

## ENGLISH TRANSLATION: DANS MAGAZINE AWARD

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Title:

**IRINA:**

**'MAKING MISTAKES IS PART OF IT'**

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Photo credit Left:

Irina as Aurora in The Sleeping Beauty

photo by: **LK Studio**

Deep and Pallas Sluyter, translated and reprinted with permission of the author.

(Text in Bubble):

She only stayed in our country for a year, but what a time

it was! Coached

and supported by ballet school **Degas in Delft** - 'I couldn't have wished for better, more loving guidance' - the Romanian **Irina Petra Caracischi** managed to fill a small trophy case at dance competitions in the Netherlands and Belgium. This includes the second **Dans Magazine Award**, which she received at the end of March during **AmsterDans**. She is now studying at the **Joffrey Ballet School** in New York City.

Article:

Four times gold, once silver, three times bronze, the **Dans Magazine Award** and certificates for a dance internship and summer course. Irina Petra Caracischi (18) herself is still a bit bewildered by all the prizes she has won in the past few months - most of them for solos, in the categories 'classical' or 'modern', and two in groups. In the previous year, she had not been accepted to any of the academies for which she'd auditioned. 'It wasn't until I was eleven that I knew for sure that I wanted to be a dancer, but because of the corona pandemic, my education stopped for almost two years. I had to work very hard to catch up. I'm still not quite there'.

### **Pure magic**

Irina is a Christmas child, born on Christmas Day 2007 in Bucharest. 'Christmas is still very special to me. When I was six years old, I saw my first Nutcracker. Although the memory of it is rather vague, and I have probably also somewhat romanticised the experience in my head, but for me, The Nutcracker is and remains pure magic!'

With parents who encouraged all of her interests, Irina tried her hand at 'everything' in her childhood, including playing the piano, karate, and - inspired by The Nutcracker and a television dance show - ballet. 'So ballet was not yet very serious for me at that time, but I immediately loved the lessons, especially the simplest barre exercises. I loved doing the same routine day after day and slowly making progress. I still love the barre, adagio exercises, and the center work. Actually, maybe I enjoy that even more than performing'.

## Potential

Due to a new job held by her father, an IT manager, Irina moved to Poland when she was 14. 'That move was hard on me, but the great thing about my new ballet school was that we performed all over Poland. From that experience, I discovered what it means to be on stage. I saw many things go wrong, and I learned that making mistakes is part of it'.

'Finding the right lessons and training regularly to improve dance technique is very important, but the right training and support in that area were lacking'.

'In both Romania, and in Poland, I was unable to find a school.

I could not find a school that taught me how to improve the areas where I was lacking technically'.

## A visit last year

to her sister, three years her senior, who is studying nano biology at TU Delft, changed that. During a "touristic outing" in Delft, Irina discovered the **Degas International Dance Academy** and decided to attend their annual summer course. She immediately "had an enormous click" with ballet teacher, **Pallas Sluyter**. She and director **Anacia Weiskittel** were so impressed by Irina's story and potential that they offered her a scholarship to attend classes at their school for a year. 'I have been received there', Irina says, 'with so much love. The student body is very mixed, but everyone there is celebrated and appreciated for who she or he is. Pallas and Anacia also seem to know exactly what each individual student needs. If you dance purely for fun, that's totally okay. But if you want more, they push you to push your limits and - if you want to - to participate in competitions.'

## Own path

After a few months Irina participated in a preliminary round of the **Youth America Grand Prix in Portugal, the Flemish Dance Waves, the Royal Dance Competition in Wassenaar, and AmsterDans**. From the classical repertoire there she danced a solo of **Aurora** from **The Sleeping Beauty**, which she worked on intensively with Pallas Sluyter. 'That was really a challenge for me. It's quite a long variation, so I had to work hard on my stamina and strength.'

The expressive contemporary solo Irina performed at the competitions, **Killer Ink**, was created especially for her by choreographer and dancer **Savea Kagan**, who is also the daughter of Degas director, Anacia Weiskittel.

Irina: 'I also took modern classes in Romania, but this was something totally different. Although Savea didn't know me at all yet, she created a solo that fits me very well

and in a way also tells my life story, because Killer Ink is about someone who follows her own path instead of the traditional way.'

Photo credit Right:

**Astrid van Leeuwen**

Caption:

'I'VE HAD TO WORK HARD ON MY STAMINA AND STRENGTH.'

### **Rollercoaster**

Meanwhile, that path took her to the Big Apple, where - after once again, having done many auditions - she was accepted with a scholarship to the **Joffrey Ballet School**. 'I really can't believe I'm moving to New York yet,' she said shortly before leaving. 'I don't think the whole idea will sink in until I land at Kennedy Airport.'

Until now, she has been taught primarily in the Vaganova method, so she is looking forward to being introduced to a wider variety of teachers and techniques at the Joffrey Ballet School. 'After all, I also really like the **Balanchine** technique and anyway, as a dancer, I would like to become as versatile as possible.'

She has no definite plans for the future. 'It doesn't matter to me whether I end up in a purely classical, or a more contemporary company, although the **Paris Opera** is my absolute favorite. But that might be too ambitious.'

The past period, she says, has been a rollercoaster. 'They say you need a year after a move to feel somewhat in place, so moving for the third time in a short time is not easy. At the same time, I have grown enormously in the past year, both as a person and as a dancer. I have become a lot more independent and because of all the support I received in Delft, I now have much better control of my body, I know a lot more about anatomy and the flexibility of my hips and hamstrings has improved a lot.' She would not have missed the time in the Netherlands for anything. 'From Romania or Poland I could never have made the transition to New York.'