Karen Arceneaux is about to deliver some bad news to the group of advanced-beginner Horton students assembled before her. She's cutting the class in half for an already weary exercise.

"If it was two counts, now it's one. If it was six, now it's done," she says. '"I'm leaving now," one student announces, semi-joking.

"Arm Arceneaux," without skipping a beat. "The music is locked."

Her quick wit is as usual a balm for the dancers' weary spirits. She successfully walks that delicate balance of tightening the mood and showcasing her students in her Horton technique classes at The Ailey School in New York City—all while instilling a respect and reverence for its time-honored technique.

After Lester Horton began modifying his geometric, shape-oriented modern-dance style in the first half of the 20th century, the choreographer Alvin Ailey (who had danced in Horton's company) skillfully repurposed much of it in his work. It's now an integral part of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre's repertoire and training program.

But it wasn't a technique Arceneaux discovered when she was in her 20s. A layover to dance—she studied in college in Lafayette, Louisiana—she didn't begin training earnestly until her 30s, and for the Ailey two-year certification program. There, she studied intensively under Horton master Ana Maria Filosury.

After a brief stint as assistant to both Farlythe and Denise Jefferson, then director of The Ailey School, Arceneaux was promoted to school administrator. She remembers hoping that teachers would call her stick, so she could teach their classes. She laughs when she remembers her earliest teaching experiences—like the time Farlythe came into her class as she was teaching counts, because an extensive disease scared on the floor, bending on the middle with the legs lifted. "After she came to me, and she said it was: "Counts balances are done in a third," Arceneaux recalls, marveling. "After that day, I went back to my Horton book. I said, "I will let them when they call me to teach."

Now, after more than a decade of teaching Horton, she's into the power it has to change her students' dancing. "They learn how to blend movements," she says. "I tell them, 'Use all of your count.' I do not have an even count. It's too much, I say. By using your count, you can go on to any other technique after studying Horton, because it's about your body," she says. "You have positions where one leg is turned out and the back one is parallel. It elevates the body and gives you more strength, coordination, flexibility, proper body alignment. It's such a beautiful technique."

If Arceneaux sounds more than a little in love with Horton, that's because she is. "My Horton book is always at the foot of my bed," she says. "When I'm teaching, when I'm not teaching, I want to keep it going for the next generation." }

BY RACHEL RIZZUTO
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KYLE FROMAN
**Step-by-Step: High Lateral, Lateral T and Low Lateral**

The lateral T is a hallmark of Horton technique. When executed correctly, the body resembles the letter T: The torso tilts to 90 degrees, and the opposite leg extends for counterbalance. For a more advanced version of this staple movement, Karen Arceneaux has students continue tilting past 90 degrees to create a low lateral before diving to the floor, further demonstrating the clear lines and physical strength central to Horton. —RR

1. Begin in a grand plié in second position, arms also in second and feet in a natural second.

2. Transition to tilted tendu in second, with the working leg in parallel. The palms face each other.

3. Lift the leg in tendu off the floor, and tip the body to the right, moving into a high lateral naturally.

**TIP:** Keep the standing leg’s heel forward and turned out, not parallel.

4. Continue tipping to a lateral T. Imagine someone is pulling on both your hands and feet, in opposite directions.

**TIP:** Don’t let the bottom shoulder slide forward. Keep both shoulders flat to the front.

5. Continue tipping to a low lateral. The body is no longer parallel to the ground, but is now on a low diagonal.

6. Allow the hands to touch the ground and begin walking them away from the standing leg, as the working leg lowers.

7. Finish by resting the head on the right arm, while on the floor, as the feet remain in first position.

To see Arceneaux and Janis in action, go to dance-teacher.com.
final pose

Lean On Me
Horton teacher Karen Arceneaux
and student Whitney Janis at The Alley Studios
New York, New York

Photographed by Kyle Froman

Dance Teacher