

yourbody | WORKING OUT WITH...

Ashley Mayeux

To navigate a career change, the Ailey dancer got back into class.

BY GARNET HENDERSON

When Ashley Mayeux joined Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater last summer after four years with Complexions Contemporary Ballet, she was already a versatile mover accustomed to a demanding schedule. But the career move came with challenges. "I had to take a lot more modern classes to get the grounded feeling back into my body," she says. "I had been doing a lot of contemporary work on and off pointe that required me to be more 'pulled up.'"

To build her stamina, Mayeux visits the gym for cardio workouts whenever her schedule allows, using the treadmill or elliptical for 30 minutes at a time. She is also careful to pace herself for long days: Mayeux never jumps into class or rehearsal without checking in with her body first. "I usually start my day out on the floor with layers and layers of warm-up clothes on," she says. She begins simply, by stretching her quads and flexing and pointing her feet. She likes to do the "cat-cow" yoga exercise to warm up her core and spine. "I try to get my body lubricated before classes."

Mayeux has worked closely with the company's in-house physical therapy team to keep her body ready to handle the Ailey rep. Once or twice a week, she sees a PT to help her with

Break Time

"When I'm not performing I usually head home to Houston to spend time with my family and my two English bulldogs, London and Rome," says Mayeux. Aside from occasionally teaching at her high school and childhood dance studios, Mayeux uses time off to give her body a break from dance.



her Achilles tendon—a common problem spot. The company's physical therapists use manual therapy techniques to ensure her ankles are properly aligned and do

not feel "jammed."

She also is diligent about self-care as her body gets used to the demands of the new rep. Away from class and rehearsal, Mayeux sets aside time to ice sore areas whenever possible. On tour, she cares for her body by getting frequent massages. Mayeux also stretches (mostly her hamstrings) and self-massages (mostly her calves) every night before bed to relax, address any areas of tightness and prepare for the next day of dancing. ■

To shift from Complexions' pulled-up rep to Ailey's more grounded style, Mayeux doubled down on modern class



Quick Fuel

Belvita's whole-grain Breakfast Biscuits are Mayeux's favorite snack when she needs something quick—especially the original and blueberry flavors.

