

Alexandra Ballet Dancers Take the Leap to Houston Ballet II for the 2011 - 2012 Season

SAINT LOUIS, MO, February 26, 2011 -- Alexandra Ballet's First Company members, Makensie Howe and Dillon Malinski, have dreamed of becoming professional ballet dancers for years. Their dedication and hard work has paid off as they take the first grand jeté into their professional careers as they join Houston Ballet II for the 2011 - 2012 Season.

The mission of Houston Ballet's second company, Houston Ballet II, is to provide their dancers with the opportunity to dance leading roles in varied repertoire; to allow dancers to develop technically and artistically through performance experience; and to serve the greater Houston community by providing quality, professional performances. Houston Ballet II is another way for Houston Ballet to serve its constituents by reaching smaller communities that might not have the chance to see major ballet companies perform. Houston Ballet II's repertoire includes both classical and contemporary works by Houston Ballet Artistic Director Stanton Welch, Houston Ballet Artistic Director Emeritus Ben Stevenson, and many other choreographers. Houston Ballet II has an extensive performance schedule throughout the year as they perform with the company in addition to having their own season.



Makensie Howe & Dillon Malinski
The Nutcracker - Grand Pas de Deux

Makensie and Dillon have been members of Alexandra Ballet for five and eight years respectively. Alexandra Ballet is the only pre-professional ballet company in the St. Louis area, with a mission to educate, elevate and enrich the community through the magic of dance. Alexandra Ballet presents *The Nutcracker*, a MainStage Production, and several other smaller performances each season. Recent MainStage Productions have included *Giselle*, *Cinderella*, *Coppélia*, and *The Firebird* which offered Makensie and Dillon the opportunity to perform in professional quality, full length ballets. The training and performance experiences Makensie and Dillon have received at Alexandra Ballet obviously prepared them for their Houston Ballet II audition. Their names will now be added to the long list alumni have joined professional companies all over the world.



Unplugged
Choreographed by Paula Weber

Makensie started dancing when she was three years old and by the time she was twelve, she made the decision to try to become a professional ballerina. Through research, she determined Alexandra School of Ballet was where she needed to study. Makensie is 17 years old and a junior at Fox High School. Makensie's admiration of Houston Ballet's incredible talent, diverse repertoire, and amazing artistic staff makes her enthusiastically honored to join Houston Ballet.

Dillon began dance lessons with an alumna from Alexandra Ballet, Sandra Kunz, at the age of nine. A year later when Dillon saw *Swan Lake* on television, he decided he wanted to be a professional ballet dancer. Mrs. Kunz informed Dillon if he was really serious about ballet, he needed to study at Alexandra School of Ballet. For eight years, Dillon has traveled four hours round trip, four days a week, to receive Alexandra Ballet's quality dance education in an effort to fulfill his dream. Dillon just turned 18 years old and is a home schooled senior. Dillon recognized Houston Ballet as his number one choice after he had an incredible experience at their Summer Intensive last year.

Makensie and Dillon will be performing in Alexandra Ballet's *Gems of the Ballet*, a glittering array of audience favorites, on March 5th at 7:30pm and March 6th at 2:00pm at the Touhill Performing Arts Center. They are cast in *Paquita's* Grand Pas de Deux, *La Fille Mal Gardée* Pas de Deux, and as a Fouette Girl/Good Girl Cadet in *Graduation Ball*. You won't want to miss the opportunity to watch these two young stars of tomorrow light up the stage in St. Louis for the last time before we wish them "merde" as they pack their bags for Houston.