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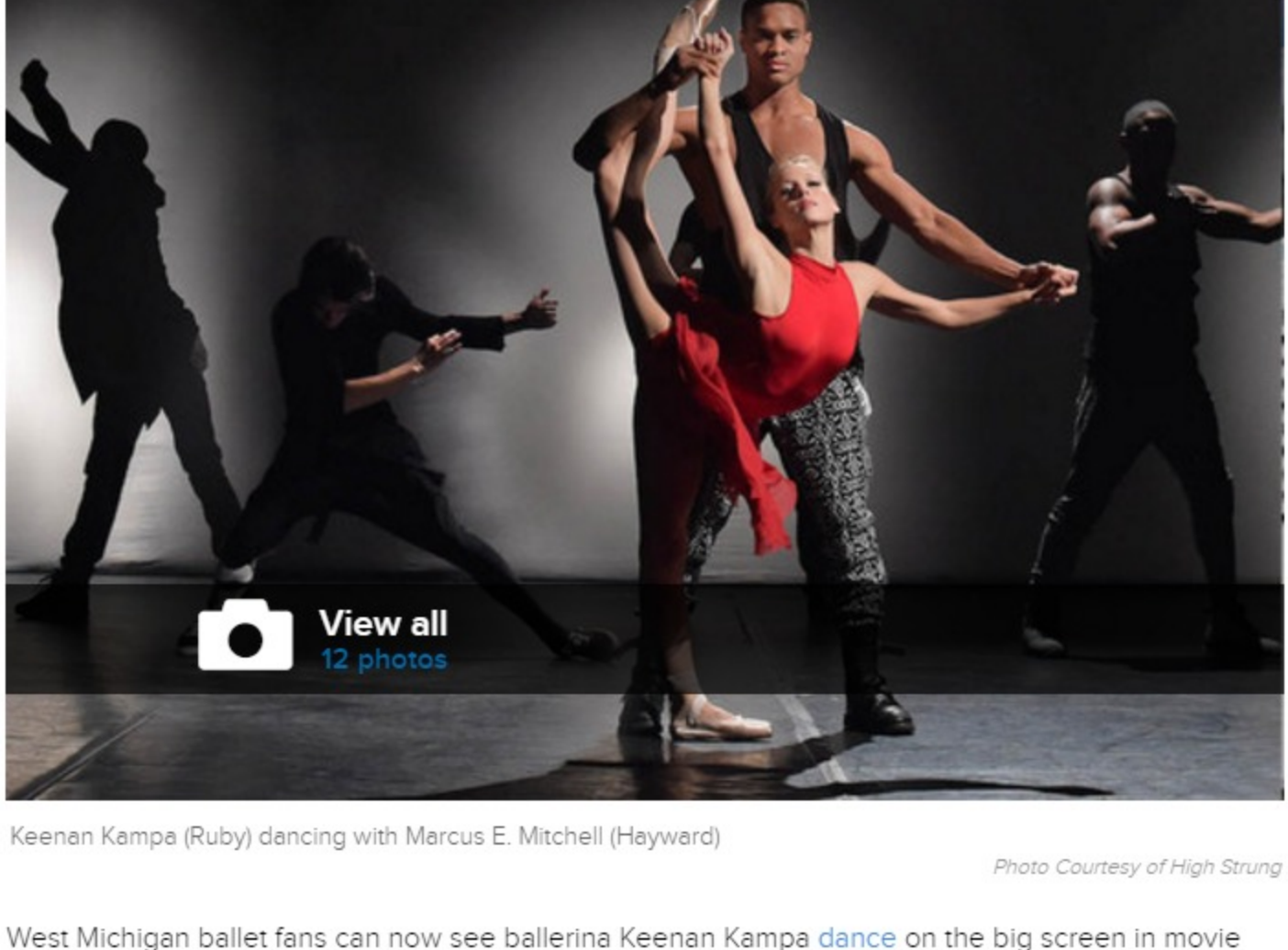
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Ballerina Keenan Kampa's journey from ballet to acting

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Keenan Kampa (Ruby) dancing with Marcus E. Mitchell (Hayward) Photo Courtesy of High Strung

West Michigan ballet fans can now see ballerina Keenan Kampa dance on the big screen in movie theaters. Kampa, who taught classes at Grand Rapids Ballet's "2014 Summer Intensive," is starring in the dance movie, "High Strung."

Dancer and Actress Keenan Kampa

Keenan Kampa is best known as the first American dancer to be hired by Russia's renowned Mariinsky Ballet, the former Kirov Ballet, in St. Petersburg, Russia. When you see her dance, it is easy to see why Kampa made a bit of dance history by joining the dance company that was once home to some of the great Russian ballet dancers like Anna Pavlova, Vaslav Nijinsky and Rudolf Nureyev.



Photo Courtesy of High Strung

Courage to Make a Hard Decision

It was hard for Kampa to make the decision to leave Mariinsky Ballet, and her decision was more than a simple career move. It was also about family. Kampa talks about leaving Mariinsky Ballet, "It was an excruciatingly hard decision to make. I went back and forth many times to make sure that I was making the right decision."

A New-found Love of Acting

Kampa discovered her love of acting while still dancing with Mariinsky Ballet. She danced the role of Salome in a ballet production based on Oscar Wilde's play, "La Salome." The role required a high degree of acting skills in addition to dancing.

Dancing on the Big Screen

Getting the lead role of Ruby Adams in the movie "High Strung," so early in her acting career is another great success story for Keenan Kampa, and demonstrates her many talents for the performing arts. "High Strung" is both a dance movie and an inspirational love story about following dreams.

Kampa was thrilled to work with Emmy award-winning actress Jane Seymour. "She is so much fun. I was intimidated when I first heard she was coming on set. But after two minutes of being around her, she just melts your heart."

Dancing in a movie means dancing in front of cameras, which is different than dancing for an audience on stage. Kampa found the idea of dancing in a movie both exciting and intimidating.

The movie, "High Strung," features dance segments that merge ballet with hip hop, two very different dance forms, and it can be challenging to mix the two styles. Kampa describes what it was like dancing these ballet hip hop fusion numbers and working with choreographer Dave Scott.

Kampa enjoyed making the movie, "High Strung," as both a dancer and an actress. When asked about her favorite thing about filming "High Strung," Kampa comments, "This is a difficult question because there were so many different aspects of working on this film that made it both memorable and enjoyable."

Life as a Freelance Artist

The future is bright for actress and dancer Keenan Kampa. After completing "High Strung," she has been working as a freelance artist, and pursuing both acting and dance opportunities. She talks about life as a freelance artist, "I've been keeping up with ballet as a freelance artist and hopefully going back into it more now that my hip is finally fully recovered."

Working as a freelance artist is different than life in a ballet company. "It's tough being a freelance artist. It's totally different than being in a company, because you take on these small projects as they come along. Right now the focus has been a lot on acting. You have to keep up with this discipline of getting to class, working out, stretching, eating and with everything," says Kampa.

Kampa is open to both acting and dance opportunities in the future. "I am keeping up with both my ballet and acting. I have some small projects coming up. It will be exciting to see what the future holds."

"High Strung" is playing in movie theaters now. Check local theater schedules for movie times. West Michigan dance fans will enjoy seeing Keenan Kampa, who made such a great impression on the local dance community, star in a movie that celebrates the art of dance. For more information, visit High Strung's Facebook page.

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