

## Q&A: Ebony Williams

Ebony Williams moves between Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet and the commercial dance world – including dancing in Beyoncé’s famous “Single Ladies” video. She talks to **Zoë Anderson**

Ebony Williams



Photograph © Erez Sabag

### How did you get into dance?

I always was a dancer. I have a video of me at one, doing the moonwalk in front of “Thriller”. I knew all of the choreography. I walked at six months, then after that I was dancing. This is serious, no exaggeration! Hip hop and all the urban-style movement was in me first. Then it was given some technique and lines through ballet.

### What appealed to you about Cedar Lake?

It was a brand new company. With most companies, when they’ve been around a long time, they have a specific style of dancer. Sometimes you just have to fit that part. It’s almost like being cast in a

Broadway show or a movie. If a tall black girl had left, then I could possibly get the job. Cedar Lake was so fresh that I could be the first to be just like me!

### How did the commercial side take off?

I went to a workshop with [award-winning choreographer] Laurieann Gibson. She saw me and stopped the music and said, ‘Where have you been?’ I said ‘I’m in a ballet company,’ and she said: ‘I know *that*’ – she could tell, by my training. She asked who was my agent. I said I didn’t have one, and she said, ‘You do now.’

### What’s it like being in something as famous as

### the “Single Ladies” video?

It feels good every time I see someone do the choreography. The first time I saw it, I couldn’t believe it was me on the screen! I just assumed that I was going to be edited out somehow. It was very giving of Beyoncé, to give us so much time. It was very important to her that it almost seemed like one of the girl groups of the 1960s.

### She also asked you to join her creative team, but you chose to stay with Cedar Lake?

I always knew that I would never be happy completely, just doing concert work, or just commercial work. It was better to have the best of both worlds. Cedar Lake has given me room to do as much as I can, and Beyoncé was equally helpful, allowing me to have time with her and knowing that the ballet company comes first for me. ●

Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet tours the UK from September 27 to October 19. See [www.danceconsortium.com](http://www.danceconsortium.com) for details.



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