

Stouffville Sun-Tribune

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Don't forget to look for Santa Claus in Kinsmen parade at 2 p.m. today on Main St.

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TRACK STAR NAMED BEST IN NATION

SDSS' Geiger has sights set on U.S. scholarship

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Staff Writer

As an internationally ranked track star, Natalie Geiger knows there are many fine performers in the sport from Canada.

The 17-year-old Stouffville resident is now in that select group.

At last week's Technical Congress and Awards dinner in Toronto, Geiger was honoured for her exploits this past season by being chosen as this year's recipient of the Myrtle Cook Trophy.

The award is given to Canada's outstanding Youth Athlete of the Year for those 17 and younger.

A five-time Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations gold medallist, the Grade 12 Stouffville District Secondary School student established three personal bests in the 400-metre sprint at the IAAF world youth competition in Ostrava, Czech Republic, last summer and placed fifth in the final.

As well, she anchored the women's medley relay team to a bronze medal.

It marked the first time a Canadian relay team finished on the podium at the world youth championships.

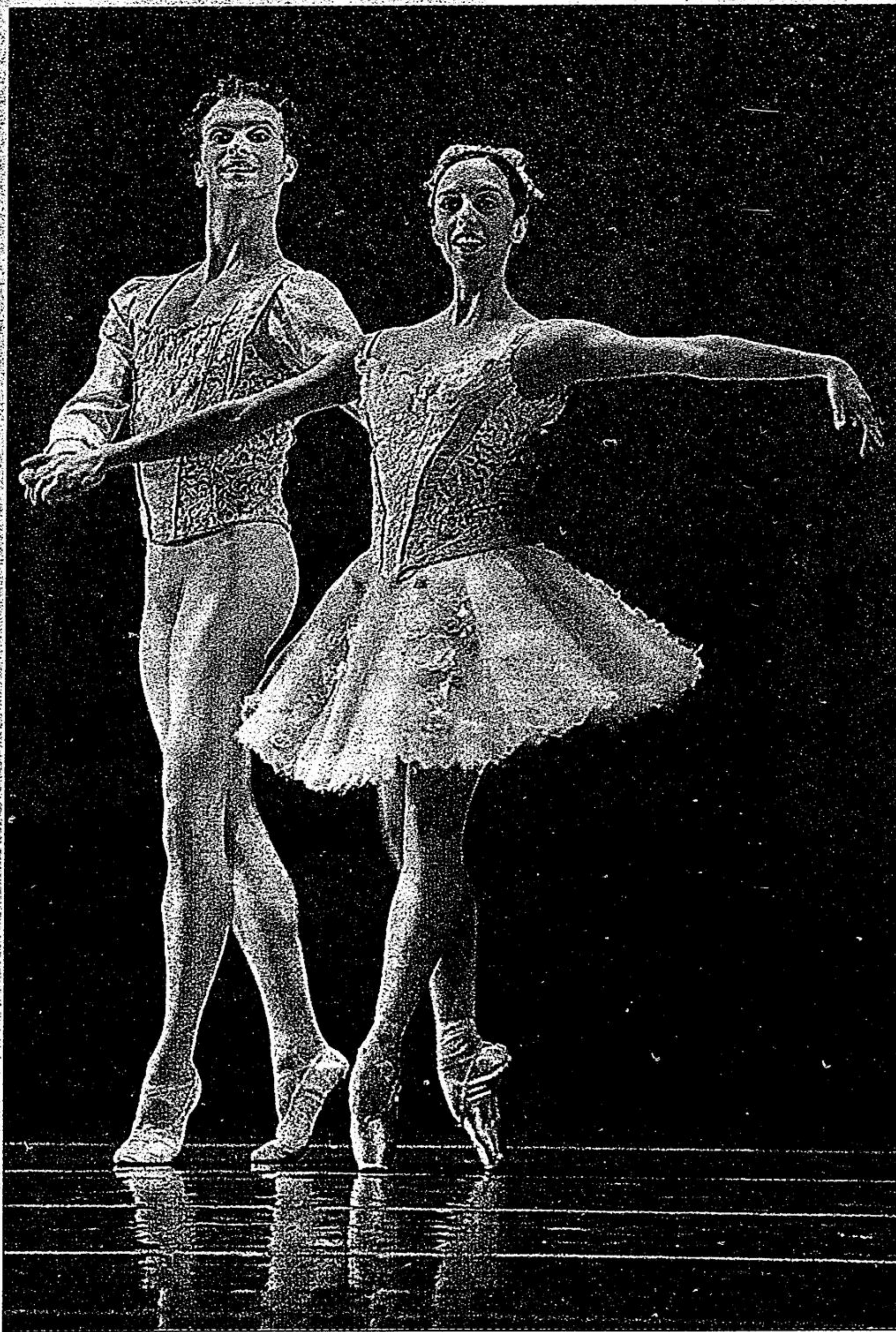
At this year's Canadian junior championships, Geiger won the 400m.

Chosen by a select committee, Geiger was surprised to earn

See GEIGER, page 7.

SATURDAY FOCUS

THE WORLD, FROM MANHATTAN TO CHINA, IS A STAGE FOR BLAIR PUENTE



PHOTO/CHARLES HOPE

Stouffville's Blair Puente and fellow Alberta Ballet company artist Sandrine Cassini dance in *The Nutcracker*. He has danced in China with the company three times and is preparing to perform a 9/11 tribute in New York City next year. He's also preparing for life after dance.

Rare trip home at holidays for dancer

BY HANNELORE VOLPE
Staff Writer

Former Stouffville resident Blair Puente gets to come home for Christmas for the first time in five years this month.

He hasn't had a chance to return to his home, to be with his parents, Daniel and Cynthia, and his older brothers, Neil and Lawrence, during the festive season because of the Alberta Ballet's performance schedule.

He has been a dancer with the company for almost five years.

His parents sometimes travel to see his performances and were at the premiere of *Othello* this fall. He portrayed Cassio, which is the type of role Mr. Puente relishes.

"It is absolutely vital that you have the character in your every movement," Mr. Puente said.

With a flair for acting and the comedic, he portrayed the Mad Hatter in *Alice in Wonderland* and the Evil Stepmother in *Cinderella*, complete with long, flowing dress.

In September, during a three-week tour of China, the ballet company visited five cities, including Shanghai, to perform *Carmen* and George Balanchine's *Who Cares*.

One of the company's performances had to be cancelled because of a typhoon. This is the fourth time the company has visited China and the third time Mr. Puente has travelled with them. During this latest tour, he made sure to explore his new surroundings and visit a variety of restaurants.

The previous tour to China was in 2004 during the Christmas season.

See CAREER, page 8.

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