

ASU grad earns communication degree while performing across Europe

By Charles Najera, ASU News
December 2, 2025

Editor's note: This story is part of a series of profiles of notable [fall 2025 graduates](#).

When professional ballet dancer Daniela Thorne takes a bow this fall, it will mark more than the end of a performance.

It will celebrate the completion of her Bachelor of Arts in communication from Arizona State University's [Hugh Downs School of Human Communication](#), earned entirely through [ASU Online](#) while performing across Europe.

For Thorne, education and art have always moved in harmony.

"Online learning really requires you to be self-motivated," she said. "It's been an incredible accomplishment, and now that I'm at the end, it feels like such a relief and a great reward. I'm very proud of myself."

Thorne's path to ASU was shaped in part by family. Her aunt, Charli Thorne, served as ASU's women's basketball coach from 1997 to 2022, making ASU a familiar presence throughout her childhood.

"I grew up getting ASU gear every Christmas," Daniela said with a laugh. "When I decided to pursue my degree while continuing my ballet career, ASU Online was a no-brainer because it offered the flexibility I needed."

That flexibility proved essential. While dancing with professional companies in Zurich and Berlin, Thorne often found herself studying before sunrise or long after the final curtain call.

"I remember coming home from a show at 10:30 p.m. and realizing I had to record a presentation for my Spanish class," she said. "I did it in full stage makeup, but I got it done."

Her experience reflects the adaptability of ASU's digital learning environment, which supports students with demanding schedules.

"My professors were amazing," she said. "Even with the time difference, they were responsive and eager to help. I always felt supported."

Through her classes in organizational communication, Thorne discovered new ways to understand how people work together, lessons that resonated with her experiences in the performing arts.

"In ballet companies, every dancer plays a role within a larger system," she said. "Learning how communication functions in organizations helped me see how art and structure influence each other."

Thorne's communication coursework gave her a strong foundation for understanding intercultural connection, and her Spanish studies further supported her ability to communicate and collaborate across cultures.

"In my first company in Switzerland, I was one of three Americans," she said. "Studying communication and languages made me more aware of how people express themselves differently, and how to connect across those differences."

Now based in New York City, Thorne continues to dance, model and act while preparing for her next chapter.

"I plan to keep pursuing the arts while exploring communication roles that align with my degree," she said. "I'm open to what's next and excited to see where curiosity leads me."

Looking back, she says her greatest source of pride is persistence.

"There were a lot of long days, but reaching the end is incredibly rewarding," she said. "Every hour I put in was worth it, and I know my life is richer because of it."

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Text image(s)



Daniela Thorne