

A Delicate Force

The softer side of San Francisco Ballet principal Lorena Feijóo

By Jocelyn Anderson

As a child what did you want to be when you grew up?

I wanted to be a figure skater, but there was no chance, because in Cuba there is no ice!

Do you have any preperformance rituals or superstitions?

I don't ever practice anything [right before curtain]. If I practice something that I am nervous about and it doesn't work, I will go onstage with that feeling. I just want to go and do it in the moment.

What talent do you have that only a few people know about?

Cooking. I cook a lot of Cuban, but I do Italian too. And I never follow recipes. I just do my own thing, and it turns out okay. My boyfriend and my mom are very lucky to have a chef at home.

During SFB's opening night at Lincoln Center Festival it looked like you did about 40 fouettés—what were you thinking about at that moment?

The worst has now passed!

What is the best thing about having a sister who is also a ballerina?

The best thing is that she gets reviews that I get credit for! And because she's good, it's good for me.

What is the biggest misconception about you?

That I am really strong. But really I am

very sensitive. People tend to think things won't bother me. When I was younger a lot of people thought I wasn't approachable because of how I come off onstage. But I'm very approachable, and people don't see my other side.

What character in a ballet is most like you in real life?

I have a lot of Kitri, but I also have a lot of Giselle. That's one of the things I told Helgi [Tomasson] when I first came [to SFB], because I was given all the bravura roles, whatever was technical and strong and powerful. I said to him, "Please do not [pigeonhole] me. Try me out. I'm very lyrical."

Do you have any pets?

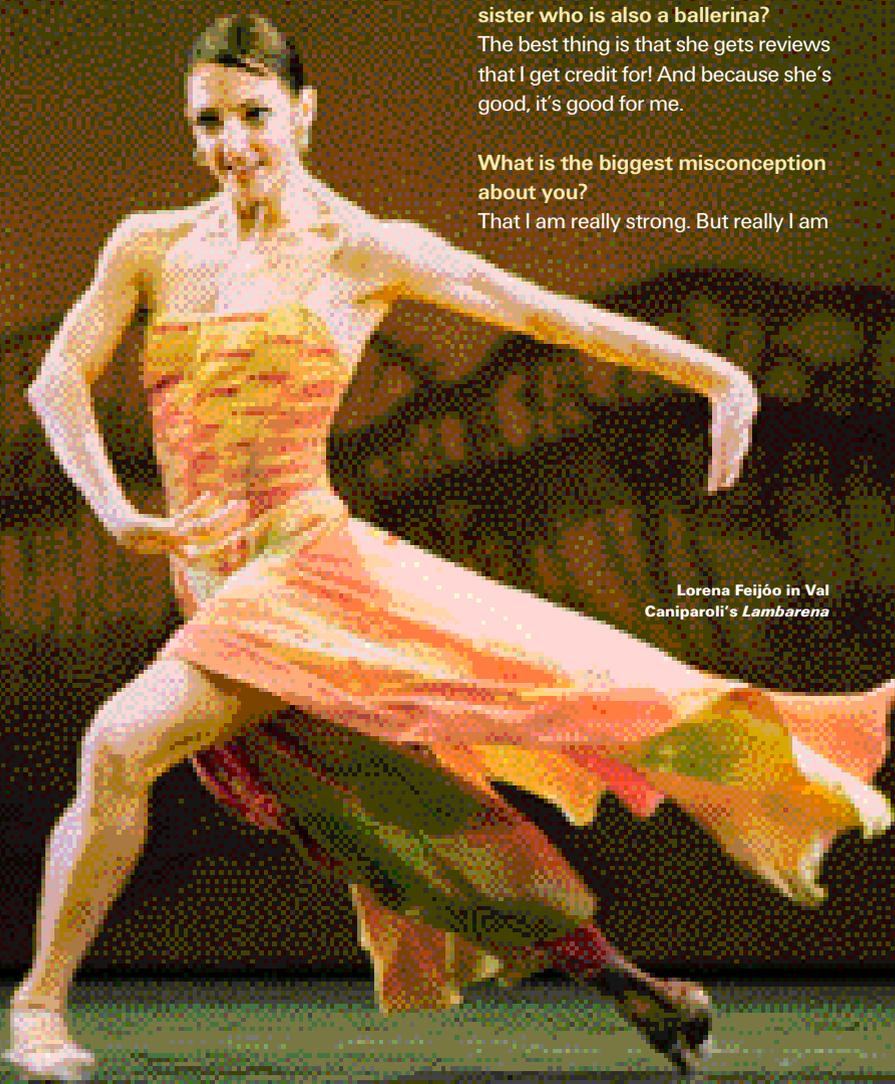
I have two cats. I have a Russian Blue named Sydney. He's not independent, like most cats; he's so loving. If he sees me crying, he licks my hand like a dog. Then I have a very snobbish, but so cute, white Persian named Mambo. I miss them a lot when I am on tour.

You were recently in the movie *The Lost City*. What is the biggest difference between stage and screen?

The biggest difference is that in theater you get one chance. You do it, or you don't. That's the luxury of movies—you can say, I didn't like that; can we do it again? In the movie, there is a bomb that explodes and they told me to do it like it's a matter of life or death, because they didn't want to prepare the explosive again. They thought 150 percent that I was going to screw it up. There was a big fuss when I did it [well]. I was like, what's the big deal? In theater, you know you have the one chance and that's it.

What do you think you will be doing in 20 years?

I hope raising grandkids. Having a great family and passing on all the knowledge that I have gotten from other people. Hopefully in a beach house. It doesn't even have to be big, just a house near the beach. ■



Lorena Feijóo in Val Caniparoli's *Lambarena*