



DaSilva (center) teaching at Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and the Performing Arts in New York City

Chanel DaSilva

Music for contemporary

BY BETSY FARBER

Chanel DaSilva has two pillars of focus for every class she teaches: performance quality and musicality. The former Trey McIntyre Project dancer asks her students to really listen and be the music, emphasizing the importance of being expressive artists. She wants students to find that euphoric place dancers feel when they're under the lights with an audience watching. "I want that in class," she says. "Don't wait for the stage."

Now on faculty at Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and the Performing Arts in New York City (her alma mater), DaSilva teaches Graham technique to freshmen and sophomores with either a live drummer or pianist. She challenges the dancers to sing the music with their bodies and listen to what's happening between the steps. Mixing up the phrasing, she finds, helps to build musicality. "I don't just teach '5, 6, 7, 8,'" she says. "I use phrases of 6s, 9s and 13s."

For her contemporary class that she teaches to juniors and seniors, she calls on her Juilliard training in Horton, Limón and Cunningham techniques. Her grounded, earthy style paired with jazz music or strong Afrobeats allows dancers to move freely in their bodies and to not worry about being perfect, she says. **DT**

MUSIC SELECTIONS



Album: *Game of Thrones*
Artist: Ramin Djawadi

"For my new creation on Harvard University's student company, The Harvard Dance Project, I needed a score that could be both driving and introspective at the same time. Djawadi's compositions, particularly from the Season 6 soundtrack, perfectly tread the line of where drama and mystery meet."



Album: *Be Good*
Artist: Gregory Porter

"I fell in love with this album back in 2014, as well as the song 'Painted on Canvas.' Gregory's silky voice and the beautiful instrumentation just make me want to move. It's great for a beautiful lyrical combination moving across the floor in contemporary class."



Album: *King of Queens*
Artist: Yemi Alade

"A couple of years ago my friend turned me on to Afrobeats artists and I've been hooked ever since. Alade's music is so vibrant, powerful, sassy and

full of polyrhythms—fabulous for pushing the boundaries of musicality. My favorites on the album are 'Johnny' and 'Sugar.'"



Artist: Animal Collective
Song: "Fireworks"

"This is one of those songs that has been in my iTunes library for years. I've always wanted to choreograph a piece to it, but I've never had the chance to. So now, it is my go-to song for when I have to create some impromptu 'Chanel-ography' in contemporary class and need an inspiring song to get my dancers moving and eating up the space."



Artist: Beyoncé
Album: *4*
Song: "Run the World (Girls)"

"I would be remiss to not mention the Queen Bey, because she undoubtedly ends up on all of my class playlists. Especially when I'm teaching my teenager dancers. It's always a great time dancing to the iconic tunes of Mrs. Carter."

Photo courtesy of DaSilva