

How I Did It

By: Sylvanie Gold

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Five up-and-coming dancers share how summer intensives shaped their careers.

BY SYLVANIE GOLD

While some dancers return year after year to the same beloved summer intensive, others travel the globe seeking novel ways of moving. Aspiring dancers can find myriad possibilities for their summer months, and with so many choices, such varied costs and so much competition, summer study can be tough to navigate. *Dance Magazine* asked five rising 20-somethings to look back at their intensive adventures.



As "the umbrella woman" in Ailey's *Revelations*

COURTNEY CELESTE SPEARS

Learning Versatility, Summer by Summer: Courtney Celeste Spears

When Courtney Celeste Spears was young, she'd ask her family to skip the Christmas presents: "Just help me go to this intensive," she'd say. As a high school freshman in Baltimore, she got into American Ballet Theatre's Austin, Texas, program, her thrilling first time away from home. The next summer, ABT invited her to New York City on scholarship, her even-more-thrilling

MEET THE DANCERS

- Princess Grace Award winner **Courtney Celeste Spears** gleamed in Ailey II and graduated to the main company in 2018.
- In addition to dancing with the Gaga-informed Ate9 in Los Angeles, **Alexander Quetell** also does his own projects.
- **Hannah Fischer**'s National Ballet of Canada career is ablaze with plum roles in classics and new ballets.
- **Tyler Maloney** dances in American Ballet Theatre's corps and regularly steps out to perform featured roles for Alexei Ratmansky and others.
- **Gabrielle Hamilton** wowed Broadway with her punchy yet lyrical solo in *Oktoberfest*, winning a Bessie Award and a Chita Rivera Award in the process—and was chosen to be the cover star of this issue as one of *Dance Magazine*'s "25 to Watch."

first time as a New Yorker. "Six weeks living alone, no chaperones — 'Mom, how do you make chicken? How do I clean?' " she remembers. "This was my first get-on-the-subway experience, the first time I'd seen *Swan Lake*. So, so, so, so great." And she returned in subsequent years for intensives at Juilliard and the now-shuttered Cedar Lake. Which meant the most to her career? She can't say.

"Versatility is a dancer's strongest asset," she declares. "Doing three different intensives allowed me to grow in that versatility. At ABT, I was in my pointe shoes every day. Then to go to Juilliard, where I didn't have to put on a leotard and tights and I didn't even bring my pointe shoes, and then to Cedar Lake, where it was so European, and we were wearing kneepads all day — it changed the way that I dance, and the way that I saw dance. Three different worlds."