

# Kellen Hornbuckle

*Kellen Hornbuckle is one to watch*

By Jasmine Fuller Cane

**W**HAT HAPPENS WHEN you mix a professionally dancing mom and a sassy three-year-old in need of a little discipline? Well, you get Houston Ballet Corps de Ballet dancer Kellen Hornbuckle enrolling for her first ballet class near the sandy beaches of Virginia Beach. Also home to Soloist Jacquelyn Long, Hornbuckle trained with Long's mother and former Cleveland Ballet dancer Suzanne Lownsbury at Ballet Virginia International where she learned her dedicated discipline for dance.

At 12 and influenced by Long's attendance, Hornbuckle enrolled in her first year of Summer Intensive at Houston Ballet Academy and was swiftly invited back the following summers under full scholarship before enrolling in the Academy full time. After a successful run in the Academy, Hornbuckle received a contract in 2018 to join Houston Ballet as an Apprentice. But like any budding star just beginning, Hornbuckle's first year with the company was filled with nerves.

"I was so scared of everybody," Hornbuckle says. "I had my evaluation with Stanton my first year, and he said he could tell I was hiding and nervous. He said to me, 'I hired you for a reason. You're in the company. Be in the company. Stand where you want to stand. You're here for a reason.' I think that helped a lot since my first year."

With Welch's words of wisdom in tow, Hornbuckle's newfound confidence landed her a contract in the Corps in 2019. And while the newly minted Corps member suffered a knee injury only a few months into the 2019-2020 season, Hornbuckle rebounded in four short months just in time for one last pre-pandemic performance of *The Sleeping Beauty*, a feat she's proud of. "I didn't think I would be back that quickly," she says.

Although the pandemic nipped at the heels of *The Sleeping Beauty*, it wasn't enough to stop the momentum of the young dancer. Hornbuckle took on a central role in "Ballad for Janoski," the last installment of Stanton Welch's 11-part film series *In Good Company*, and filmed *Marie's* third act pas de deux, a favorite performance of hers to date.

"I do really like acting and the drama. When I was doing the *Marie* pas, I actually started crying because I can pull those emotions out of myself," Hornbuckle explains. "I am a very emotional person, and I like to be

**"Sabrina Lenzi used to tell me just to dance for myself, and I try to hold on to that."**

expressive."

In addition to her love for acting and drama, Hornbuckle appreciates any time she can "groove in a pointe shoe" and has an affinity for neo-classical and new works, like Melody Mennite's upcoming world premiere. Audiences can catch her in Mennite's new work and many corps moments, but this star is on the horizon.

"I've recently been covering a lot of good roles," Hornbuckle reveals. "I'm not there yet, but hopefully soon. Look out for me." ■



## Kellen's Rehearsal Essentials



### POINTE SHOES

A ballerina isn't complete without her pointe shoes!



### SNACK

Sometimes looking forward to a snack is all it takes to get through three hours of rehearsal.



### ADVIL

For quick relief of aches and pains, Advil does the trick (but consult your physician if needed).