

## ON THE SIDE


# Abby Relic

Hip hop helps this Pacific Northwest Ballet dancer find her own groove.

By Margaret Fuhrer

**Pacific Northwest Ballet corps member Abby Relic** has never been your typical bunhead. At her Kansas high school, she was a member of the decidedly un-balletic drill team—which is where she first discovered hip hop. “The captain made up this sort of hip-hoppy routine for us that I loved,” Relic remembers. “It was such a release. I’ve always enjoyed busting out of the ballerina box.”

But Relic didn’t start taking hip-hop classes regularly until she arrived in Seattle in 2008: “I discovered this studio, Westlake Dance Center, that has a bunch of hip-hop teachers. It’s fun to learn all their different styles. They’ve taught me that hip hop is about capturing an attitude, a feeling, and then adding a bit of yourself on top, instead of just copying the teacher.”

That emphasis on putting a personal stamp on choreography has changed the way Relic thinks about even the most classical pieces. “When you’re in the corps of a story ballet, you have to dance cleanly so you fit in—but now I consciously put more of *me* into the movement,” she says. Plus, she’s found that when the company is learning a contemporary ballet, her diverse hip-hop experience helps her nail the quirkier steps. “I’m used to picking up new styles quickly, even if they feel foreign at first.” 

**“In hip hop you learn to add your own style to everything, which prevents you from becoming a ballet robot.”**

—Abby Relic

