

# 2018 Tribute to My Teacher Award



*Laura Linder and Julia Thomalla*

*There is no question that dance is an incredibly demanding art. Hours upon hours of work are put in at each studio by each dancer, all to deliver three minutes of the performance of a lifetime. Dancers learn to bend and manipulate their bodies to make their routines truly lovely, perfecting their technique and expanding their flexibility to create a beauty unlike any other. But rare is the dancer who can do this on their own—to make the dancer extraordinary, it requires an extraordinary mentor, role model, instructor: a dance teacher. Laura Linder is a shining example of when even the most extraordinary dance teachers go far, far beyond extraordinary, to be the one every little dancer aspires to be.*

*My name is Julia Thomalla, and I'm seventeen years old. I've been a proud member of Triple L Dance Company for all four years it's been open, but I've been dancing under Laura's instruction for four years beyond that as well, eight in total this year. Growing up, I've had endless figures to look up to, to wish to emulate, and to dream of modeling my own life after. But never, never have I come across another individual as kind, as driven, and as passionate about what she does as Laura is. Every moment, every little thing she does is done with the intention to make her studio, her routines, and her dancers the very best they can be, and it is because of her that Triple L has become a truly wonderful place to dance.*

*Every dancer in the studio receives the attention needed to help them to grow, to become the best dancer they themselves can be. Laura spends time with each and every one of her students, taking a few moments whenever one needs assistance in technique, or with the choreography, or with anything else. It doesn't matter to her how naturally flexible her dancers are, or what their body looks like, for in her eyes, all dancers are beautiful. She is careful to be aware of each dancer's capabilities, and at every class, she'll strive to push each one of us just a little bit harder, to make us just a little bit better, more sure of ourselves with each encouraging word she gives. Every single one, of over a hundred students, she knows*

by name, and she knows exactly what we have the potential to do. And because of her, we really do have the potential to do great things. Her care, her dedication, shows in every shining moment, and she works harder than anyone I know to ensure that her studio is a safe, welcoming, encouraging place to dance.

But far beyond her passion as a dance teacher, Laura is an exceptional role model for everyone she meets. She showed me, and everyone else who looks up to her so deeply, that you really can achieve your dreams if you are driven enough, dedicated enough, and refuse to give up on your goals, as she has. Even before she opened the doors of Triple L Dance Company to the next generation of dancers, Laura's passion for the art has made such an impression on everyone she has taught. Before opening her own studio, she was the director of the Roseville Parks and Recreation dance program, as well as a teacher there, offering fun and encouraging dance classes to those of all ages and ability levels. But for the longest time, it had been her dream to open a studio of her very own, a studio that would welcome dancers of any ability, and give them a love for dance equal to her own.

That she did. It started small, with four girls in a tiny room in the basement of a skating rink, hardly enough room to rehearse their single routine. Under her instruction, those four girls took that routine to their very first competition, and came home grinning with a fifth place plaque. I was one of those girls, scared to death of the big world of competitive dance, but by the end of that day, I knew that dance was something I truly loved, because of what Laura had given us. And so did the rest of us. The next year, there were six girls instead of four, and the year after that. We all grew in our technique, our flexibility, and our passion for the art. We started to establish ourselves in the dance world, always under Laura's careful, enthusiastic tutelage. She was our guide as we became ourselves, and we would become even more alongside her dreams.

In 2015, the doors to the brand-new Triple L Dance Company opened in Maplewood, Minnesota, welcoming just over thirty students to competitive and recreational classes alike. By the next year, that number had doubled, and now in this year, over a hundred students are proud to call Triple L their home for dance of every style. At the heart of it all was Laura, owner, director, and head teacher, prouder than proud of what she had created, given to all of us little dancers who looked up to her every move. She showed us that we can do anything, anything, if we wanted to, no matter who we are or what our body or style of dance looks like. It is because of her that I love, really love, to dance, and I owe her everything that I am and have grown into as a dancer.

Laura Linder is an inspiration to everyone she meets, whether it be through the lifelong dreams she fulfilled in opening her own studio, or through the smallest of corrections she gives that make her students into better dancers. Her drive, her passion for dance, has made her one of the people I most look up to in my life. She shows us that it really is possible to achieve your wildest dreams and continues to demonstrate that every time we walk into the studio, her very own studio, and slip on a pair of dance shoes, ready for another class filled with Laura's enthusiasm and passion, that which can only come from someone who truly loves to dance as she does.