

POINTE



Miami City Ballet principal Taylor Naturkas. Photo by Gary James.

Taylor Naturkas: Bringing Strength and Star Power to Miami City Ballet



Guillermo Perez

July 2, 2026

In May, during Miami City Ballet's season-closing program, [Taylor Naturkas](#), a 23-year-old newly appointed principal, bounded from leaps to rounds of turns, crisscrossing the stage with skittering pointework and fluid glides. The Broadway-bright work, *Grand Glittering Gershwin*, to the titular composer's piano concerto in F, was a premiere by MCB School resident choreographer and faculty member Durante Verzola. Dancing with fellow principal Alexander Peters, Naturkas provided the artistic TNT that brought down the house.

"It's always special for me to work with Durante," says Naturkas, who also added shading to the choreographer's 2023 work, *Sentimiento*. Their connection goes back to her two years of training at MCB School, before joining the company. "His Gershwin ballet felt like one big push forward for me—in technique,

musicality, interaction with my partner. I loved coming in to rehearse, finding ways to make its intricacies my own."

It was a fitting way for Naturkas to cap off her sixth season with the company, where she's been on the fast track since joining the corps de ballet in 2020. After her latest performance of George Balanchine's "Rubies" in March (also partnered by Peters), artistic director Gonzalo Garcia announced her promotion to principal on Miami's Arsht Center stage. For the director, her advancement was one of two (Cameron Catazaro, being the other) during his [first year](#) at the helm.



Photo by Gary James.

"I want to keep encouraging talents to develop, picking up on what has already been built here," says Garcia. "That includes recognizing the right time for a promotion—too soon can be frustrating, delay can stunt growth. With her strength and musicality, Taylor deserved this recognition. I've been fascinated by how she can take on a lot of repertory."

An Early Standout

Garcia, who calls Naturkas a prodigy, first noticed her in 2024 while serving as repertory director at New York City Ballet, where he had danced as a principal. The young dancer had been invited to participate in NYCB's 75th-anniversary celebration, performing the second-act divertissement of Balanchine's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* alongside then-MCB soloist Brooks Landegger. "You could tell Taylor had a talent raring to come out," Garcia remembers.

For Naturkas, that performance fulfilled a dream. "I'd be lying if I said I wasn't nervous," she says. "But guesting at New York City Ballet was a personal milestone. I never went to School of American Ballet, but there I was, dancing on the same stage as ballerinas I've looked up to since I was little."



Naturkas and Damian Zamorano in George Balanchine's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Photo by Alexander Iziliaev, courtesy Miami City Ballet.

Naturkas grew up in the lakeside-resort town of Petoskey, Michigan, with her fraternal twin, Autumn. ("One of my biggest supporters from afar," she says.) They both started dance training locally at Crooked Tree Arts Center School of Ballet, although Autumn moved on to other interests. Artistic director Heather Raue, a 2010 *Dance Teacher Award* winner who remains a mentor to this day, steered Taylor as a preteen to Suzanne Farrell's Cedar Islands Summer Intensive.

"Suzanne is one of my idols," says Naturkas of the former NYCB star. "She taught me style, technique, and etiquette, increasing my overall confidence. Without that experience, I don't think I would've felt so at home dancing in Miami."

In 2018, Naturkas attended MCB's summer intensive. Verzola points out that even then, before inviting her to the year-round program, he and MCB School artistic director Arantxa Ochoa had already taken stock of the teen's joyous energy. "She stood out through her attack and sensitivity to the nuances of music," he says.

When Naturkas later displayed her growing skills as a full-time MCB School student, Lourdes Lopez, the company's artistic director at the time, was quick to notice. During Naturkas' last year at the school, Lopez cast and coached the 16-year-old as Dewdrop in Balanchine's *The Nutcracker*.



Photo by Gary James.

"It was overwhelming to be in the studio with the company, thinking all eyes were on my every move," Naturkas remembers. "Yet I knew this was why I'd moved to Miami." She worked with Lopez for a week before

making her debut—her first *Nutcracker* performance with MCB. “I had no time to overthink it. I remember the whole experience as magical. Every time I dance this role, it brings me right back to that place.”

Lopez was impressed. “With each performance as Dewdrop, Taylor became more comfortable and expressive,” she says. The director soon offered Naturkas a corps contract for the 2020 season, going on to promote her to soloist in 2022 and principal soloist two years later. “With consistency, her dancing demonstrates artistic and technical ease,” Lopez continues. “This has been her trajectory in practically every role in bigger and more difficult ballets.”

Building Repertoire—and Artistry

Since joining the company, Naturkas has danced leads in everything from Balanchine favorites (*Square Dance*, *Divertimento No. 15*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and *Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux* among them) to works by Jerome Robbins, Alexei Ratmanský, Justin Peck, William Forsythe, Twyla Tharp, and Martha Graham. But she considers two achievements, both in 2024, as truly transformative: taking on the principal roles in Balanchine and Robbins’ *Firebird* and in Ratmanský’s *Swan Lake*.

Of her *Firebird* debut, Naturkas felt particularly challenged by the solo’s nonstop bourrées on pointe. “It almost took me to curtain to feel I could own this part,” Naturkas says. “But I loved working with Lourdes on every little detail, getting into feeling distraught not as a woman but as a magical creature.”



Naturkas and former MCB soloist Brooks Landegger in Alexei Ratmanský’s *Swan Lake*. Photo by Alexander Iziliaev, courtesy Miami City Ballet.

To develop her Odette/Odile two months later, she had to plunge deep into *Swan Lake*’s dramatic waters. “It was a huge undertaking,” she notes. “I’d never had an assignment with so many layers. Acting is a work-in-progress for me.”

To lay out the story effectively onstage, she tried to relate it to experiences from her own life. But she also looked to MCB principal [Hannah Fischer](#), a sensitively experienced interpreter, for inspiration and support. “She’s been like a big sister guiding me over the years. I’m always moved by what she’s feeling onstage,” Naturkas says.

In nonnarrative ballets, Naturkas questions the relationships the choreography brings out among her and her fellow performers, sometimes making up stories for them. And she’s extended her artistic reach in

contemporary works in part “thanks to amazing coaches.” Noah Gelber, for instance, helped her reframe partnered dancing through William Forsythe’s *Herman Schmerman Pas de Deux*; Pontus Lidberg, in his 2023 MCB premiere *Petrichor*, immersed Naturkas in his movement process, which left its mark on her, she says, with its unprecedented calmness.



With Shimon Ito in William Forsythe’s *Herman Schmerman Duet*. Photo by Alexander Iziliaev, courtesy Miami City Ballet.

In addition to her taking on such a wide-ranging repertoire, “Taylor’s success,” Garcia says, “has to do with her understanding of the art form and the connection to her own capabilities, and to the relationship she develops with her partners.”

She and [Alexander Peters](#), for example, bring a sense of spontaneity to the stage. “It’s really exciting when you can experiment with a partner like Taylor to make a ballet with a long history look like a conversation,” Peters says of their recent “Rubies” performances. “When we dance together, sometimes she’s the one pushing me!”

Thinking Beyond Ballet

Naturkas is eager to explore further opportunities during MCB’s upcoming season, which includes new works by Tiler Peck and Patricia Delgado, company premieres (Wheeldon’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and Robbins’ *N.Y. Export: Opus Jazz*), and returning ballets like *Swan Lake* and Balanchine’s *Allegro Brillante*. And her aspirations stretch into a future that she hopes might include more Forsythe, Robbins’ *The Cage*, and Jean-Christophe Maillot’s provocative *Roméo and Juliette*.

“To push beyond my comfort zone keeps me growing as an artist, and I’m excited for the next chapter,” says Naturkas. “But I also want balance in my life.” In her spare time, she does yoga (“That hour calms my mind, which is always running”) and weight training. And she recently became certified to teach Pilates.



Photo by Gary James.

While she feels lucky to count MCB colleagues among her best friends, Naturkas says she also strives to “go outside the ballet bubble for different, invigorating perspectives.” She also cherishes returning home to Petoskey, not only to guest-perform with Crooked Tree Arts Center but to catch up with family and long-time friends. “When my career started, I lived ballet every second,” she says. “Now I need other passions, or my art would not be the same.”
