

# *Cuba, Mexico and the United States Win Awards at Ballet Competition in Havana*

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Mexican ballet student, Paulina Guraieb, won the Grand Prix, and Cuba's Rafael Quenedit won the Artistry Award at the 12th International Ballet Students Competition which wound up in Havana over the weekend.

Guraieb, who competed in the advanced category, pas de deux modality, received standing ovations in the competition's three rounds for her virtuosity and amazing turns, while Mexican student, Ivana Bueno, took home gold in the juvenile category. Besides winning the Artistry Award, Rafael Quenedit, from the Cuban National Ballet School, won gold in the advanced category for boys in the pas de deux modality, sharing the gold with Francois Llorente, also from the same school.

Standing out among competitors was US ballet student, Francisco Serrano, who also took home the gold in the advanced category, variation modality, opening the door for more US competitors to participate in future ballet competitions in Cuba.

The jury was made up of Cuban National Ballet Student Directress, Ramona de Súa; Cuban National Ballet prima ballerina, Viengsay Valdéz; Joburg Ballet Director, Dirk Badenhorst, from South Africa; Peruvian

Youth Ballet Director, Tatiana Izquierdo; Diana Faría and Roberto Machado from Mexico; Cheril Oblander from the United States, Carlos Paolillo from Venezuela and Lila Martínez from the Camagüey Ballet, Cuba.

The awards ceremony closed the 20th International Ballet Academies Encounter attended by some 700 foreign participants from 15 countries, including the participation of the United States for the first time, represented by Michigan's Interlochen Arts Center Dance Director and former Joffrey Ballet principal, Cameron Basden.

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