

THE TRIBUNE

Arts & Entertainment

Dance is passion for Stouffville teen Geoff Larkin

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Although 17-year-old Geoff Larkin of Stouffville is regarded by his friends as just a regular guy who loves skateboarding, track and field and cross country running, this soft-spoken, modest teen has another not so typical — passion: he loves to dance.

While still a small boy, his love for music and his sense of rhythm prompted his mother to encourage him to enroll at Stouffville's Dance Expressions. Larkin readily agreed, and for the past six years has studied jazz, lyrical expression, ballet, musical theatre, and tap under the direction of Charlotte Mackay and Jeanette Kelly. However, this year Larkin found that



HEAD OVER HEELS: Stouffville dancer Geoff Larkin goes airborne.

Photo by STEVE SOMERVILLE

"school got away too heavy," and he had to drop musical theatre and tap.

Last year at the City Playhouse Theatre in Vaughan, Larkin's dance mark of 92 per cent earned him a \$100 cash scholarship in the 15-16-year-old open dance category. And this past month, in a competition at Stratford, Ontario, his talent and that of the lyrical expression group won the Union Gas award.

But the time Larkin remembers as "the most fun I ever had" was in 1996, when Dance Expressions flew 25 to 30 students to Las Vegas to compete against dance schools from across the United States, and some from Australia, with Dance Expressions being the only school from Canada.

Larkin said that though he enjoys all types of dance, jazz is his favourite. It's "my

thing; it's so powerful."

He believes being a dancer has helped him stay in shape, get along well with other people, and acquire good teamwork skills. Also, he said it teaches him responsibility. "Others in the group, especially girls — have to have a lot of trust in me when I'm lifting them. I haven't dropped too many," he joked, "at least not all the way to the floor."

The next few weeks will be busy for Larkin. He'll be practicing hard for another performance at the City Playhouse Theatre. Dance Expressions will present two shows on Saturday, June 27 — a matinee at 1 p.m. and a 7 p.m. show. Larkin will perform six dances in each show, three in jazz, two in lyrical expression, and one in ballet.

Although he thinks dance is "fun," he's quick to point out that it's not all fun and games. And he advises anyone thinking of studying dance to be prepared to work hard. "If you want to be good, you've got to work hard. There's not one day I come out of jazz class without sweating bullets."

Despite his heavy schedule of school, dance practices and competitions, in addition to his other after-school activities, Larkin doesn't slow down during the summer. He spends eight weeks as a counselor (and some weekends during "off season" as a host and doing farm chores) at Glen Brook Day Camp. "Working with kids is a very important part of my life."

As for the future, Larkin said that his dancing days will probably be over when he enters university. He's not sure what he'll do yet, but knows it will be "working with kids in some capacity."

The Grade 12 student at Stouffville District Secondary School confesses that as a child he may have been teased a little about being a dancer, but now the guys are really "accepting" and that most of his friends think that what he does is "really cool."

He does, however, have one regret about dancing. "I only wish that I'd started earlier."



PITCH PERFECT: Solo vocalist Sarah Blenkhorn was one of the many talented entertainers to take the stage at Stouffville District Secondary School's Spring Fling '98 music department concert last Friday. Photo by STEVE SOMERVILLE



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