

## College Reunion, Dancer Edition: Three Cover Stars Reflect on How College Launched Their Pro Careers

By: Courtney Celeste Spears

September 16, 2020



Today, Zoey Anderson, Corey John Snide, and I are all professional dancers thriving in the industry. But we were once anxious, excited young college students in NYC, hoping to make it big. The three of us graced the September 2013 Dance Spirit Higher Ed Issue cover together. Anderson graduated from Marymount Manhattan College in 2015, the same year Snide graduated from The Juilliard School; I completed the Ailey/Fordham BFA Program in 2016. Recently, we reconnected to talk about how we've grown over the years.

*What are some of the highlights of your careers so far?*

Zoey Anderson: I'm currently a dancer with Parsons Dance. One of my favorite highlights has been teaching. We typically teach more than we perform, and being able to give back and see the world while dancing is honestly like therapy.

Corey John Snide: I was so grateful for the opportunity to work with Andy Blankenbuehler on the filming of *Cats*—I packed my bags and moved to London for six months. I was also the dance captain for *Carousel* on Broadway. And I'm currently in *West Side Story* on Broadway. The true highlight is, always, just dancing.

**Courtney Celeste Spears: I joined Ailey II right out of college and am currently a company member with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. It still feels like a dream. But one of my most special highlights has been starting my own company, ArtSea Dance, which brings dance education to dancers based in the Caribbean—specifically the Bahamas, where my family lives. Giving back has brought everything full circle.**

*What was that original cover story like for you back in 2013?*

ZA: I personally grew up idolizing Dance Spirit magazine. Having the opportunity to actually be on the cover gave me a huge sense of confidence, and validation that Marymount was the right choice for me.

CJS: It felt like a true celebration. Having the opportunity to represent Juilliard for that shoot was honestly such a moment to celebrate.

**CCS: I still can't believe it happened. Choosing the right school can be so stressful, but representing Fordham on that cover made every difficult moment feel so worth it.**

*What are the most valuable things you learned from your college experiences?*

CJS: How to pull information out of the context in which it was originally given, apply it, and use it to stand on my own two feet. With my career on Broadway, I've worked with concert dancers like Justin Peck, and my concert dance training has applied in so many ways.

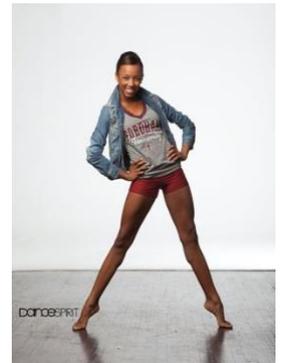
ZA: College opened my eyes to a love of learning. It's more than just dance. You're getting a deeper understanding of your body and the history of the form. College helped me find myself within my dancing.

**CCS: I learned how to fall in love with working hard. It was difficult to juggle dance and academics, but I found that as time went on, I started to really appreciate the structure. Working at that level became my new normal.**

*When it comes to college, is there anything you would've done differently?*

ZA: I wish I'd focused more on enjoying the small moments and the journey. Instead of comparing myself to others, I should've been learning that I'm an individual.

CJS: I would've taken the pressure off a little. I always wanted more, and sometimes that would take its toll on me, physically and mentally. It's important to enjoy just being at college, to join a club that isn't a dance club, or to get involved in something within your community. While planning ahead, I sometimes missed out on the present.



**CCS: I would've networked more. I worked with so many choreographers as a student and didn't get contact information for any of them. Start building those connections while you're in school. That way, when you've graduated and are looking for work, you have people you can call.**

*What advice would you give dancers just starting their college journeys?*

ZA: Don't start off closed-minded. We tend to choose one school and end up narrowing our path further from there. Instead, open your eyes, expand your knowledge, and explore many opportunities and options. Be a sponge and soak up every piece of information.

CJS: Don't go to a college just because it's the one you heard about the most. Have a clear vision of what you hope to gain, and understand the power of being versatile.

**CS: Don't limit yourself. Each program offers something completely different, and it's up to you to really dig deep and see if you want to spend four years there. Stay curious. When you step into the right school, I promise you that you'll know.**