

From Summer Intensive to Dream Job

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It's every young dancer's fantasy: Attend a summer intensive, dazzle the artistic staff with your flawless technique, land a company contract, and grand-jeté into the sunset.

If only it were that simple, right? But while the intensive-to-company path isn't all that well traveled, it does exist. You may need to trade the words "company contract" for "second-company contract," "apprenticeship," or even "traineeship." At the end of the day, though, summer intensives are a great first step on the path toward the job of your dreams: They're a place to improve your dancing, get the feel of a company, and introduce yourself to the directors who could potentially hire you.

We caught up with six pros who followed the summer-intensive-to-dream-job route to get the inside scoop on how to give yourself a fighting chance at that coveted end-of-summer offer.

For Jamaris Mitchell, who's in her first season with Ailey II, attending the company's summer intensive made all the difference. After participating in the program for multiple summers, she was awarded an apprenticeship with Ailey II in 2018, and one year later, she officially joined the second company. "When I found out I got it, I wanted to scream, and cry, and yell, and laugh all at the same time," she says. "After all these years of dreaming, I finally did it."

On knowing Ailey II was the place for her: "When I was 6 years old, Ailey II artistic director Troy Powell did a master class in Syracuse, NY. It was my introduction to modern technique, and I ate it up. Once I saw the company dance in person, it was hard for me to think about anything else. I begged my mother constantly until I was old enough to attend the summer intensive. I came hoping it would eventually lead me to a contract—I think everyone at the summer program feels that way—and it worked."

On giving herself the best possible shot at a contract: "First and foremost, I followed the rules. I went to class, I was attentive, and I soaked up all the knowledge I could from my teachers. I also took advantage of the program advisor assigned to me during the experience. I talked with them about my goals, and they gave me advice for how to make them happen. They taught me how to present myself, how to work with choreographers, how to audition—and I listened."

Her advice for anyone hoping to follow in her footsteps: "Make friends. The program is very demanding, just as the company is demanding. The friendships you make will get you through it. They're your support system, and will be a big part of your eventual success."

JAMARIS MITCHELL, Ailey II

