

Experiencing the “Real Marvelous”
By: Jordanna Matlock

It was raining profusely that night. This kind of weather was such a juxtaposition to the usual sunny skies of San Diego, California where I am from. My mom and I had left our house early enough for my audition to accommodate the traffic that was sure to come because of the rain. I can't remember specifically what I was auditioning for; it was either the All State California Band or the All Southern California Band. I never was the type of musician to come to an audition super early. I was in high school and although I really didn't want to audition for these ensembles my private bassoon teacher always made me. I was this kind of free-loving, hippie kid, who would wear her Birkenstocks to school every day and some version of a tie-dye t-shirt. These auditions always felt uninspiring; they felt disingenuous, foreign and sterile. The adjudicators never really *heard* me as they claimed.

My mom was frantically driving as it was about 20 minutes before my audition. To her, we were already late. She lives by the phrase “being on time means being early”. She was trying to keep calm for my sake in the car but it wasn't holding up. My mom had left her job early that day so she could drive me specifically to this audition. She doesn't lose her cool very often and in my experience, it seems like as a single parent, she can't. In response, I centered myself and took out my music in the car. I started humming it in my head. The air conditioning wasn't on, and even with the windows closed, I felt the humidity seeping into the car. As I looked over my music, I realized the sheet music felt sticky in my hands.

Finally after what seemed like forever, we arrived at the foreign high school. My mom informed me she was going to let me out right at the front while she parked the car. As I grabbed my bassoon in my fancy concert blacks, an all black outfit that musicians wear to gigs, that I never quite feel comfortable in; I didn't even try to fight the rain with my umbrella. I just got out, put my bassoon on my back and let my hair and clothes get wet; at least that was honest. I ran into the check-in room flustered and went up to the lady with the stagnant list of names. I said to her, "Jordanna Matlock, bassoon", She responded, "Your audition is in 5 minutes. Hurry!" As I turned around, I saw the first flautist from my high school. Both she and her parents were there. I am sure they had been camped out there all day waiting for her name to be called. As I walked out I left a trail of puddled water behind me and they looked at me disapprovingly.

I swiftly walked to the other bungalow where the woodwinds auditions were taking place and tried to avoid getting completely soaked. I chose my steps carefully as I walked up the wet metal ramp that lead to the roll away classroom, I found a small spot that was sheltered from the rain. I squatted down and put my instrument together, although it was hard to see because the light out front was flickering. I played a few quiet notes to warm up. Suddenly, I saw my mom running through the parking lot coming straight towards me. She came up to me and said our bassoon inside joke, "Break a reed." She grabbed my hands and tried to warm my fingers in her palm, she knew my fingers got cold when I was nervous.

Only a second passed and the adjudicator walked out of the room with another hopeful bassoonist. He called my name, “Jordanna Matlock?” he looked at me and I nodded, “Come on in.” I squeezed my mom’s hand, I let go, and walked with the man inside. It was a muggy room, I suppose because of the rain, and the lighting was one of a hospital. The florescent lights drew my eyes to the white undecorated walls. And I noticed the windows seemed to be fogged from the inside. It was hard to believe that children were encouraged to learn in a room such as this. Needless to say the space was uninspiring.

I imagined the first flautist from my high school would look at this man and think, he is my own judge, jury and executioner. That he has my fate in his hands. But I did not see the man in this way. The man’s smile was kind and my mind wandered as to who he really was. Maybe he was a tired gigging musician whose wife just left him because music wasn’t a “real job” and his passion caused him to struggle to make ends meet. Maybe he was an overworked dad adjudicating for his kid’s band program to prove to the child custody courts that he was the right choice to parent full-time, or maybe he was a simple band director from another high school who drove thirty minutes after a full day because he cares so much about music education, honestly I don’t know.

He walked over to his table facing me, parallel to my chair and stand and asked me to sit down. I did and then proceeded to fidget with my bassoon and reed. He said, “Okay, go ahead and start with the first movement of Mozart.” I played the first

page of the famous Mozart Bassoon Concerto. I remember feeling satisfied with the way I had sounded. He then said, "Okay, the second movement please." I sat there in silence before I played. I heard the orchestra introduction in my head and once the four quarter note pick up's approached, I brought up my bassoon to my lips. I began...

The crazy inconvenient night faded in front of my eyes because of one choice. To just be present and PLAY. It was just me and my horn. A human and a machine. A body and an instrument. A perfect union. In this little space inside of myself, I am free, free from judgement of myself and the judgements of others, and most importantly I am free from my own circumstances. It is complete vulnerability. It is here that as every sound happens, it's gone before it had ever started creating a continuing unconscious stream of music. You see, it doesn't matter what happened that day. It doesn't matter that we were running late, it doesn't matter that my mom was anxious, it doesn't matter that it was raining, it doesn't matter where I placed in the honor bands and it most certainly doesn't matter that I played perfectly. All that matters is that I dug deep, and brought out a part of myself I had long since hidden into the light, where the audience and the world could see it.

This is the real marvelous.

I looked up as I was holding a long note and I saw once again, the kind still man sitting there. I began to notice my surroundings further; the oddly lit room and humid air however these worldly complications didn't matter. The man and I were there

together with only the sound of the rain hitting the window and the melody of my bassoon. His eyes were closed.

In my experience, it happens to be that in the most unsuspecting moments, the extraordinary can manifest in a seemingly mundane situation. For me, on that cold rainy night the man with the kind smile heard me. He *heard* me and isn't it most wonderful to be heard...