



Hee Seo
Photo by Gene Schiavone

DANCER'S JOURNEY

Hee Seo

Up close with ABT Principal Dancer Hee Seo

My journey with dance began when I was 12 years old in my hometown, Seoul, Korea. I was taking swimming lessons with my two brothers and decided I didn't want to swim anymore. My mom said I needed to do some type of activity, so she put me into a ballet class.

I've only participated in three competitions in my life, but each one was an important step on my journey. My first competition was when I was 12. I was accepted into an Arts School in Seoul, which then led to a scholarship with the Kirov Academy of Ballet in Washington, D.C. I entered another competition, **Prix de Lausanne**, that led me into the Stuttgart Ballet in Germany, where I trained in the John Cranko Ballet Academy and danced with their company. Finally, at the **Youth American Grand Prix**, I was offered a position with ABT's Studio Company and joined ABT shortly thereafter. Over the next seven years, I worked my way through the company before being promoted to Principal Dancer in 2012!



Other Dances
Photo by Erin Baiano



Hee Seo in *Romeo and Juliet*
Photo by John Grigaitis



Hee Seo and Roberto Bolle in *Swan Lake*
Photo by Gene Schiavone

First Ever Role: My first role was Red Riding Hood in *The Sleeping Beauty* when I was 12.

First Role with ABT: *Ballet Imperial* by George Balanchine. There are four groups, and I was the first girl to lead one of the groups. I was supposed to take my cue from the conductor to start, but I was too nervous to do so, so I asked the Ballet Mistress to switch me with one of the senior corps members so I was not the one leading the line.

Favorite Role: My favorite role is Odette/Odile in *Swan Lake* because it is so challenging, but so rewarding afterwards. Normally you either play a nice person or a bad person...but this is the only ballet you can actually play both good and evil (White Swan/Black Swan) in the same evening. It is so technically challenging that once you finish the full-length ballet, it feels like you have accomplished something. For me, it was the role where I became a ballerina. It was very special.

How many pairs of pointe shoes do you go through in a week? I think I probably go through 10 pairs per week.

Favorite Ballet? *Swan Lake*

Most Challenging Ballet? *Swan Lake*

Do you prefer playing Odette or Odile? I say this because I just rehearsed Odile. I think I like white swan better. No, that's not true. I don't know...I like them both!

One thing in your dance bag that you can't go without? One thing? Two, I need two. Lipstick and perfume.

When did you start to love ballet? When I came to ABT. Before then I didn't see enough beautiful dancing growing up. We didn't have access to extensive videos or YouTube channels like today. When I finally made it to ABT, I got to see these incredible dancers that I saw on video in real life. I realized that a dance form could be this beautiful, and it really gave me the wings to fly!

Beginnings in Seoul at the Sun-hwa Arts Middle School

Kirov Academy of Ballet of Washington, D.C. - Universal Ballet

John Cranko Ballet Academy in Stuttgart, Germany

ABT's Studio Company

ABT Main Company as an Apprentice

ABT Corps de Ballet

ABT Soloist

ABT Principal Dancer