



In Their Words: Testimonies from Elite Training Participants and their Families

Two years ago I walked into a studio for the first day of the Open World Dance Foundation's summer intensive in New York City. I spent most of that day learning from the legendary Irina Kolpakova, watching her eyes light up as she showed the port-de-bra for a Paquita variation or soar across the studio with the lightest of steps as she demonstrated how a ballerina is supposed to travel across the stage. I went home that night with tired feet and sore muscles but with a feeling of fulfillment and deep yearning for more. That day I was introduced to the Open World Dance Foundation and that day was the beginning of my journey with this beautiful foundation that changed my life.

I have attended the past three summer intensives with the Open World Dance Foundation as well as taken part in their Winter Workshops and Elite Training Program. Through every experience, I have learned an invaluable amount as the foundation has the knowledge that I have yearned for and what they work so hard to pass on and continue is such a treasure. The directors of the foundation, Ekaterina Shchelkanova and Anton Boytsov, as well as all the incredible teachers I have met through the Summer Intensives, have provided me with great inspiration and helped to instill in me the power to trust and continue pursuing and working towards the beauty that I believe in within this art form.

Russia was always an unattainable dream for me. But with the work I received through the Elite Training and Summer Intensives with the Open World Dance Foundation, my unattainable dream finally became within reach. I am now dancing professionally in St. Petersburg, Russia, performing in the many beautiful theatres of the city and as well as traveling the world with the company. It has been a dream that I would never have gotten to without the training, guidance, support, and inspiration of the foundation and the programs they provide. Through all I received during the Elite Training and Summer Intensives, I was able to build a foundation in the Vaganova technique with which am able to continue to work and grow from and have grown a deeper understanding of the true beauty of this classical art form and the importance of its perseverance.

I could not be more thankful for the work and inspiration I was given through the the Elite Training and Summer Intensives of the Open World Dance Foundation. From the beautiful mission, to all the incredible teachers and people involved, I stand behind this foundation with all my heart and hope others will be able to experience all I have through the continuation of the invaluable programs they provide.

Sincerely,

Katia Raj

I have been searching for so long for what OWDF offers, and the Elite Training Program has been incredibly personalized, authentic, and rewarding. To be able to study the purest form of classical ballet technique, and also learn why everything is done the way it is, is truly special. The training provides a window into the true meaning and intentions of classical ballet, allowing each student to advance remarkably, but not only as classical dancers, as people as well.

Juliette

Marc and I want to thank you both so very much for the incredible ballet education you are sharing with Claire. We searched all over to find authentic Vaganova training in the United States, only to find one disappointment after another. When Claire attended her first Open World Dance Foundation audition in 2015, we knew she had found what she was looking for. Finally, teachers who not only trained at the Vaganova Academy and went on to dance professionally at the Mariinsky and ABT, but teachers who know how to teach what they know. You both have a very special ability to communicate your incredible technique in a way that your students can absorb and understand like never before. And just as importantly, you share your appreciation of the traditions and beauty of the art of ballet. Claire has learned far more than mere dance steps; she is learning to appreciate and understand music, history, and the humanity that ballet represents. She is a richer human being for studying with you both.

We are so grateful that you have extended your training to include not only the Winter and Summer Intensives, but also small group coaching. Claire is thrilled to be able to take the incredible education she has received from the summer and winter intensives and extend it throughout the year! Her dream is to attend the Vaganova Academy and with your incredible coaching, she will be prepared for the audition and for a future as a professional dancer. From the Intensives, to the Cinderella performance opportunities, and now the small group training, we know Claire has found the place she needs to be to make her dreams come true.

Thank you for putting your heart and soul into Open World Dance Foundation. The legacy of the art of ballet will live on for future generations because of your dedication.

With Gratitude,
Kathryn and Marc (Parents of Claire, M)

A year and a half ago, I walked into a studio for the first day of the Open World Dance Foundation's summer intensive in New York City. I spent most of that day learning from the legendary Irina Kolpakova, watching her eyes light up as she showed the port-de-bra for a *Paquita* variation or soar across the studio with the lightest of steps as she demonstrated how a ballerina is supposed to travel across the stage. I went home that night with tired feet and sore muscles but with a feeling of fulfillment and deep yearning for more. That day

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I went on to attend the Open World Dance Foundation's winter workshop that year as well as their summer intensive again the following summer. Each day was such a special opportunity to learn from the amazing teachers and each day gave me new inspiration and new appreciation for this beautiful art form. I was able to continue working with Irina Kolpakova at each of the programs and I especially treasured these experiences with her. Watching her in the studio, learning from her, it is incredible and invaluable getting to work with such a legendary ballerina.

At the end of that summer, I was invited to take part in the foundation's premiere of *Cinderella* in Houston, Texas and within a few weeks, I was moving to Houston to rehearse and work under the guidance of the directors, Ms. Shchelkanova and Mr. Boytsov. From Misty Copeland to the hearts of all the children involved, the performance brought us all together, "united by dance", following in the foundation's motto. It proved to be an amazing experience to be part of such a beautiful creation and to witness the beautiful impact the opportunity had on the children involved. My journey with the foundation has now moved on to Florida, where I continue working and growing under the guidance of Ms. Shchelkanova and Mr. Boytsov.

Open World Dance Foundation has had a great impact in my life. The foundation has the knowledge that I have yearned for and what they work so hard to pass on and continue is such a treasure. The different experiences have given me so much appreciation for the true beauty in this art form and the impact it can have. However it is not only these experiences that the foundation has provided me with that are so important. They have also provided me with support and guidance. They are helping me to grow, to trust and to believe, and are impacting my life not only as an artist but as a person.

I do not know what the future holds, but wherever I go from here or however far, my heart will stay connected to this foundation. From the beautiful mission, to all the incredible people involved, I stand behind the Open World Dance Foundation with all my trust and am so appreciative for the all work that this foundation does.

Katia R – New York (now living and working in St. Petersburg, Russia)

I discovered Open World Dance Foundation in the summer of 2016 and attended their 4 week summer intensive program. From day one of the intensive I knew I had finally found the place I had been searching for and, by day two all I knew was that I didn't want it to ever end. This experience with Open World Dance Foundation opened up doors to an opportunity that I was thrilled to have come my way. I traveled to Houston for a few months to train and prepare for OWDF performances of *Cinderella* at the Hobby Center. It was beautiful to be apart of OWDF's mission, to be a part of the creative process of something truly wonderful. The way *Cinderella* involved the community was especially heartwarming, the excitement of the young dancers given the chance to be involved was contagious. Those 3 months provided me with immense growth and knowledge, not only as

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a dancer but as a person as well. This is why I am so excited to continue the journey with OWDF in Florida, I am very grateful to this foundation for not only what it has done for me, but for others as well. It is something very special and it will always have my support and gratitude behind it.

Megan K.