

Julia Stiles

Star of *Save the Last Dance*

Forget the grade-school Christmas pageant. As a little girl growing up in New York City, Julia Stiles had her sights set on loftier stages. After attending her first avant-garde play at age 11, Stiles wrote a letter (in crayon, no less) to the theater's artistic director, begging for a part. "I told him that if he had any roles for children to let me know," says Stiles, now 19. The director responded to the precocious thespian by creating a part for her in his next play. Since then Stiles has proved her versatility, playing a pregnant flower child in the miniseries *The '60s* and an acerbic teen in the film *10 Things I Hate About You*. This month she can be seen as a small-town seductress in David Mamet's new movie, *State and Main*, and as a headstrong ballerina swept up in an interracial romance in the film *Save the Last Dance*. Last fall Stiles took on an entirely different role: college student. As a university freshman in New York City, she has happily put aside the perks of her budding celebrity to immerse herself in the everyday realities of college living—communal showers, dubious cafeteria food and cramming for midterms. "I was sort of nervous about [taking time out to attend school]," she says. "But I think in the long run that all of the experiences I'm having now will make me a better actress." She credits Bill Murray—who played Polonius to her Ophelia in last year's film version of *Hamlet*—with helping her make the decision. "He has always made sure his life isn't second to his career," says Stiles. "I really admire that."

How has your beauty routine changed since you started college? I still pay attention to the way I look, but college

"My style is very eclectic. I would definitely rather be a little flamboyant than simple and boring."

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