

SHS graduate Lauren Wattenburg dances to New York City

By Ceili Cornelius
Correspondent

Lauren Wattenburg has always known that she wanted to pursue ballet. She has been dancing for as long as she can remember.

Wattenburg is a graduate of Sisters High School in the class of 2017. She is now starting her third year at the University of Utah, located in the Rocky Mountains outside of Salt Lake City. She is pursuing a bachelor of fine arts in ballet.

“All my life I was taught to pursue my passion, and ballet is my passion so I am currently pursuing a degree in it,” Wattenburg told *The Nugget*.

Her schedule day to day is filled with all things dance. She is not only taking dance and ballet classes, but also classes about music and kinesiology.

“Having all these things going on and such a crazy schedule and taking classes on these other things is definitely an adjustment with all of what I want to be doing,”

she said.

Her favorite part is discovering how much is related to the world of ballet, not just the dance itself.

“That is one of my favorite parts about this experience, is having exposure to all these fields within the discipline. It is really helping me to become a well-rounded dancer,” she said.

Recently, Wattenburg has been doing a lot of extracurricular activities relating to dance. She has been working with photographers in Salt Lake City, modeling a line of dancewear for a company that is run by a young woman who graduated from the same program Wattenburg is now in.

“It was cool to have that come full circle and be a part of that and get that exposure,” she said.

She has also been traveling a bit around the country and dipping her toes in the professional ballet world. During her sophomore year, she got to work with artist director of company BalletNext, Michele Wiles. Wiles put on a program at the university featuring a number of pieces. Director Wiles then extended an invitation to eight girls, including Lauren, from the ballet program at University of Utah, to travel with her to New York to perform pieces she choreographed.

“I had such an incredible experience doing that, and it was really surreal,” said Wattenburg.

She traveled there with

the company three times this year. In February, she performed at New York Live Arts in New York City; in June, at the Kaatsbaan International Dance Center in Tivoli, New York; and then again for the final time in July at the New Victory Theater on Broadway in New York City.

“This opportunity wouldn’t have happened if it wasn’t for the partnership and connection with U of U. I am very lucky to have had that kind of exposure with that in college,” she said.

Wattenburg was involved in a lot of activities during her time at Sisters High School. She participated in Associated Student Government, built a guitar, and was a part of the Mr. SHS fundraiser for Family Access Network.

Wattenburg credits the support of the Sisters community in helping her get where she is now.

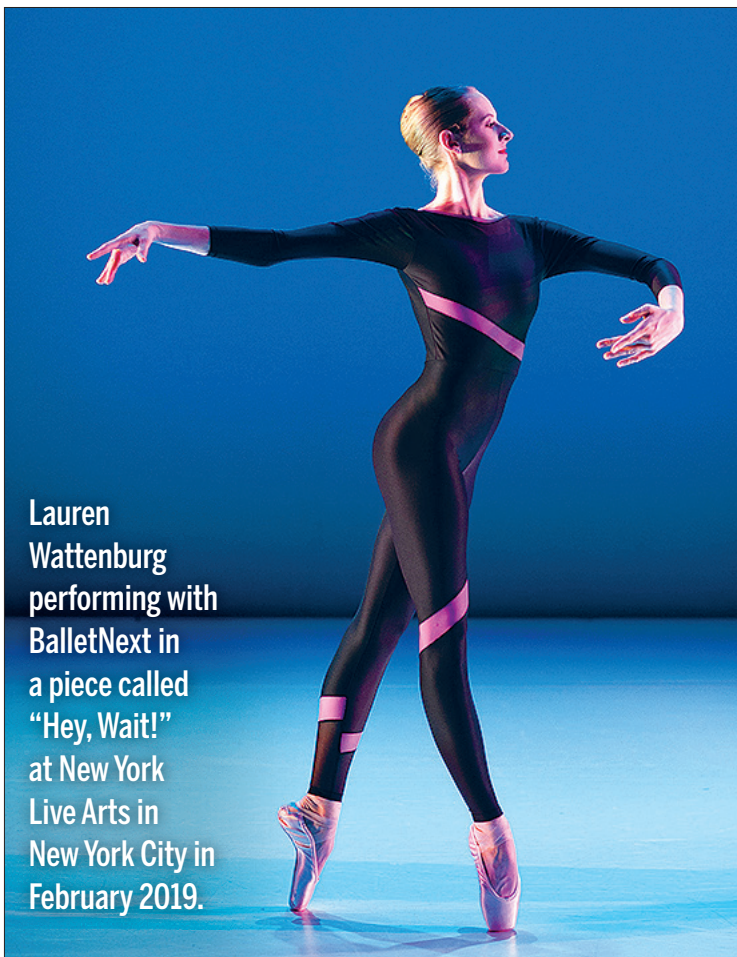
“I would not be where I am if it wasn’t for the community. I was fortunate that I had them behind me while I was pursuing my passion,” she said.

Wattenburg says being involved in so much and having a good relationship with her teachers has allowed her to feel comfortable in the college setting and that she was given the space to pursue what she wanted to.

“I was taught that it is OK to pursue your passion, no matter if it is the most conventional,” she said. “The teachers and community have such an openmindedness to acknowledge that the future of the youth can take any direction.”

Wattenburg was one to pursue many opportunities during her high school years, which she is still doing with her time at University of Utah. She felt as if she entered into college with the ability to be brave and pursue any opportunity that came her way, and to follow her dream of dancing.

“I really just want to thank the community and my family for their unconditional support of my endeavors. This community really enriched my life and I feel very lucky,” she said.



Lauren Wattenburg performing with BalletNext in a piece called “Hey, Wait!” at New York Live Arts in New York City in February 2019.

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