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NBC spotlights LINES Ballet BFA in Dance student

Winning a coveted Princess Grace Foundation (PGF) Award in 2015 was a blessing for LINES Ballet BFA in Dance student Lani Dickinson '16, because she won it on merit.

The award, which came with a \$25,000 scholarship, is validation for 13 years of hard dance training that began at the age eight when Lani, born in China as a left arm amputee, developed scoliosis and was led to ballet by her mother to combat Lani's warped spine. She takes comfort knowing dance has helped her overcome adversity and numerous surgeries, and has led her to new heights in the field through [Dominican's BFA in Dance program](#).

"I've gained more leadership and confidence in what I'm doing," says Lani, whose remarkable story was featured in an [NBC Bay Area newscast](#) on December 11, 2015. "I'm pretty stoked about that."

Lani, now working with AXIS Dance Company in Oakland, showcased her abilities on December 4 in Angelico Concert Hall at [BFA in Dance's Senior Solo](#). She performed with seven other Dominican dance students – Rebecca Lillich, Amy Greene, Calleja Smiley, Anna Krumpos, Ha Vo, Charbel Rohayem, and Tatiana Barber. Charbel and Tatianna each won a Dizzy Feet Foundation scholarship this year and, with Lani's PGF award, it is testament to the talent, depth and growing reputation of the BFA in Dance at Dominican, which will observe its 10th anniversary next year.

At that time, there were 43 students from 12 states majoring in the program. Four of the fall 2015's 15 incoming freshmen were from Illinois.

Lani, who is from Massachusetts, is the third [LINES Ballet BFA in Dance](#) student to receive a PGF award. She follows Jeffrey Van Sciver, now a member of the Alonzo King LINES Ballet, and Katie Scherman, who graduated from the University of Oregon with her Masters of Fine Arts in Dance in 2015.

"The Princess Grace Foundation scholarship is really the most prestigious dance scholarship in the country," says Marina Hotchkiss, Director of the LINES Ballet BFA in Dance program in the [School of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences](#) at Dominican. "They are expressly looking for young artists who will have an impact on the future of the art form. As a differently-abled dancer, Lani pushes choreographers to think differently and audiences to see differently. I am so excited to see her career blossom from this moment."

It was while attending Idyllwild Performing Arts School in California as a high school junior that Lani was first approached by Marina. Lani was drawn to Dominican by potential dance workshop opportunities in San Francisco and by the beauty, intimacy and close-knit feel the Dominican campus offered. She has developed close relationships with faculty, particularly her adviser, Gay Lynch. Lani is taking a class, "Dance, Spirituality and Religion," with her this semester.

Lani also is tight with and well respected by her fellow BFA in Dance students.

"When we first started with Lani, we were all blown away," says BFA in Dance senior Rebecca Lillich. "Watching her take barre is a humbling experience since half the time she doesn't even use it. She is physically, mentally and emotionally one of the strongest people I know and while some see her missing arm as a disability, it's given her more strength and story throughout her life than any of us."

It was while traveling with her mother, Julie Bell, to China in July with a heritage tour program when Lani first learned about winning a Princess Grace Foundation Award.

"I was really grateful and full," says Lani, who, with the scholarship money, now has the financial wherewithal to produce a formal audition video this winter to apply for dance jobs and to participate in a winter workshop at the Conservatory of Dance in San Francisco.

On December 4, Lani performed her Senior Solo. Her presentation was an abstract with a “bit of dance,” which began with Lani walking on stage, projecting an illusion that she was searching for something or someplace.

“I want to make the audience guess what I’m thinking and where I’m going -- What it is to me isn’t going to be what it is to them. I want to feel good about it,” Lani said beforehand. “For the audience members who don’t know me, I want to inspire them but I also want to change something in them. I want them to feel something. I want a response.”