

Case Study: Profiles of People That Choose Jersey Over Philly

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Alexei Borovik's arrival in the United States was part of a plan. His association with the Pennsylvania Ballet was an accident. His choice to live in South Jersey solved his biggest problem.

Borovik, principal dancer with the Pennsylvania Ballet, left his home outside Perm, Russia for America in 1991. He and several other dancers hoped to create a US version of Russia's premier traveling ballet troupe, the Bolshoi Ballet. When their plans quickly unraveled, Borovik found himself stranded in Philadelphia while his wife, Elena, and their two children Alisa and Nikita, remained in Russia awaiting news of when they too might emigrate.

Unsure what to do next, Borovik rented an apartment across the street from Pennsylvania Ballet's Rock School and enrolled in a few classes. Several weeks later, he was asked by then-artistic director, Christopher D'Amboise to be the company's guest artist. Borovik sent for his family, but where would they live?

In perfect English, Borovik explains "We thought about the Russian community in Northeast Philly, but we wanted to adapt faster so we knew we had to live outside of that. We thought about West Philly, but transportation there was not good. So, we picked New Jersey for the schools and the Speedline. It was also affordable."

The Boroviks' home in Barrington has been an oasis for Alexei, now principal of the Ballet. Pantomiming exhaustion, Boroviks' arms are limp at his sides and his tongue lolls from the side of his mouth as he recounts, "I would be so tired from dancing all day, and from having to think and speak in English, and also from helping my kids adjust to being here in America, that I would just sit in my backyard sometimes and stare up at the sky and trees. My brain was hurting."

Borovik has danced much of the classical ballet repertoire, including Giselle, Swan Lake, Romeo and Juliet, Cinderella, and the Nutcracker, for starts. In June, Borovik will reprise a new version of his role of Siegfried in Swan Lake when the Ballet stages their million-dollar commission of the work by world-renown choreographer, Christopher Wheeldon. "Alexei is the quintessential classical ballet dancer," says Wheeldon, also noted for his classical style.

He is also the quintessential American husband and father, who takes the train into work every morning, pays his bills ("I had to learn so much about how to do that here in America. It is different in Russia," he remembers.), and comes home tired every night.

Now that the children are older, and Elena, who was a pediatrician in Russia, is employed as a lab technician at Kennedy Hospital, life is less hectic for the Boroviks. Although they considered moving back to Philadelphia with its cultural scene, they opted to stay put, feeding their craving for charm and art with strolls through Haddonfield and trips into the City on the train. "Haddonfield has character," Borovik explains.

It's the perfect arrangement for the dancer who says he wants his culture and his lawn, too. "I go to the library in Voorhees a lot and get books on birds and trees. I like to mow the lawn, too." he says, eyes twinkling. "I get videos of old movies, too. But not the scary Hitchcock ones."

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