



The Good Life

Miami City Ballet principal Jennifer Lauren takes *Pointe* through her typical day.

By Amy Brandt

Photography by Lilly Echeverria

Ask Miami City Ballet's Jennifer Lauren if she feels any different now that she's a principal, and she'll quickly say no. "I'm still the same dancer I was 10 years ago when I joined the company," says Lauren, who was promoted at the end of last season. "I'm still working harder than ever." She does feel that people are watching her more closely now, though. "Kids in the school peek in the window all day," she says. "I need to make sure I set an example."

In some ways, Miami City Ballet has been a second chapter in her career. Lauren, 36, had previously danced with the unranked Alabama Ballet, where over the course of eight seasons she was frequently cast in leading roles. Since joining MCB as a corps member in 2007, she's had to slowly work her way back up. "My career has taken me up and down and sideways," she says. "It's nice to have the recognition that comes with being a principal. Although if you asked me to dance in the corps tomorrow I would do it, gladly."

While her days can be grueling, life in Miami Beach has its perks. "I love the sunny days," says Lauren, who lives close to the studios and the beach with her husband Blake, her pug Sophie and cat Coco. "As soon as we moved here, it was pure warmth and joy."

Earlier this year, *Pointe* followed Lauren throughout her typical workday. At the time, she was preparing for her debut as the lead in Balanchine's *Theme and Variations*, a major milestone for any ballerina. "It's pure classical ballet, pure Balanchine, which is what I love and what I live for."



"This is my 20th season dancing professionally, and I don't see myself stopping anytime soon. I'm still loving every minute of it."

—JENNIFER LAUREN

Company class starts at 10 am. "I usually focus on whatever is relevant to what I'm rehearsing at the moment," says Lauren. "For instance, *Theme and Variations* has a lot of turns from fifth. And I'm always stretching and working on lengthening."



Lauren and her regular partner, Kleber Robello, rehearse sections of *Theme and Variations* with artistic director Lourdes Lopez. "I really enjoy working with her because she's very clear and easy to understand," says Lauren. "She gives me a lot of ideas that help me present myself more as a ballerina."

"Lourdes has pulled a lot out of me that I didn't know I had."

—JENNIFER LAUREN



Around 8:30 am, Lauren walks her 14-year-old pug Sophie. "She's very old and diabetic, so we take care of her a lot," she says. "Sometimes we put her in a stroller because she can't walk for long. People think it's either adorable or ridiculous. But everyone smiles."



Breakfast usually includes a granola bar with almond butter, a banana drizzled with honey and a cup of coffee.



After rehearsal, Lauren has a costume fitting for an upcoming performance of *Stars and Stripes*.



Here: In company class. Above: Lauren and soloist Ashley Knox pose for a selfie near the beach across the street from MCB's studios. Dancers often head there during breaks. "We look at the water, get a little vitamin D," says Lauren. "But not every day, because sometimes you're so tired that all you want to do is rest."