

LIGHTS, CAMERA,

Laura!

by Carolynne Hutter

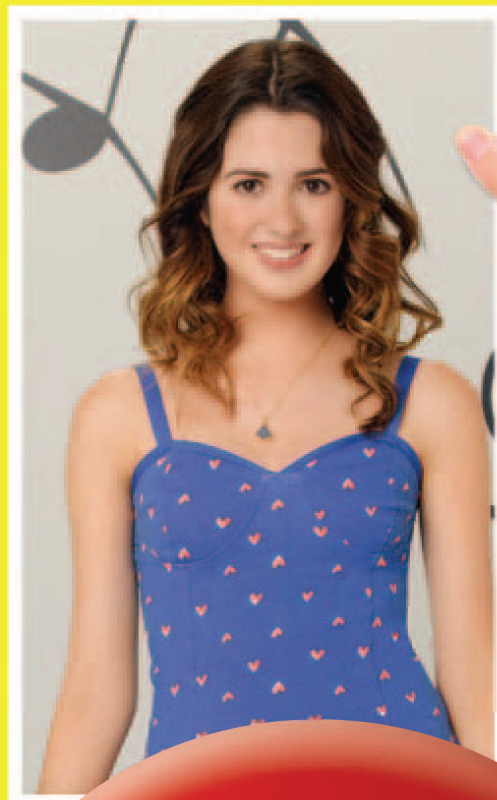


High school junior Laura Marano sings, dances, and acts for a living. She plays Ally on Disney Channel's hit sitcom, *Austin & Ally*, which is set in a music store.

"The fun that the audience sees is the fun we're having. The cast is extremely awesome. We all get along. The crew is spectacular, and the writers and Disney people are wonderful," says Laura.

Laura really enjoys playing Ally, but it is hard work. The show is musical, so besides acting, Laura has to sing and play the piano. And she has to balance schoolwork and a demanding job.

While the show is in production,



"The best part of working on the show is all the fun we're having."



Laura studies on the set with a teacher, plus she learns online. When the show is not in production, Laura goes to a regular high school.

"When I'm back at school, all my friends ask how I know what they're doing in school. I tell them that even though I'm working on the set, I'm still doing schoolwork," says Laura.

From Monday through Wednesday, Laura's day flips back and forth between school and rehearsing for the show. Her day starts at 7:30. She does schoolwork for a couple of hours with the teacher and then goes back to learning lines and rehearsing. Thursday is devoted to preshooting. On Friday, the show is filmed in front of a live audience.

Laura first began professional acting when she was just 6 years old.

"My sister, Vanessa, and I grew up in the theater, since my mom runs a theater," Laura explains. "We would go to acting class with her and do children's plays with her. We fell in love with it."

When Vanessa was 6 and Laura was 3, they asked their mom if they could be actors. Their mom told them: Absolutely not. Acting is such a difficult business, full of rejection.

But Laura's sister wouldn't give up. Laura and her sister entered the business after Vanessa auditioned in front of a top agent who agreed to take both sisters on as clients. Laura has now been on television and in movies. But her heart still lies with





live theater because of the connection to the audience. She gets to have this connection with *Austin & Ally* since they film in front of a live audience.

What are Laura's plans for when she graduates from high school? She wants to continue acting and doing music. And she wants to go to college. It will be a challenge to do all three, since Laura plans to study something besides music or theater at college. But she loves to stretch herself and learn more.

"I still go to acting classes, vocal lessons, and piano lessons," Laura says. "My opinion is that you should never stop learning and you should always work on your craft."

