

Senior Spotlight: Fostering Perfection

By Alex Hodor-Lee, Contributing Writer

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Hannah Foster is a ballerina.

Her movement is magisterial: "Her body was just built for ballet - 180-degree turn-out, a slender frame and super long limbs, delicate lines, perfect arabesque - she's incredible," dance major Megan Killeen '14 says.

Foster's grace translates when she speaks-her gestures are elongated, her hand swivels with an inherent cadence -as if elegance were congenital. Yet, anyone who knows Foster knows that her perfection is underpinned by her work ethic and dedication.

While many students enjoy nightlife and the college lifestyle, Foster's friends drink to her in absentia, as she sacrifices social life for life dream - and it's been that way since she began dancing at age 3.

"At San Francisco Ballet School it was just too hard for me to commute to the city and do regular high school. So, I tested out of high school when I was 15 and started taking classes at the local junior college." Foster, now 20, says.

Foster graduated 2 years early to commit to the SF Ballet, an hour-and-a-half commute from her East Bay home, located in the San Francisco foothills. "I would get home around 7.30 and do homework while I iced my feet," a smiling Foster reflects.

At Skidmore, Foster majors in English. "I've always been a huge reader, I used to write little poems in my room by myself all the time. So I knew English would just be natural to me." Foster is currently writing her capstone, a collection of personal essays (already 53 pages). "I'm writing about dance - big surprise!" she says with a chuckle. "I want to explore the dancer's relationship with perfection and how it can be damaging."

"They tell you that you can always be better in ballet - you can always point your foot harder, your leg can be higher, your line can be more clean, you can turn more," she says. "We're always working towards this ideal, every single day. Perfection is impossible." Despite this, Foster is not far from ideal.

After months of weekend commuting to New York and Boston for open call auditions, Foster was chosen out of 80 other dancers to join the Boston Ballet School as a trainee. "It's not a paid job, but it's the first step. Kind of like being an intern! Maybe? Maybe, that would be the equivalent."

Most professional ballerinas don't go to college; Hannah Foster is the exception. "For a ballet dancer to go to college - it's really unusual. I'm feeling a lot of pressure right now because I'm 20, which is such a baby for a college student, but for a ballerina that's late to be starting."

Foster will graduate in May - a year ahead of schedule - and will join the Boston Ballet School in the fall, taking it one step at a time, "I feel like as I get older, I'm trying to think less far into the future. I mean, certainly I've had this vision of being a ballerina since I was 3 years old." For now, Foster focuses on preparing for the competitive world of professional dance, with a mindset she's maintained for the past 17 years, "I'll always have it in the back of my mind: be perfect."