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EXCLUSIVE
JEMELE HILL
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"If I'm trying to retain moisture, my go-to is always twists," says Fana Tesfagiorgis. Having spent nearly all her life dancing, which includes grueling rehearsals and a demanding tour schedule, Tesfagiorgis opts for a heat-free routine with nourishing products, such as Carol's Daughter Rhassoul Clay Enriching Conditioner ($14, carolsofficial.com), to help safeguard her strands. "I'm not sure what it is that makes it for active living, but I definitely feel my hair gets softer each time I use it," says Tesfagiorgis.
While styles that cause less stress, such as cornrows, box braids and updos, traditionally take more time to complete than, say, a wash-and-go or ponytail, they often lead you to have a greater understanding of your hair's texture, growth pattern and moisture level. "Finally, we have started to communicate," Ashley Mayeux says of her tresses. "Since I began using castor oil and the manuka oil, I have a better relationship with my hair. And I don't have to do it as often."
Constance
YEARS IN COMPANY: 6

The ends—the oldest and most fragile part of the strand—truly benefit from dos that give your locks a break. "I have thick, curly hair," Constance Statton says. "I feel like these styles help keep my conditioner's moisture, and I don't ever have to worry about my hair coming loose while I'm dancing." The mom of two has even started teaching her young daughter the art of conservational styling. "I make sure to twist my daughter's hair every night before she goes to bed. She's like, "This is protecting my hair,"" Statton says.
The Ailey Legacy Continues

Twists and braids are also an ode to our roots, much like Alvin Ailey's eponymous dance company. Each production illustrates the beauty and humanity of our African-American heritage. From now until May, you can see the illustrious troupe bring our rich culture to life at one of its 64 performances in 21 cities nationwide.