

Desert Vista grad chosen as dancer on Disney cruise ship

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Special for The Republic

Kristin Roa has long been obsessed with Disney - catching every animated movie and visiting Disneyland from open to closefour times a year.

Now, the 2009 Desert Vista High School grad will be living her dream, having been chosen to dance on the Disney Wonder cruise ship, one of 200 dancers selected from May auditions in New York City, Los Angeles, Orlando and Ahwatukee's Dance Studio 111.

"I've always been a bit obsessed with Disney," said Roa, who transferred to Brigham Young University from ASU. "This is really a dream come true for me."

Roa, 19, served as DVHS student-body president and performed with the DVHS Dance Company for four years, graduating at 17.

She said entering the May 12 Disney audition was serendipitous.

"It was a last-minute decision because my best friend was graduating from ASU that morning," she said. "I thought, well, I might as well as try."

She joined 100 hopefuls from Oregon, Washington, California and Arizona who learned a dance routine and then performed it in small groups before a Disney judge. If chosen, they were told they would be notified by phone.

Roa, the only Arizona dancer selected, received the news via e-mail last week.

"I got a new phone, so they e-mailed me. When I called them, they asked if I was interested. I said yes. They called back and said, 'We want to offer you the job.' I was kind of surprised as the audition was a month ago and I'd almost forgotten about it, and I'd moved to Utah the week before," Roa said.

Roa will start dance training in Canada in August. In October, the troupe will go to Los Angeles where they'll board the 11-deck cruise ship that will carry them on six- and eight-day cruises from LA to the Mexican Rivera through April2012.

One of Roa's duties is to dress as Minnie Mouse and interact with youngsters on the ship.

"I've never acted, but I definitely know what it's like to be on the other side of a Disney character greeting - I hope I don't disappoint any child," she said.

She'll also dance onstage in five shows each day, sometimes as Minnie, other times as

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Lilo.

Roa started dance lessons at Ahwatukee's Dance Studio 111 - then the Kimberly Lewis Dance Studio - at age 9 and pursued it heartily for eight years.

"I was there every hour I wasn't in school, dancing 20 hours a week because I just loved it so much," said Roa, who was on the ASU Spirit Squad her freshman year.

The majority of her dance classes were with her favorite teacher, Carrie Matheus-Anders.

"She was like a second mom to me," she said.

Matheus-Anders was one of the only choreographers nationwide selected by Disney to teach the audition routines. Other sites used Disney employees.

Roa is studying business and marketing at BYU - skills she said could be used in the future with companies such as Disney.

"Any experience is an opportunity, and I'm excited about this one. I'd like to see where this will take me. Maybe we will be able to work together again in the future," she said.

Her friends and teachers are thrilled for her Disney opportunity.

"Kristin was a dedicated dancer whose years of training and **hardwork** are about to pay off," Dance Studio 111 owner Kimberly Lewis said. "What a wonderful accomplishment for her to now be offered a job performing on a Disney Cruise ship."

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