

# A Global Scholar's Tale of Gratitude

**A DETERMINED, HOPEFUL DANCER** looking for her big break sat on a curb across the street from her dream company, Giordano Dance Chicago. Gazing up at the giant banners that hung from the towering light posts, she admired the dancers' photos and thought to herself, "I'm going to get into that company."

In a surreal moment, Lindsey Leduc '00 found herself standing in that same spot many years later. It was time to say goodbye to a place that became her home, filled with family. As she stood there reminiscing in her mind, she was satisfied knowing that she accomplished what she set out to do; that she was leaving on a high note; that she was, as her dad, Tom Leduc, put it, "opening a spot for a young dancer and allowing another dad to feel the pride" that he had felt for her; and that it was her photo now gracing the banners high on Chicago's Michigan Avenue.

This is only one experience Lindsey attributes to the solid foundation she gained during her five years at Wilbraham & Monson Academy. Here, Lindsey shares the stories of her start, her path and the support she received along the way.

## Presenting...12-year-old Lindsey Leduc

"I was dancing with Terri Gordon, owner of Mass Motion Dance, since I was 2 years old. In 1995 her daughter, Irada (Djelassi '96), was attending WMA. Terri was getting involved with the Academy more and they started talking about their interest in dance. At the time, they had a strong theater program with ARC, but no dance program. Using her best dancers, Terri put together a lecture demonstration to present what a dance program could look like at the Academy and how it would be structured. As a 12-year-old, I was in the senior company, along with Irada, and we participated in the lec-dem."

## First Impressions

"When I arrived on campus I was so impressed. I actually talked to my parents about attending a school like that for dance, but we weren't able to afford it. We showcased all the different disciplines of dance. The families of the dancers were invited and we put on this great show for the school administration. Afterward I was up in the Mattern parking lot with my parents getting ready to leave and we heard someone calling my name. It was Rebecca Bouchard and Richard Malley,



the Director of Admission and the Head of School at the time. They congratulated me on my performance and asked me what I thought of the Academy. I told them how amazing it was!"

## Opportunity Knocking

"Four days later, I received a T-shirt and an application in the mail along with handwritten notes from both Rebecca Bouchard and Richard Malley that read, 'We'd love to see you on campus in the fall.' It was so exciting for so many reasons! My parents ended up meeting with them and explained that I would love the opportunity, but we just weren't in the market for a private school. Later on that summer someone contacted us offering substantial tuition assistance through a Trustee scholarship. I ended up attending the Academy from eighth grade through my senior year. We received a lot of help. We were all so excited for the future!"

## Getting an Education

"The education I had up to that point was not at all advanced and entering eighth grade at Wilbraham & Monson Academy I was completely out of my element. I would go home every day and cry. Math was much more than times tables; my older brother would help me with algebra. I had reading for research classes where I wrote a

22-page paper as an eighth grader! The most I had ever written until that point was a one-page book report. It was so overwhelming."

## Building Academic Confidence

"I didn't do very well but everyone was so patient with me. They never made me feel bad or treated me like I wasn't good enough. And no one ever let me fail. The biggest achievement of my young life was making the honor roll. I made it once in my senior year. You would have thought I won the lottery. I was so excited. After five years I finally felt like I knew what I was doing and I knew what I was talking about. Looking back, it was a long journey and I was so supported."

## It's Showtime

"The interest in me was my dancing. They wanted to start this dance program and how great to have this young dancer, who's already trained, to be a part of it. That would be attractive to other students who maybe wouldn't be attracted to the school otherwise. That was great for a few years and in my junior year we lost our instructor halfway through. I said, 'I think I could do this for you; I could teach classes.' And that's what I did. I taught everyday and put a show together. I choreographed and helped other students choreograph as well. We did 'Cabaret' that year."



PHOTO CREDIT: GORMAN COOK



### Making the Connection

“One thing that was very different for me going to the Academy was I would get connected to these people and then they would just disappear; some students would come for a PG year or just for senior or freshman year. Most people grow up with the same group of students and they’re excited about getting back together with their high school friends during the holidays and breaks. My high school friends are all over the world; we don’t all come home and meet up at the local bar. It prepared me well for the industry I’m in, though. Being an artist is very gypsy, you work with people very intensely for a certain amount of time and then you move on with life.”

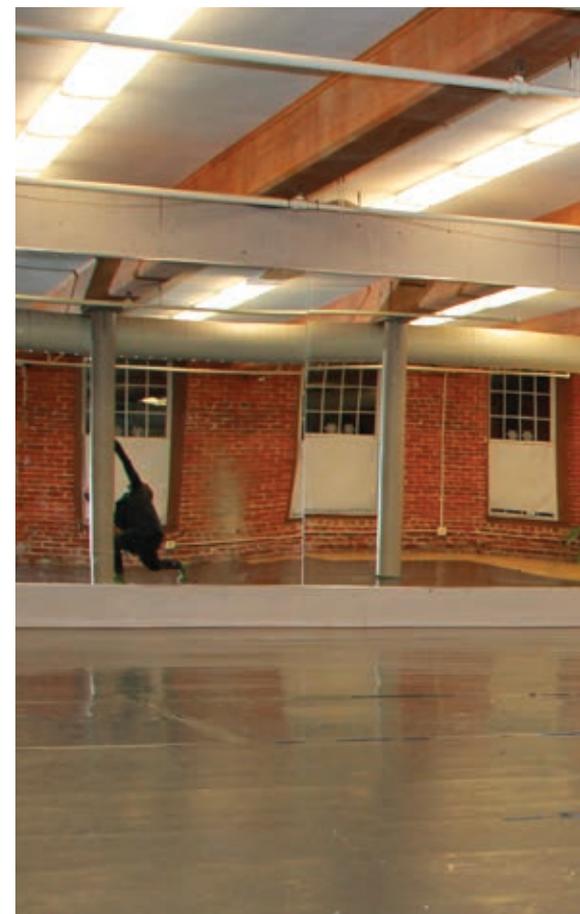
### Support Group

“Becky Bouchard and Richard Malley had the most influence on me during my time at the Academy. Not only did they pull me out of the Mattern parking lot, but we continued to have a close relationship throughout my years at the school. I even played tennis for Mr. Malley.

He was the coach and encouraged me to try something new. Many times I had to stay overnight on campus and Becky Bouchard would help make arrangements. I would sleep in the girls’ dorm or with Mr. Getty’s family. He was the Dean of Students at the time and was very good to me. He supported me being able to continue my education at the Academy. I would stay with Rebecca Bouchard sometimes, too. She was also my advisor. It was a very supportive group of people I had around me.”

### Prep School Payoff

“When it was time to graduate, I didn’t apply to many schools. I ended up getting accepted into Hofstra University. It reminded me of the charming Wilbraham campus. I loved it! But I was terrified of the thought that what happened in my first year at Wilbraham would happen again. I was afraid of failing. Because all I ever cared about was dance, I never thought I would have cared so much about my academics. But I realized I did care about my investment



and all the work I had done. I was so proud. Then in my freshman year at Hofstra I made the Dean's List. The following year I was a student teacher. That's what the Academy did for me."

### Roll the Credits

"Because of where I came from and then the person I ended up being by the time I graduated, I always put in my bio for gigs: 'At 13 years old she became a Trustee Scholar at Wilbraham & Monson Academy for her dance ability, exposing her to knowledge and cultural diversity that shaped and inspired her.' If only I could have articulated that at the time to the Trustees who gave me this huge opportunity. I guess that's what comes with getting older. I certainly feel so much appreciation now and know how lucky I was to be given such a gift."

Lifelong residents of the once-booming mill town of Southbridge, Mass., Regina and Tom Leduc are two extremely proud parents. But more than that, they are grateful for that fateful day when their daughter's dancing talent was noticed. "Sometimes when kids are recruited, they are just used up in a sense, but Lindsey was cared for and nurtured and given so many opportunities,"

Regina said. "The Trustees who gave her the scholarship really changed how her life turned out because she wouldn't have had these same experiences after high school either," added Tom.

If you walk along Faculty Street toward the Athletic Center, you can find Lindsey's senior stone where it was placed 15 years ago during the Commencement ceremony of the Class of 2000. It reads simply, "Thank you." ■



Lindsey graduated cum laude from Hofstra University with a B.A. in Dance and Community Health. She earned her Actors Equity performing off-Broadway, attended Giordano Dance School on scholarship, was promoted to Giordano II and performed with Giordano Dance Chicago for seven years. Lindsey has performed, choreographed, and taught master classes nationally and internationally. She has also been on faculty at The Joffrey Academy of Dance and serves as an adjudicator and master teacher for premiere international dance competitions. Lindsey has served as judge for the Lifetime series "Dance Moms," was featured on the cover of "Dance Magazine," and is currently on faculty at Boston University.



▲ Lindsey teaching master class at World-Class Talent Experience.