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Committed to Cultural Diversity



PHOTO BY BEVERLY CORBELL/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Aanaiyah Jones, age 10, started taking ballet at age 3 at Peninsula Park Community Center in north Portland, but now takes lessons at Classical Ballet Academy, a serious training ground for future professional dancers in southeast Portland, where she will star as Clara in the school's production of *The Nutcracker* on Dec. 20.

## Big Dreams for Young Ballerina

By BEVERLY CORBELL  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Aanaiyah Jones has been taking dance lessons since she was three years old and though she's only 10 now, she's already preparing for a future on the biggest stage of them all, becoming

a prima ballerina in New York City.

"I love to dance because you can totally express yourself and be yourself," she said recently as she was working out dance exercises at her school, the Classical Ballet Academy in southeast Portland, where she's been taking

classes under director Sarah Rigles for the past three years.

Jones got her start studying ballet at Portland Parks and Recreation's Peninsula Park Community Center, a program serving a diverse population in north Portland before moving on to the

more advanced classes at the academy.

According to Portland Parks' spokesman Mark Ross, this is the first time an African American child will have the lead in the academy's Christ-

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