



USA International Ballet Competition



History of the USA International Ballet Competition

One of the world's most prestigious dance events, the USA IBC, is a two-week "olympic-style" competition where tomorrow's ballet stars vie for gold, silver and bronze medals; cash awards; and scholarships. Designated as the official USA Competition by a Joint Resolution of Congress, the USA IBC is held every four years, in the tradition of sister competitions in Bulgaria (Varna), Russia (Moscow), and Japan (Tokyo).

The first International Ballet Competition premiered in Varna, Bulgaria, in 1964 and eventually grew into a cycle of ballet competitions that rotated among the three cities of Varna, Moscow and Tokyo. In 1975, the Jackson Ballet Guild invited Thalia Mara, renowned ballet teacher and educator, to develop a professional ballet company and school for the state of Mississippi. As a part of her development plan, she introduced city leaders to the idea of ballet competitions and convinced them to secure the USA IBC for the city of Jackson.

In 1978, the nonprofit corporation, Mississippi Ballet International, Inc. (MBI), was created to produce the first International Ballet Competition in the United States. Robert Joffrey, renowned Artistic Director of the Joffrey Ballet, agreed to chair the first international panel of jurors. With the help of local, national, and international endorsements, and the energy and commitment of the citizens of Jackson, the first USA International Ballet Competition was held in June 1979, featuring 70 dancers from 15 countries.

At the conclusion of the first competition, a sanction was received from the International Dance Committee of the International Theater Institute (ITI) of UNESCO for the USA IBC. Thus, Jackson joined other ITI-sanctioned competitions that rotated each year among Bulgaria (Varna), Russia (Moscow), and Japan (Tokyo).

In 1982, the United States Congress passed a Joint Resolution designating Jackson as the official home of the International Ballet Competition. The second USA IBC was held the same summer with 78 dancers representing 19 countries. The 1982 competition was featured in a 90-minute ABC/PBS film, *To Dance For Gold*, which aired around the world. Subsequent competitions have enjoyed an ever-growing number of competitor applications in addition to worldwide publicity and acclaim.

Today, international ballet competitions are flourishing worldwide, yet the USA IBC in Jackson remains one of the oldest and most respected dance competitions in the world. The VIII USA IBC will return to Jackson June 17 - July 2, 2006.