

LET'S HORSE AROUND!  
FROM WHS TO NYC BALLET

HONORING WILTON WOMEN  
LOOK—LAKESIDE LIVING

# wilton

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program. "Heidi was like my mom," Mary Liz says. "I'd go to an open class at Steps on Broadway in the morning, take classes at SAB in the afternoon, then return to the apartment and do my schoolwork. I had to teach myself, and Heidi would help."

That dedication paid off when Mary Liz was selected to join the internationally renowned New York City Ballet. Dancers begin in the Corps de Ballet and advance either to senior corps members, the position Mary Liz now holds, soloists, or principals. "I don't necessarily aspire to be a principal dancer," she says. "Principals typically dance one ballet a night, whereas the corps dances two or three."

The training is incredibly rigorous, especially during performance season when, in addition to conditioning, Mary Liz dances ten hours a day. Not surprisingly, she's sustained her share of injuries. Four years into dancing with the NYCB, she began experiencing severe pain in her ankle. "I have this crazy pain tolerance, which isn't good, because the injury inevitably gets worse. I kept ignoring it, then my other ankle started hurting so much that I forgot about the pain from my first injury." When the curtain came down on the last performance of

the season, she was in the doctor's office, scheduling surgery.

Despite the sacrifice and commitment required, professional ballet confers an ineffable and transient magic all its own. "Sometimes what you release is very powerful to the audience—and then it's gone," Mary Liz explains. "That's what I love about live performance: You create this work of art at this moment in time, and this particular audience is the only one that will ever see it. The next night, we will dance the same ballet, but it's always different."

While performing in Paris this past summer, Mary Liz celebrated her 30th birthday, which means she'll likely "expire" in five years. Retirement age comes earlier for corps members because they dance so much more than soloists and principals. While the latter may perform into their late 40s, corps dancers typically retire between the ages of 28 and 36.

What's next for the woman who's devoted her life to ballet? "I have so many things I want to do. I love writing and will probably write fiction that's influenced by my experiences. It's a magical little world, ballet. It allows for so many interesting stories." Not the least of which is this ballerina's own. ■



## Fancy Greenery

» Ferns can be a wonderful addition to any garden that has a bit of shade. "They are easy to grow," says Mike Walker, a licensed horticulturist with Wilton's Hoffman Landscapes, "and because they are a native plant, ferns have few if any pests or diseases. Ferns are also extremely versatile and tolerant of many soil types." We asked Walker for a few of his favorites for our area:



**AUTUMN FERN** thrives in full shade. This fern initially displays coppery red fronds, which eventually mature to deep green as the season progresses. In the photo shown here it is paired with red astilbe.



**HAYSCENTED FERN** thrives in rich, moist soil in shade, but with adequate moisture it will tolerate full sun. Another benefit: it spreads on its own, achieving a height of about two feet.



**CINNAMON FERN** is distinctive in spring when cinnamon colored spikes emerge from the center. An excellent choice to plant near a stream.



**LADY FERN** exhibits a lovely red shade on new fiddleheads. It is slow-growing and also does well as a potted plant.



**JAPANESE PAINTED FERN** is colorful! Some varieties have fronds that are tinged a silvery grey and others come "painted" in shades of burgundy. They make great companion plants for blue shades of hosta. —JANE CARLSON