



Battle Ground teen Lia Mrazek won the 17th annual Weiler Choreography Competition.

Perseverance pays off for Battle Ground ballerina

For Columbia Dance student Lia Mrazek, winning first place in the Weiler Choreography Competition was an accomplishment years in the making. Mrazek had entered the competition five times before, previously earning first place in the juniors division and two second-place finishes in the upper division, before claiming top honors on her sixth try.

Mrazek, a 17-year-old from Battle Ground, won for "A Father's Movement," a classical ballet piece she dedicated to her father.

"He and I used to listen to classical music together, and this particular song we both really enjoyed," she said.

The song was Karl Jenkins' "Palladio I, Allegretto," a track from a CD Mrazek's father bought her for Christmas when she was younger.

The dance pleased more than the judges. The man who inspired it was moved as well.

"He loved it," Mrazek said of her father's reaction to the choreography.

Mrazek, a senior at Prairie High School doing the Running Start program at Clark College, envisioned the performance with eight dancers, but she could only find seven people able to devote the time needed for rehearsals. So she had to dance the eighth part, even though she doesn't usually like to be in works she's choreographed.

"I don't like being in my own pieces because you can't really watch it," she said.

With her first-place finish comes a \$500 award Mrazek will use to help pay for a summer intensive dance program at Milwaukee Ballet in Wisconsin.

Mrazek's win was especially sweet because the competition is only open to pre-professional choreographers, and she's about to enter the professional realm.

Mrazek was offered a teaching and choreography position in Ballet Idaho's pre-professional school, as well as an apprenticeship with their professional dance company. She plans to begin this fall.