

Studies on hold for shot at big time

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All she wants to do is dance.

Ever since Lindsay Leuschner put on her first pair of ballet slippers at the age of two, she knew what she wanted to be for the rest of her life — a dancer.

Ms Leuschner is now one of the 22 finalists for this year's So You Think You Can Dance Canada. Five are from York Region.

This won't be the first time Ms Leuschner, 19, puts her dancing talents to the test.

The Stouffville resident has been competing since she was five. In 2008 Ms Leuschner was named Miss Dance of Canada, which gave her a spot at the national competition where she finished as the second runner-up.

Her goal for So You Think You Can Dance Canada is not to win, although she'd love to, but "to be a sponge" and get everything she can out of the experience so she can bring it with her to New York City.

"I just love it so much. It's my favourite place. I can't wait to move there and just dance," she said.

Ms Leuschner had her sights set on auditioning for the dance show ever since fellow Markham Elite Danceworx student Melanie Mah made the top 20 in 2009. But Ms Leuschner had to bide her time and wait until she turned 18.

Ms Leuschner graduated from Stouffville District Secondary School in 2010 and was accepted into four universities for kinesiology. But she deferred accepting for a year so she could focus on her big moment.

Ms Leuschner trained four to five hours a day, four days a week, which included daily ballet classes and trips to the gym.

She also refined her diet and continued competing in an effort to prepare her for the rigours of going up against the best Canadian dancers on a weekly basis.

In October, Ms Leuschner and a friend were about to head off to Saint John to audition for the show

when she came down with scarlet fever. Ms Leuschner missed the Toronto auditions because of a pre-planned family vacation, so that left flying out to Vancouver last November to audition as her last chance.

"There were so many amazing dancers auditioning for this and I can't believe they gave me this opportunity," she said.

Ms Leuschner went into the audition confident she could wow the judges. After all, she had worked with judge Blake McGrath at Elite Danceworx during the previous two seasons of the show on the duets and final performances, so she knew what they were looking for.

"I needed to work my butt off and show them I could do this," she said.

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Ms Leuschner apparently did just that, as she was given an automatic pass to the final 22.

No matter what the outcome, university will have to wait one more year.

"This is what I want to do so I don't get too caught up in school and not dance," she said.

Starting Monday, the 11 male and 11 female dancers will take to the stage to perform. Each week they will be paired up and learn new routines and styles of dance.

Voters will determine the bottom three couples, but the judges will decide who goes home.

The first performance show of So You Think You Can Dance Canada airs on CTV, July 11 at 8 p.m.

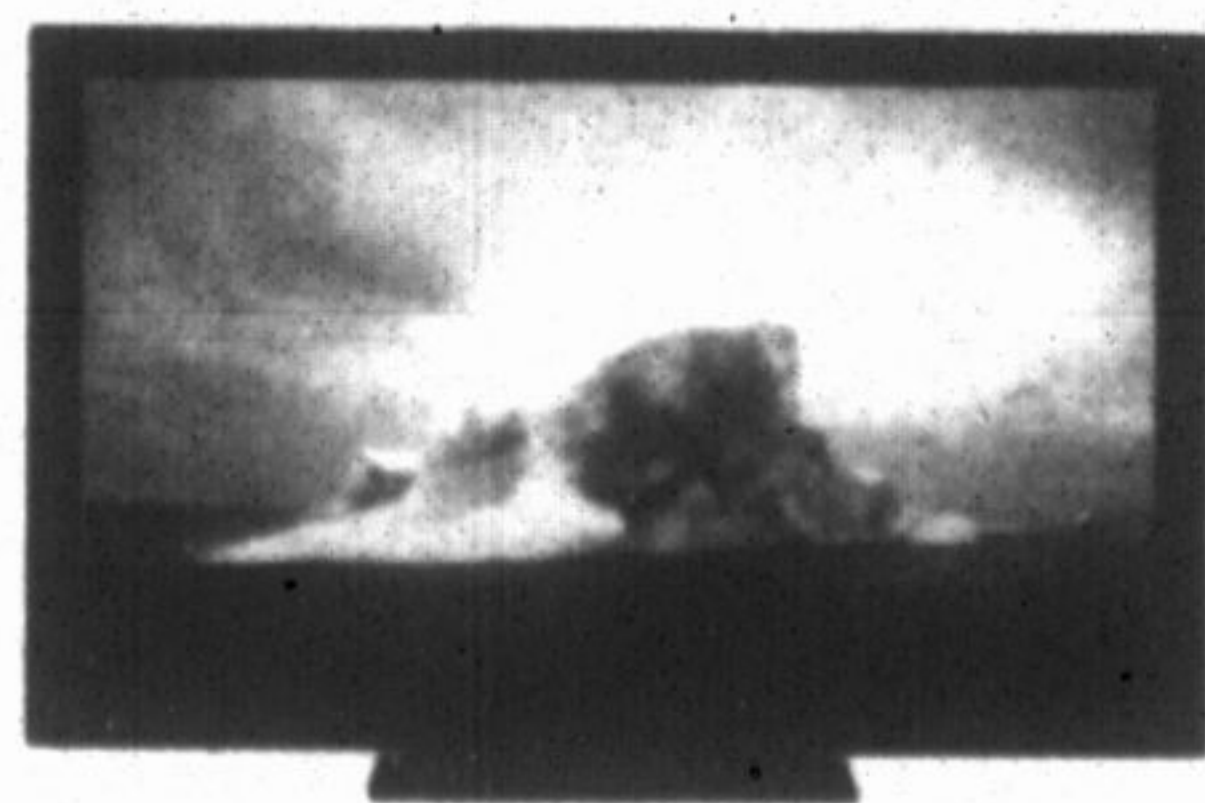
Viewers can follow the dancers on the show's official Twitter account for giveaways and insider information at twitter.com/SYTYCDCanada and can become a fan of the show on Facebook at facebook.com/SYTYCDCanada.com

Stouffville's Lindsay Leuschner will be one of 22 competitors when the new season of So You Think You Can Dance Canada airs on CTV starting Monday at 8 p.m.



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