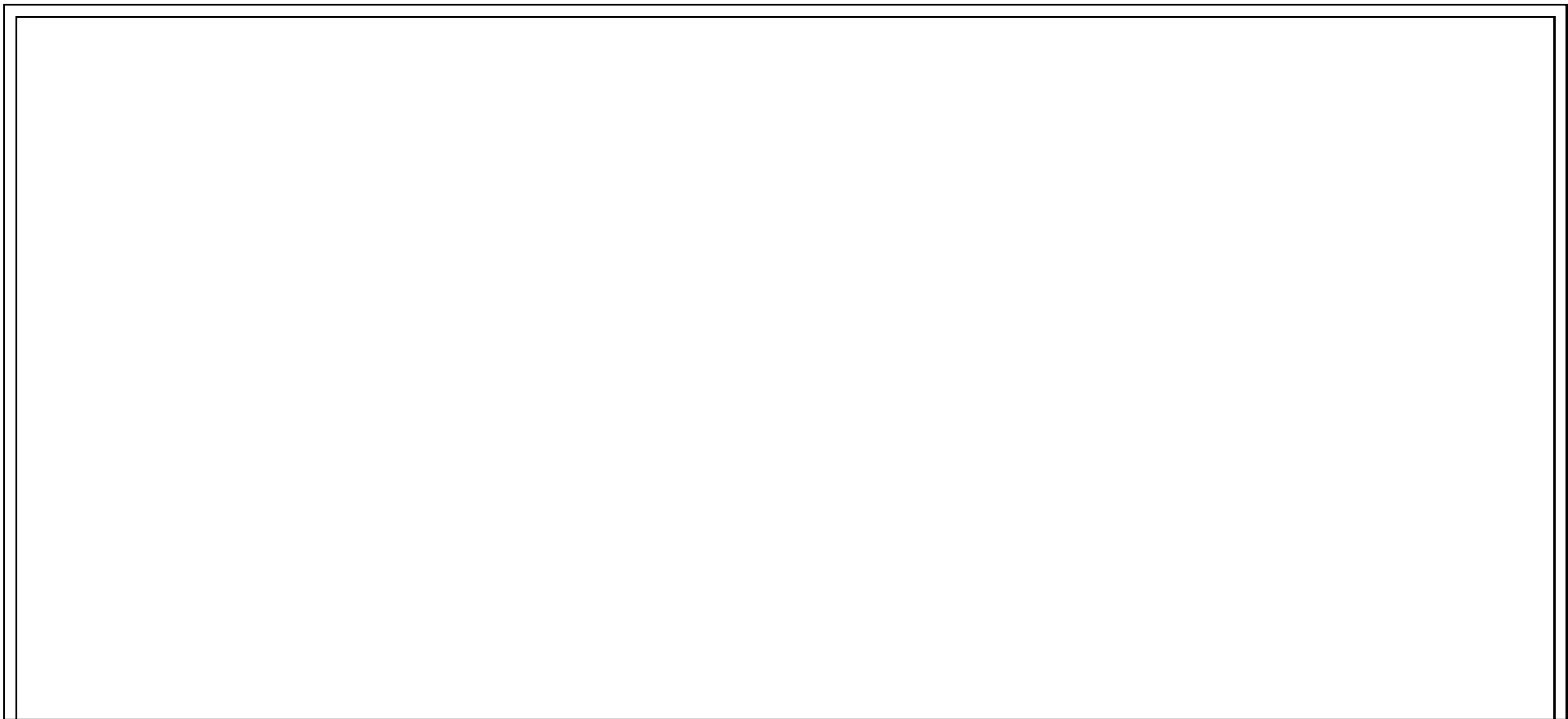
The title refers to the stance that every new ballet student learns, and in Kargman’s document, symbolizes the career beginnings of the cream of the youth crop. No matter what your opinion or connection to the art form is, this film enhances the appreciation of the hard work and dedication that these children endure. There are several surprises, with both the expected stereotypes and outside-the-box participants. Everything is beautiful at the ballet.

Kargman follows six different competitors in the prestigious Youth America Grand Prix, which focuses on ballet dancers ages 9-19. There are types that are expected – the intensity of a parent who accommodates and sacrifices, the instructor taskmaster in the studio and the hours of obsessive rehearsal. But when the individual kids are spotlighted, a new truth emerges. Life has a different path for these talents, and each journey has an artistic interpretation within it.

There are ballets types that might be assumed, upper middle class kids who have the luck of time and resources to indulge in the art, but the best part of the film is the unexpected. There is the war orphan whose odds of being in ballet were nil at her birth, and the teenager from South America who is dancing for a better life. All of the dancers are shown as normal kids, with normal kid activities and innocence, which becomes apparent. But when that music starts and the first position is realized, the artist within the child is born.

“First Position” continues its limited release in Chicago on May 18th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Aran Bell, Gaya Bommer Yemini, Michaela Deprince, Jules Jarvis Fogarty, Mike Forgarty, Rebecca Houseknecht and Joan Sebastian Zamora. Directed by Bess Kargman. Not rated.

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The Remarkable Micheala DePrince of ‘First Position’
Photo credit: Sundance Selects



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