

KENDALL GAZETTE

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Young performer aiming for stardom in Hollywood

BY BILL KRESS

Passionate about dancing since preschool, Georgina Paez is on a fast-track to stardom, heading to Hollywood this month with a select group of graduates of the iSTAR project, a Miami-based program with an unbeatable formula for finding and developing young talent.

As she takes her training to the next level in Los Angeles, the 10-year-old Kendall resident, who also acts and sings, admits she is motivated by the success of such young and rising stars as Ariana Grande, Taylor Swift and Demi Lovato.

But her true source of inspiration is striking — and bittersweet.

“Of course, my mom is my biggest inspiration, because she always gives me so much support,” Paez said. “But next to her is Jose Fernandez because he was my idol, my baseball idol — and because he was such a success.”

In fact, Paez was so dedicated to the late Miami Marlin's pitcher, she recently performed a unique and moving dance routine in honor of Fernandez, who was killed in a tragic boating accident off Miami Beach in 2016.

According to her mother, Barbara Paez, “Georgina was deeply inspired by Fernandez's success in



GEORGINA PAEZ

Miami as a Cuban refugee and how he stayed the course to achieve celebrity after finally defecting to the United States, despite the odds, to become a Major League player.”

Paez and her stepfather, who similarly fled Cuba on a makeshift boat for a better life here, would watch Marlin's games together.

“First I was into soccer, then I was into basketball, but now I am really really into baseball, because of him,” she said.

“Jose was like a brother to me, like a piece of me. And he was Cuban so he's kinda like me that way too. But

now he's gone because he died.”

And so Paez was inspired to celebrate Jose's life in an emotion-packed dance.

Sobbing at first on stage, she quickly composed herself under the spotlight to go on to successfully complete her tribute, because — in addition to Jose — she has personal strength, stamina and a natural talent on her side.

According to Zuzana Monroe, iSTAR Project founder and president, “At the beginning, our aspiring local talents need to acquire tools and techniques that will open up new practices of awareness, expression and imagination, and opportunity.”

Combined with the invaluable training she has received through iSTAR, Paez now is moving swiftly on to the next step, called iPOP, the world's leading talent event that promotes emerging talent to leading agents, managers, and casting directors in Los Angeles.

Sharing her excitement, Barbara said, “I am so proud to say my daughter was called and will be going to Hollywood for her iPOP experience.”

Monroe is equally pleased.

“Georgina has a bright future, with her mom at her side, right on top of everything. This is how success happens. This is the model for success,” she said.