

THOMAS ARMOUR YOUTH BALLET'S

◦ LETTERS FROM ◦

NEW YORK





THANK YOU

for your support of
Thomas Armour Youth Ballet's
2019 Summer in New York program

Every summer, **Thomas Armour Youth Ballet** sends talented students who have been placed in professional dance intensives to New York City for four to eight weeks. This program is privately funded and covers the students' apartment, chaperones, and food. On a need-basis, we also pay for airfare and tuition for the intensives. In summer 2019, our students participated in programs with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Bolshoi Ballet Academy, ArchCore40, Dance Theater of Harlem, American Ballet Theater, Ballet Hispanico, Martha Graham School, Urban Bush Women, and Steps on Broadway.

ALEXANDRA WERBLE

Dear Benefactor,

Living in New York during the summer of 2019 introduced me to the culture, people, and general way of life a true New Yorker lives. Besides having the opportunity to learn from living legends in The Ailey School, I was able to explore the city from Brooklyn to Manhattan. New York is a part of the growth and training I will carry for the rest of my life. I cannot be more thankful for this opportunity granted to me.

During my time in New York, I was able to experience different art forms all around me. With street performers at every corner, my trip never included a dull moment. One subway ride home, a noticeably homeless man, entered my train car. The homeless man wore ripped rags on top of each other to make a complete outfit. Although he didn't look like an artist, he began to belt out his request for donations through song while sending chills down my spine with his voice. The saying "never judge a book by its cover" rang in my mind at this moment and I found a new perspective towards the strangers around me. New York taught me to accept the different cultures of others due to the diverse population the city contains. I used to be afraid of certain types of individuals because of the way I grew up, although surrounding myself with these people opened my mind. I saw how we are all living life in different ways, yet we are all human and share similar qualities. Apart from street performers, I was able to see professional entertainers live. After years of attempting to watch The Lion King live on Broadway, I finally took the opportunity!

The incredible scenery mixed with insanely talented performers gave me an experience I will never forget. The feeling in the crowd reminded me of how important this production is to many people, including myself. A few days after seeing the show, I found out the cast of the Lion King went to Alvin Ailey to see my summer performance! I am still in shock and filled with glee.

Broadway is a major tourist site although it is just one spot out of many I was able to see. Walking down the Brooklyn Bridge was astonishing and gave me a sight of the Statue of Liberty! While in Brooklyn I saw a free show from Gibney Dance by the water outdoors and took photos with the stunning scenery. I fell in love with Brooklyn and its

beauty this trip. I hope to come back in the future to keep exploring and watch future shows in the Brooklyn Bridge Park.

Central Park was additional adventure in itself. I rented a bike and rode around to see as much of the park as possible. People played Jazz music, went in canoes in the water, and ate churros along with other food truck options. I learned you must be extremely attentive while biking in New York because of the crowds of people, cars, horse-driven carriages, and other bikers. As it grew dark, I experienced fireflies for the first time in my life. It was remarkable to see the bushes and other plants light with these bugs.

When it came time to go home, all of us in the house were able to sit around the dinner table and share our day with each other. We grew close and became a family for the duration of the trip. This experience through TAYB enhanced my New York experience, and I am grateful to have been chosen to be a part of the program. Not only did we talk in the house, yet we looked out for each other and went around New York together. Some of what we did together includes the Pride Parade, museum visit, stroll in central park and more. Hopefully, the pictures we took can share an insight into how astonishing this summer has been. Thank you to everyone who made this experience possible; I cannot thank you enough.

JAYSAN STINNETT

Dear Benefactor,

This summer, thanks to the generosity of Thomas Armour Youth Ballet, its benefactors, and Mr. Darryl Quinton, I was able to spend 5 weeks in New York in a TAYB sponsored apartment and attend the American Ballet Theatre Summer Intensive. This experience has been one of the best experiences of my life. I was blown away by the kindness, hospitality, and friendliness of my host, Mr. Darryl Quinton. I was also enlightened as to what it would be like as a dancer at American Ballet Theatre.

On the first day of my stay, Mr. Quinton kindly took me to the American Ballet Theatre studios where I would be taking class every day so I could figure out how to get there. During my stay, he took me to see the Broadway musical "King Kong" which is one of the shows that they are retiring from Broadway soon, and early on he took me to the movie theater as well. Having Mr. Quinton as a host was what made this trip such a blast. Every day when I got home from class, he had a meal ready for me because he said he wanted to give me the time to be able to unwind once I got home, so he liked for me to be able to eat once I got there in order to give me the most possible time to relax. His meals were delicious, and he had a different meal made almost every single day. Not only was he this considerate, but he was also very kind and great to talk to. I am very grateful towards Mr. Quinton for all that he had done for me during the trip, and how much he cared for me as if I was his own son.

At the summer intensive, I was able to go see American Ballet Theatre in company class. I was also able to attend their performance of "The Sleeping Beauty" which was my first time seeing ABT perform in person. Through these two experiences, as well as a "Meet the Dancer" with a soloist of the company, I was able to see further into what it's like to be a dancer at my dream company, ABT. None of this would have been possible without Mrs. Ruth Wieson and the generosity from all of the benefactors at TAYB. For that, I am extremely grateful as well. Through this generosity, I was able to come a step closer to achieving my dream, and had a great time whilst doing it.

Throughout the trip, I was able to visit friends whom I hadn't seen in over a year who live in New York. I also got to see pieces of New York I had never seen before, and

even got to see two members of the Wallenda family tightrope walk across Times Square! At the end of the Summer Intensive, I was surprised once again. Mrs. Ruth Wiesen and the TAYB family sent my mother to watch me perform in the final showcase, another incredible experience for me. Now that the summer is over, I am back in Florida getting ready to join the Orlando Ballet as a company member for my debut as a professional dancer.

Thank you all. I will never forget this experience.

JAYDEN KING

Dear Benefactor,

Spending my summer in New York has been an unforgettable experience for both dance and life. Being my second year here in this apartment is just as exciting and exhilarating as the first year and I hope to participate in this for the future years to come. Alvin Ailey has been my dream since I was a kid, and I look up to all the strong, powerful dancers and strive to be just like them. I am so honored to have met so many dedicated, humble dancers in my intensive and had the opportunity to create so many friendships. Sharing hours of class together, and creating a safe artistic environment for each other is one of the many amazing things about Alvin Ailey.

While at Alvin Ailey, I saw one of my biggest inspirations, Misty Copeland. Misty Copeland is a famous American ballet dancer for American Ballet Theatre (ABT). In 2015, Copeland became the first African American woman to be promoted to principal dancer in ABT's 75-year history, which makes me have hope for more diversity in all leading companies. I aspire to be just like her.

Being in New York doing what I love has been one of my favorite things to do, but I also got to experience all that New York has to offer. I went to a huge food festival/annual food flea market called Smorgasburg, where 20,000-30,000 people travel to Brooklyn each weekend and all come together for various different foods.

Another place I traveled to was the Empire State Building. I didn't get the chance to go on the tour, but the outside of the Empire State Building already does enough justice for itself. Looking at the building from the outside was just breathtaking! So much history has occurred there and I felt so special and blessed to have had the opportunity to see something so magnificent. I also got to see more of Central Park which is always a nice place to get away from all the city and chaos. Central park has had many movies filmed in it, so it was fascinating to see exactly where the movies take place and the reality behind it. My roommate, Odaysha, and I went on a picnic there and it was really great to just sit down and have a long conversation with her about everything.

New York, this experience, and Ailey have made this summer an unforgettable one and I will forever be grateful and will hold this close to my heart.

NAYAH MERISIER

Dear Benefactor,

My experience this summer has been like no other. Having been to New York before, I did not expect this time to be much different than I remembered it to be. I attended the Alvin Ailey Summer Intensive which is the same Intensive that I attended last year so I expected to have the same if not a similar experience. However, I was happily proven incorrect. Last year, when I attended this program, for reasons regarding expenses, I didn't take advantage of the fact that I was in the cultural hub of the United States. I stayed in my apartment most weekends due to exhaustion from the intensive but mainly because I did not have the budget to participate in most of the activities that my friends were doing because of expenses regarding the Intensive. Luckily, this year I was not burdened by the same expenses because of your kindness and generosity.

This summer, I saw some incredible sights and participated in many exciting activities. I went to the Brooklyn Bridge with one of my roommates and a student that I met in my program and I was absolutely speechless. We walked all the way to the center of the bridge and back which is something that I did not know you could do. To think that from one small point in all of New York, you can see the burrows of Manhattan and Brooklyn and the beautiful Hudson River is unfathomable and I am so grateful to have been able to experience it. Along the bridge I was able to purchase a few trinkets for my friends and family that I know they will appreciate. It is so incredible to see that something as simple, yet breathtaking, as a bridge can be such a staple tourist location.

Although the Brooklyn Bridge was an incredible experience, luckily it was free. However, because of your generosity, I was able to visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art which was truly magical. To be able to visit a place that I've only ever seen in movies and on television was unbelievable. The museum itself is enormous; it is triple the size that I imagined it to be. Although I wasn't able to visit the entire museum because it is too large to complete in one day, I viewed the Egypt exhibit which was my favorite. I was able to learn about the use of ancient weaponry and the stunning jewelry that was

spotted by royalty during their life as well as what they were buried and mummified in. Another exciting exhibit was that of the MET Gala themed "Camp" which was absolutely extraordinary to say the very least. The use of intricate fabric and everyday objects to create over the top or "Camp" couture and fashion was interesting. I personally would not choose to wear most of the clothing that was on display, however it was all very exciting to look at and take pictures of. I also visited the exhibit of Abstract Art, Roman Catholicism, and European Art which were truly beautiful and, in some cases, made you question the various ideals behind the word "art".

Some other attractions that I visited with friends that I made at the intensive as well as my roommates include: the Smorgasburg food festival, a picnic in Central Park, SoHo, Times Square, and Coney Island. I would not have been able to do all of these without your overwhelming generosity. Looking at how quickly funding for the arts is dwindling, it makes me truly glad to know that there are still some people in this world who do support the arts and believe that young people should be exposed to the world and all of its treasures. I know I can speak on behalf of myself and my roommates when I say that your kindness and effort does not go unnoticed. I say this with as much sincerity as physically possible, thank you so much for this opportunity.

KACEY THOMAS

Dear Benefactor,

This experience you've provided has been unforgettable and incredibly beneficial to my education and memories for years to come. Providing me with a place to stay for 5 weeks has been nothing less than a blessing and I know for a fact that having the chance to attend Bolshoi Ballet Academy Summer Intensive has matured and strengthened me not only in my physical abilities, but my mental abilities. It has taught me discipline for being on my own, spending money wisely and properly managing my time from getting place to place.

In Miami, I was very dependent on my mom and dad who made sure I was never late and drove me to most of my needed destinations. Being in New York has taught me how to manage my time properly on my own and how to use the city's transits, which I was very unfamiliar with considering the fact a very large portion of Miami uses cars. Having to take the transits on my own has taught me to be very aware of my surroundings at all times which I believe is a very important skill to have in the outside world.

During my time here, I went to the Statue of Liberty where they had a museum on the island, which taught me so much about how Lady Liberty was created and what she stands for. I went to Times Square for the first time which was astonishing. Seeing how busy the city is, and all the different things going on, it definitely is the city that never sleeps! I went to Central Park, which was gorgeous, and had a peaceful, quiet picnic with my mother and sister.

As for staying in the apartment, it has given me the chance to make beautiful friendships. I am very grateful for Janis, our chaperone, who took the time to show me how the subways work, the buses, and for simply giving me a good laugh often. It's a big plus that she just so happens to be a great cook! The girls here created such a good energy and everyone was so welcoming and thoughtful towards one another. Living in a 3 bedroom, 2 bathroom, apartment in New York City with 11 girls all together is no piece of cake but we managed to make a pretty sweet cake at that.

One of my favorite events here in New York were the nights spent after dinner when we would all just sit around the table and talk for hours on end. There was one night after dinner when 2 of the older girls and I stayed at the dinner table for 4 hours after dinner just talking about possibly everything and getting to know so much about each other. I have always loved getting to know people and hearing funny stories about when they were kids, and maybe not-so-funny stories, things they believe in, and what's important to them and after having this 4-hour long conversation with the 2 girls I spoke with, made me want to be the best possible person and friend I can be. I am so grateful to have made great friendships with such strong, talented, humble dancers and humans and experienced it all in New York City.

KASHIA KANCEY

Dear Benefactor,

My time at the Urban Bush Women Summer Leadership Institute was something incredible to experience. I was taken away by the knowledge shared and community driven work put together by the company's Chief Advisor, Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, company members, and all of the women and men participating inside of the institute. After being in the presence of Jawole for those ten days, my admiration for her grew tremendously. The way she handled and collaborated the ending showcase with everyone and how she etched out talent from every single person in the room. It was all so stunning to witness. From discussing topics such as un-doing racism, to creating a multi-disciplinary performance that perfectly tied in all aspects of what working with one another for the greater good really means. It was one of those life changing intensives where you don't realize how much you've been affected until you're walking down the New York City streets and suddenly feel like bursting into a million tears, the good ones and the bad.

After being finished with the Institute I realized while being a part of the Urban Bush Women Summer Leadership Institute, that it was the only company I've ever been interested in that satisfied every artistic need I felt I had. I left feeling nourished, nurtured and exposed. For ten days I was surrounded by a group of women that were predominantly black, and that created a space that felt so safe, to the point where for the first few days I didn't know if it was real or not. We danced and sang together, cried with one another, and laughed and smiled with each other. To be a part of a community such as this one, it made me realize that there was much work to be done back in my own community and my own body of work as an artist. The un-doing racism workshop left all races speechless. It was a workshop that geared toward having those vital conversations about race and not avoiding them anymore. In order to fight racism, all parties have to be involved. My mind was blown away, and all I could do about it was cry. I left with an increased awareness, a blown mind, and I can't wait to see what they have in store for us next year.



LAKERIA ROBINSON

Dear Sponsor,

I would like to start out by saying thank you so much for allowing me this amazing opportunity. I am extremely grateful to have been a part of such an amazing program. I have been to New York before but this was my first time going alone. This program was my miracle. After getting accepted into the ArchCore40 program, I had no intentions of attending. After I found it was in New York, I knew it could not happen. I knew there was no way I could save up enough money to buy my flight ticket and find somewhere to live for my time there. I did not know anyone who lived in New York, so couch surfing did not even cross my mind.

Then the miracle happened, Ms. Ruth found out about me getting into ArchCore40 and told me about your program. I just knew it was meant to be. I made sure I did not let this opportunity go in vain. I worked extra shifts to save for my flight tickets and I prepared everything I needed to in order to make sure I took full advantage of such a wonderful opportunity. Getting off that plane I was determined to make sure you knew your money was not going to waste. After my experience and meeting the beautiful and amazing girls I met in the house, I can assure you that it did not.

Through this experience, I have gained a whole new perspective on life. I would wake up early in the morning to leave the house and be the last one in the house late at night to go to sleep. It was a pain to get out of bed every morning but I always went to sleep satisfied, knowing I made it through the day. I have been challenged both physically and mentally beyond what I ever thought was possible. I was surrounded by such talented and inspirational dancers from all over the world. It was truly a life changing and motivational experience that would not have been possible without you! Thank you so much!

FERNANDA ALVARADO

Dear Benefactor,

My name is Fernanda Alvarado, since I was a little girl I dreamed of coming to New York. Being an immigrant from Chile, I always wanted to come to the big city and do what I love which is dance, and all that came true because of you and your support, so thank you.

I thought that being in an apartment with ten girls that I did not know it would be a little bit difficult, but what I thought the experience would be were way far from what I have lived until now. Everyone was so nice and friendly, we all opened and shared things about our life, and at least for me it was really special to live with people who understand you and your passion. I created new friendships, people who before were strangers to me, became so close. If I had to choose one moment of all the experience here, would be dinner, because it felt like we were a family even if it was for a month, but we were a family, we talked about the past, present and future, and it was so interesting to me hear how different a person can think from you and still find a way to communicated and click in the best way. This experience was so important to me not only because I was in New York but also because I was on my own, I went from only child to having nine sisters, sharing two bathrooms, two rooms and a kitchen, but besides all that I can say that I learned a lot from everyone here. I wanted to thank Janis. She was incredible with us. She took the time to get to know us and make a bond, she made sure to cook everyday so that we could have food in our tables and food for our lunch. She took care of us, and I wanted to say thank you to make sure we were safe everywhere we went.

Being in New York has been such a learning experience. Being in Times Square seeing all this signs and all the crowd moving was powerful. In my head I was thinking about the movies and how I always watched the character in the middle of all the noise feeling achieved, and in that moment I was the character, I was the one who was happy and living the moment I only dream of, being in The American Museum of Natural History, learning about the world and the species, and how everything has change in the past centuries, standing in the middle of Columbus Circle watching the cars go around and people walking fast to get to places, walking the Brooklyn Bridge and seeing how big the city is, finding people from my country, hearing different languages, and admiring how big and beautiful the meaning of the bridge is, taking the ferry to see the Statue of Liberty standing in front of all the big buildings of the city.

Living this experience was a dream come true, so thank you so much to make it possible. Thank you for supporting my dream and the ones of my roommates that now I can call friends. I will never forget when I was in the plane, and the plane was about to land, and I looked through the window and I saw the city, I saw my dream coming true.

Thank you for supporting the program. I will be forever grateful.

LAURA PEREZ

Dear Benefactor,

Getting to spend three weeks in New York City this summer was an unforgettable experience. I learned so much about myself as a person and dancer. Taking dance classes at Steps on Broadway from Broadway performers, choreographers, and directors, was a dream come true. Dancing on Broadway has been a dream of mine ever since I was a little girl. After taking numerous classes with other aspiring Broadway dancers, my dreams no longer seem unattainable. Seeing where I stand in relation to other dancers, who I will presumably be auditioning with at upcoming Broadway auditions, has been an eye-opening experience. I now know what I need to work on to make my dreams a reality. I am also more at peace with my future because I know that I have what it takes to make it in this industry if I continue to work hard and push myself.

Another memorable experience I had in New York City was visiting the 9/11 memorial on the fourth of July with the other girls in the apartment. I visited the memorial before but this time it felt different. Seeing a multitude of American Flags on all of the names of those who have died took my breath away. It reminded me how grateful and proud I am to be an American. After the 9/11 memorial we went to see the Statue of Liberty. All I kept thinking about on the thirty-minute ferry ride was how thankful I am to be given the opportunity to go to New York and be one step closer to pursuing my passion. New York is one of those cities with such diversified people and cultures that have come to this country to pursue their dreams. It proves to me that with hard work anything is possible.

Some of the other fun and interesting experiences I had in New York was with our chaperone Janis. We saw three different dance performances that were unlike anything I have seen before. For instance, in one of the performances the audience was allowed to walk around the room while the dancers were performing. This allowed me to see the dancers from multiple perspectives. One of the dancers even took me by the hand and walked me around the room. The number of opportunities there are to watch dance and experience the arts is one of my favorite things about New York. Being exposed to different styles of dance at these performances has inspired me and given me some ideas of my own to experiment with at home.

Janis and I also went to an Italian festival in Brooklyn at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church. This Italian feast is a neighborhood tradition and has taken place on an annual basis for

the past 115 years. The festival was filled with authentic vendors, dancing, rides, games, and live music. We attended the opening night Mass. After the Mass, we did a procession around the Church in which a group of men held a statue of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. This was a really special experience for me because I have a particular devotion to Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Worshipping God with residents from different parts of New York was an experience that I will not soon forget. I have returned home with a newfound inspiration and deep gratitude for this experience.

ODAYSHA GOODMAN

Dear Sponsor,

It all started on June 29, 2019; I never thought this day would ever come. The day where I finally went on my dream trip. Traveling to New York has always been a dream of mine. Not only to visit and look around but to dance at one of the companies there and it just so happened that I received an opportunity to do so. Being here in New York has been so exciting and fun. I've learned and seen so many things that I was mind blown.

First things first, being chosen to do Dance Theatre of Harlem's summer intensive is honestly one of the best things. It was always something I wanted to do- get training from professionals and learn new things about myself. Being there at Harlem made me realize more about myself and dancing and I'm so happy I was able to receive that. While at the summer intensive I've grown stronger in my dance technique and learned so much about the school, and Harlem itself. It was truly an experience I'll never forget.

Also while in New York I was able to attend my very first pride parade and it was so much fun. Everyone was dancing, cheering, and marching up and down the streets. I also got the chance to see Time Square for the very first time and it was gorgeous, bright, and huge. It was like walking into Disney world for the first time. I was also able to see the Empire State Building, even go inside and it was absolutely stunning. I loved every second of it. I even took a trip down to Central Park for a lunch picnic date with my friend and it was amazing. Nice weather, beautiful view, calming, and gigantic. I got on the ferry for the first time on the Fourth of July and got to see the Statue of Liberty.

Now while seeing all of these amazing things, I would say the one thing that brought everything together for me was when I got to see my very first live Broadway show. I went to watch the Temptations on Broadway and it was breathtaking. A true experience I'll never forget.

I went to Smorgasburg and it was wonderful; the food was scrumptious. I was also able to go view the 9/11 Memorial and it was beautiful and peaceful. It was a moment that I cherished because it was a beautiful sight and very peaceful. Lastly, I went to Turnstyle, my very first underground market place, and it was really cool. They had lots of food and a couple of stores. The food there was also amazing. Did I mention all of New York's food is very good? Overall I really enjoyed my trip to New York and I can't wait to come back again.

SARA FRANCO

Dear Sponsor,

The past three weeks in New York City have been filled with eye opening experiences that are unique to this city's culture and environment. During my trip I had the pleasure of experiencing the unifying Pride parade, the greatest Fourth of July fireworks extravaganza I have ever seen, and an immersive theater presentation called Sleep No More.

The New York City Pride Parade emanated the strongest sense of community I have ever felt before. People from all walks of life and multiple countries gathered together to celebrate the acceptance of love without boundaries. The overwhelming cheering of the crowd was infectious as I observed a portion of the NYPD ride down in their uniforms and motorcycles representing the LGBTQ members of their department. This moment inspired me to continue to be accepting others in my day to day life, and reminded me that tradition can progress slowly.

Another inspiring moment I experienced in New York City was the patriotic Fourth of July fireworks celebration by the Brooklyn Bridge. The image of the bridge silhouetted by pyrotechnics exploding in the air commemorated the strength of this country during a time when our resilience is being tested. As the exhibition continued, I watched as various cadences of fireworks shot out of the bridge itself celebrating the feat it was to build the Brooklyn Bridge. After 136 years this bridge made out of granite and steel is a symbol for the strength and resilience of the people of New York City.

The invaluable theatrical experience created by Punchdrunk's Sleep No More was one I will never see anywhere else, other than in Shanghai. This one of a kind presentation has been critically acclaimed for its innovation in the dance theater and performance arts scene. Based on Shakespeare's MacBeth, the film Noir genre, and the Paisley witch trials, Sleep No More elevates immersive theater into panoramic theater. This venture takes you out of the proscenium stage environment and into the repurposed McKittrick Hotel, which was publicly active in the 1930's. During my visit to the hotel I understood why they call it a panoramic experience by the amount of detail I was surrounded by. From the props to the choreography, everything was carefully orchestrated and astonishingly unpredictable. There was no guide to tell you where to go; you only had your curiosity to guide you. Therefore, you were in complete control of your experience at the hotel. The cast of performers is composed of acclaimed dancers from top international companies like the Batsheva Dance Ensemble, and William

Forsythe's Frankfurt Ballet. They are trained actors but tell most of the story through movement. I saw two dancers perform who I have worked with in the past and commend them for their ability to stay in character, as the audience can stand as close as possible to the performers. Sleep No More was the climax of my visit to New York City, because it exposed me to a realm of dance I would like to be part of. These realizations are important to me because my passion for dance is what inspired my stay in this city.

The experiences I had New York City are irreplaceable, and have shaped me as a person in many ways. I am grateful to have the opportunity to have a place to stay in the city, and to be part of its multifaceted community. I hope that more young women and girls get the same opportunity that I did, because one trip to a progressive metropolis like this one can change how they perceive the world they live in.

NADIA LAUROVIC

Dear Benefactor,

A few years ago I auditioned for the Alvin Ailey Summer Intensive and unfortunately wasn't able to go due to financial circumstances. This year I decided to audition again and thankfully was accepted into the program. Once again it came to a point where my family and I couldn't afford the intensive; however, through New World I was blessed to hear about this wonderful program. It has been an absolute blessing to be a part of this housing. The girls and I got along very well and we became good friends.

I have been to New York twice before this trip for extremely short trips for dance auditions, but I wasn't able to truly experience New York. Now being here over the summer I have been able to experience New York to the fullest. The first week here when the dance program began, I was excited to take the subway and learn my way around the city. Being in the center of Manhattan has so many advantages. I was very proud once I got the hang of the subway system. The first weekend here was Pride weekend. I was blessed enough to go with four of the girls at the apartment to the parade. It was such a beautiful celebration of love and all four of us had a wonderful time doing each other's makeup and getting dressed up for the occasion. While at the parade I met lovely people who were in the same dance intensive as I am and we were able to become friends which was lovely.

Fourth of July came around the following weekend and our dance program had two dances off to celebrate allowing us to have an extended weekend to which I truly took advantage of to experience New York as much as possible. The girls at the apartment and I were able to visit SoHo and spend the day shopping and walking around. We went to this astonishing Australian restaurant there and just enjoyed ourselves. We also were able to watch the fourth of July fireworks over the river which were absolutely stunning. Another day one of the girls here and I along with some friends went to Smorgasburg to visit the food festival right along the river. The same weekend I was also able to visit and walk the Brooklyn bridge which was definitely one of the most exciting and memory filled days. It is much more astonishing and stunning in person than it is online from what I've seen.

It is extremely hard to pick my favorite thing about New York; I have fallen completely in love with this city. Some of the most memorable experiences I've had here was going to

Coney Island. I've heard so much my whole life about the carnival and the beach at Coney Island. It was surreal, all of the flashing lights from the rides and the stunning boardwalk that went over the ocean. We spent hours walking around taking in all of the sun on the boardwalk and even got to go on the Ferris wheel which was so much fun. I felt like a kid again and loved every second of it. The following day I was able to go on the Staten Island ferry and visit the 9/11 Memorial. We walked around the two areas and read the names, a few of the names had flowers inside of them to represent their birthdays. What truly broke me was to see the names that had the unborn child attached to them. It was honestly such a remarkable memorial that represented the heartbreaking tragedy that occurred.

Out of all the phenomenal experiences I've had in New York and the imposing places I've been blessed to visit; my favorite overall has to be the Met. I was blessed enough to go this past weekend with a large group of people. I personally am a massive nerd when it comes to science and history, I love to learn about other cultures and passions of people. One of my hobbies is to study around subjects and to gain knowledge about other cultures, so it was incredible to go through the exhibits and see everything about the cultures. We spent hours there roaming around and taking in all of the beauty of it.

I am beyond grateful for this marvelous opportunity you have provided for me. I wouldn't have been able to come to New York otherwise, not only has my dancing improved tremendously while being here but I was able to make fantastic friendships and experience the best parts of New York. It has been the most wonderful summer and I am so grateful and tremendously sad to leave.



THOMAS ARMOUR YOUTH BALLET

