



# LUCIE CAPEK



Combining Art  
&  
Science

BY JENNA CAPUTO  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ZANE KRUMANOCKER

**D**r. Lucie Capek knew from a young age the importance of creative expression. Born in Prague, Lucie's family moved to Montreal, Canada when she was seven years old due to her father's work in international academic medicine. She grew up there, travelling to the US for vacations. In between school and travels, Lucie was a serious ballet dancer, attending two of the top ballet schools in Canada – the National Ballet School in Toronto and Les Grands Ballet Canadiens in Montreal. Throughout high school she danced six days a week. She also enjoyed art, music and reading in her down time.

She wanted to dance professionally full time, but as she participated in more professional productions, she realized what a tough life it could be. As she reached her senior year in high school, she knew she had a tough decision to make. Dancing had been a goal and a major part of her daily life since she was little, but it became clear that it might not become her life after all. "So many talented people never get a break and I realized that I didn't love it enough to do it in potential obscurity. If I couldn't be at the top of the ladder, the art alone was not enough," she explains. Eventually, it came down to a head over the heart decision. "Medicine was something that I felt confident I could tackle with hard work and study, and it was a secure career choice. The arts seemed far too uncertain. As an immigrant and a child of academics, I chose the sure thing."

She was always good at math and science but couldn't see herself in a lab or academic setting. Her creative side was too strong, and she knew she needed to find a career that would allow her to tap into both sides of herself. "I have a strong desire for creative expression in order to



feel fulfilled,” she says. “So the first step was finding a science-based career that had a human element. Both my parents were physicians, so medicine seemed like the obvious choice. Once I started my clinical rotations, I was naturally drawn to surgery because of the immediate and dramatic benefits it offers to patients. After seeing cleft lip surgery on an infant, I was hooked. It seemed like the perfect combination of art and science, technical skill and creativity. After some international rotations in plastic surgery, I was sure this was the specialty for me.”

She completed medical school at McGill University where her father was a professor. She then went on to Harvard University for her general surgery training. She was in a grueling program with 25% female residents. They were luckily treated as equals to the men and she built her confidence before heading into a plastic surgery program at Washington University. Based at the Barnes Medical Center, she had exposure to a wide range of procedures including trauma and cancer reconstruction, cleft lip and palate procedures, as well as cosmetic surgery. She then spent two and a half years at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, learning pediatric and craniofacial surgery, which has helped her to this day. “I learned to be meticulous, got very comfortable with facial surgery and was challenged with the most difficult cases,” she says.

After finally completing all her training, Lucie decided she wanted to go into private practice. She lived in large cities all her life, and she knew she wanted to settle in a smaller community that would still be in driving distance to her family still in Montreal. Having travelled to the US so often with her family to their vacation home in Vermont, as well as for other trips including a two month cross-country road trip in which they camped from the northeast, over to the Pacific Northwest, down the coast of California and back through the national parks, the US slowly began to feel like home. The Capital District seemed like a “sweet spot,” allowing her the perfect position of living in the middle of both Montreal and the cultural centers of New York City and Boston. She has now been here 23 years.

She opened her own practice and never looked back, ecstatic that she found a specialty that requires lifelong learning and a venue where she can continuously improve her skills every day. She is grateful to have the opportunity to set her own standards that she and her team can deliver to their patients. Safety and satisfaction are always at the top of her priority list. Running a business with a medical background can sometimes be frustrating, dealing with all the rules and regulations on top of the daily decisions needed for human resources, accounting, marketing and compliance. These are skills not taught in medical school and are a separate learning process all on their own, but she is grateful every day for the opportunity to make an impact on her patients’ lives.

“I have the best job!” she says. “I get to work with wonderful patients to help them feel great about themselves, while using my hands and creativity. It’s exciting, gratifying and no two surgeries or procedures are the same. I love the opportunity to change people’s lives for the



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better. This is something I hear from my patients every day. It is a great privilege to be allowed to impact another person in this transformative way. I am always grateful for it!”

Lucie still keeps in touch with her passion for dance, volunteering on the Board for Northeast Ballet, the resident ballet company of Proctors Theater. It is a program close to her heart since their affiliated Myers Dance School, their annual Nutcracker presentation and other youth programs like the Young Artists Festival at SPAC, all help youth throughout our community engage in the arts and their own creativity. Lucie finds this critical to mental health and general well-being. She also has a passion for animal welfare and has supported several local rescues and shelters over the years.

Lucie speaks three languages (English, French and Czech) and loves fashion, interior design and architecture, in addition to yoga. She always looks forward to hanging out with her family, going to the theater or concerts, enjoying all the area’s great restaurants, cooking and she still loves to travel, especially to places where nature is

“breathtaking.” She loves spending time outdoors or hiking and has even learned from her parents how to pick safe-to-eat wild mushrooms when she is walking around the woods.

At home, she finds comfort with her husband and two children, as well as their one rescue dog and four rescue cats. She wishes always to have health for her family and time to watch her children self-actualize with happiness and peace.

Her favorite mantra is, *We are all made up of strength and struggle.* “It reminds me that no matter how ‘perfect’ someone’s life may seem, we never really know what lies beneath, and everyone is deserving of our compassion and empathy,” she says.

Lucie wants people to remember that, “If there is something that bothers you, but you consider it ‘vain,’ let that thought go. If you are spending energy on it, give yourself permission to get the issue fixed or improved, and you’ll have that energy back to use in more productive ways. I see that dynamic with my patients every day. Self-care is healthy, not selfish, and can be life-changing!” ■

**Kathleen Toombs**  
 (518) 688-2846  
 ktoombs@toombslawny.com  
 toombslawny.com

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