



INTRODUCING:
LAUREN YORDANICH

BALLERINA



Photo courtesy of Ballet Arkansas, Sarah Marie Littleton.

Introducing Lauren Yordanich Ballerina. (And, Michigander!)

Lauren dances with: [Ballet Arkansas](#) which is ranked as one of America's top 100 ballet companies. It should not be surprising that Ballet is not found only in Chicago, Los Angeles, or New York City. The beauty of what ballet is and can do for us is expressed through the relentless pursuit of training, and a life that is dedicated to dance, so it doesn't matter if we experience a ballet dancer's art in Arkansas, South Dakota or Maine. That's what ballerina's do, and that, is Lauren Yordanich. Being a dancer with a ballet company is not for the faint of heart. You must be committed to it 110%. There isn't room for a lack of self-confidence because as graceful and poised as ballet dancers are, the competition is fierce, and staying focused is crucial.

I am thankful that Lauren was able to take some time away from her demanding schedule to answer a few questions and for taking a leap onto my stage and dance with some words.

Okay, let the dance begin!

TS: Who (or what) has been your greatest influence/inspiration?

LY: I gained a lot of inspiration growing up in my home studio in Chelsea, Michigan. Each year we would perform The Nutcracker and another show, either a full-length ballet or mix repertoire bill. When I was eleven, we were preparing for a full-length Swan Lake. I had the role of a Four Little Swan which was a big honor for me as it is quite an iconic part in the ballet. Being in the rehearsals with all the studio's older dancers was a turning point in my determination to continue pursuing ballet. The White Swan Pas de Deux in Act 2 I could watch over again and still be memorized. From my experience in my home studio to now, I draw the majority of my inspiration from the dancers I work with every day. Their passion helps me stay inspired.

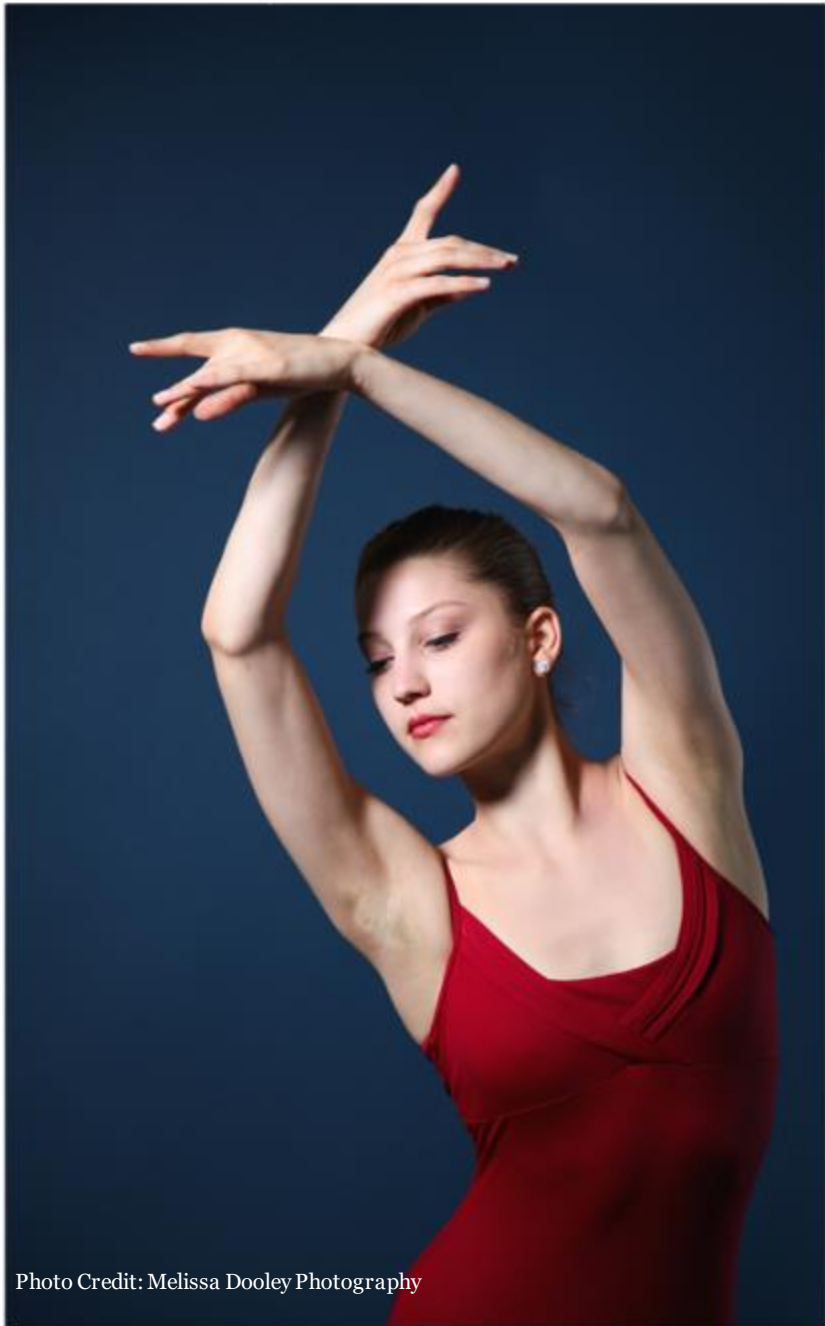


Photo Credit: Melissa Dooley Photography

TS: You dance with [Ballet Arkansas](#) which is unique because when most people think of Ballet, they might believe Ballet Companies exist only in Chicago, NYC, or Los Angeles, but it is alive and well in Arkansas. How did you become a dancer with Ballet Arkansas?

LY: Although there are large ballet companies who receive national attention in major cities there are also many smaller ballet companies who are performing great repertoire and have very talented dancers. Auditioning for ballet companies can be a daunting task and audition season can linger over dancers hoping to receive a position for the following season. Often ballet students, like myself, have a growing list of ballet companies at which they hope to audition for. For most ballet companies in America the audition process begins at the beginning of the year and spans several months. There are multiple ways to audition for ballet companies. One popular way is through audition tours. Companies will post a list of audition tour dates at which they will hold open auditions in cities around America. Attending one of these auditions in a big city is sometimes referred to as a "cattle call" due to the number of dancers who attend these auditions. I would assume this way of auditioning is quite like casting calls for movies and tv shows. An alternative way to audition is done by sending materials for a company class or a selected audition class. Dancer materials that are sent usually consist of a video of the dancer in class work and clips of performance materials, as well as a resume. My audition for Ballet Arkansas started with a friend recommending the company to me. I looked further into the company and started preparing my materials to send. Ballet Arkansas does not hold audition tours but instead accepts materials for company class auditions or to attend one of their Little Rock audition dates. When I was accepted to audition, I was given options for a date. I choose to attend a company class as I think it is valuable to get a feel of current dancers to see how well of a fit I would be with the existing company. One thing I valued when auditioning is that Artistic Director Michael Fothergill and Associate Director Catherine Fothergill took the auditioning dancers back to their office to discuss their interest and to hear more from their auditioners. This personality doesn't happen with many auditions and I was delighted to receive a positive response with an offer later the following month.



Photo Credit: Melissa Dooley Photography

TS: :What are the elements to being “in the game” and competing with other dancers to achieve success? Let's face it, being a ballet dancer is not just being dancer, you are also an athlete and people might miss that fact because they see something beautiful and graceful on stage, but might not realize the years of training that took place before that first step is taken and those bright, hot, theatre lights come on.

LY: :When I was younger and at the stage of serious training, I felt like the more I could do the better dancer I would be. I would often compare myself to what other dancers around me were doing. How they were spending their time in the studio and how they were cross-training outside. Trying to become the dancer I aspired to be, I would try to do my best to match the amount of work I was hearing and seeing. But like many things, what works for one individual doesn't work for another. I was putting too much of my energy focusing on doing what I thought I had to, versus doing what worked for me. I believe this took away from the focus and strength I could provide in the studio. When I accepted my contract with Ballet Arkansas, I was still expanding a high level of focus on trying to do all I could to be the dancer I wanted of myself. It wasn't until we had to take a break from our traditional training during Covid that I found the importance of balance. When our schedules get intensive in the studio and when performing I focus on using my time more for recovering and reflecting on how things are going and how to improve the following days. When my schedule becomes more relaxed is when I find the time to build upon weaknesses through cross training. Another element that has helped me in becoming more focused in the studio is finding the balance between dance and other personal interests. I really enjoy exploring my time in the kitchen. I find that dinner isn't a chore but that cooking and baking actually allows me to decompress and focus on myself at the end of a busy day. I stopped eating meat just after high school due to ethical and environmental beliefs and now have a more plant-based diet. I've had to play around with this to find what will provide me with optimal energy and strength, but I believe it works well for me. Like any athlete we must consider our diets as an important factor in our performance, but no one diet is fitting for everyone. Also, I enjoy spending time in nature and Arkansas has beautiful time in the year to explore trails, get outside and spend quality time with friends. Interest and time outside of the studio is as important as the time inside the studio and I believe what one does to improve their ability to stay focused and motivated in the studio will help them achieve success.



Photo Credit: Melissa Dooley Photography

TS: What has been the best advice you have ever been given, and what is the best advice you can give to aspiring dancers?

LY: I have received great advice and encouragement over my time that has kept me pushing towards my goal as a dancer, but the best advice I have ever received was at the end of my traineeship with Grand Rapids Ballet in Grand Rapids, Michigan. After my audition season I was weighing the decision to continue my ballet training in a top-level division at another ballet company or joining Ballet Arkansas as an apprentice. Usually, young ballet dancers are looking for their first company contract, but I didn't know if I was mentally and technically ready to take on that position. I spoke to a few individuals I respected for advice, one being Atilla Mosolygo, the Grand Rapids Ballet School Director. In our conversation, he told me that I was technically ready to join a company and that the experience I would obtain as a member of a company would be more valuable to my career than pursuing more training. Ultimately, hearing those words made me believe more in myself and trust that I was ready.

I signed my contract shortly after and began my journey with Ballet Arkansas. To me this was the best advice I could receive because at that time I was very unsure of myself. Joining Ballet Arkansas and now being here for four years I have been able to become a stronger dancer and continue to push myself. The best advice I could give to inspiring dancers is to explore and connect back to what they love most about dancing. It is no secret that dance as a hobby or as a career takes a lot of hard work and dedication. In difficult moments it can be hard to lose sight of why we love to dance and why we continue to push ourselves.

TS: Thank You Lauren for sharing your time and talent with us. This has been a very informative interview to say the least.