

## DISCOVERING MY TRUE VOICE



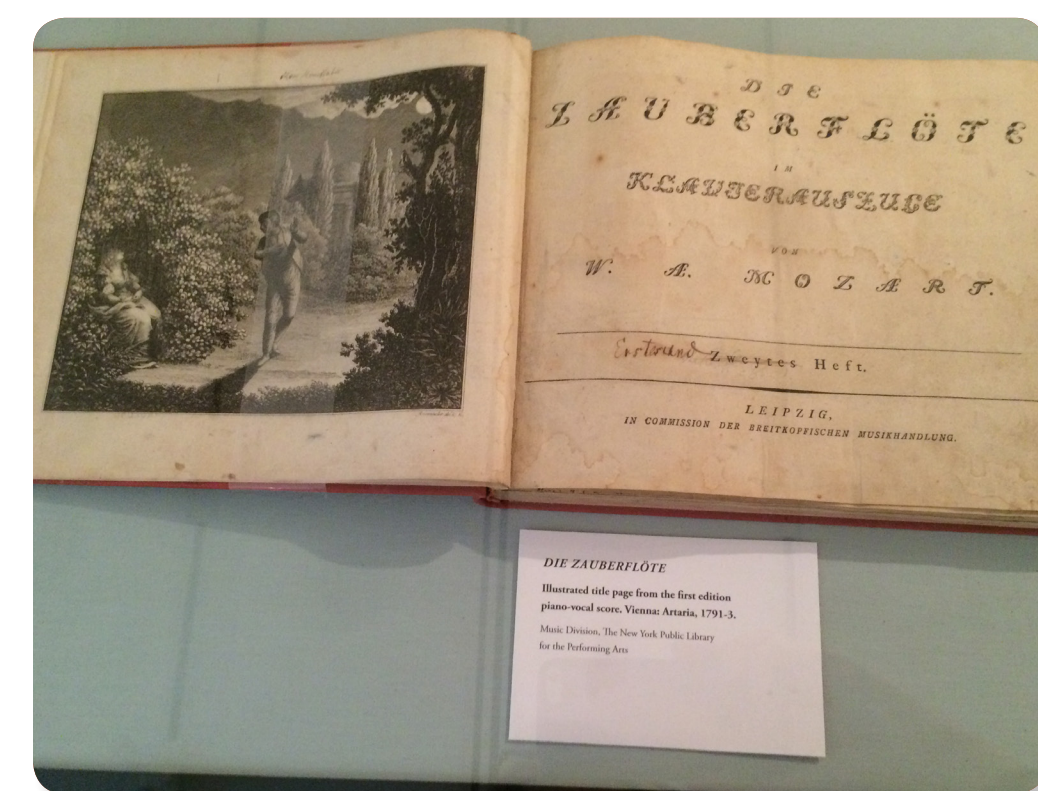
SARAH ADAMS  
Class of 2017  
Greenville, SC

Sarah Adams

As my parents and I pulled up into Washington Heights early one morning in June, Bachata music could be heard playing from the nearby bodega. I walked up to the apartment building where I was to stay for the next month and a half. I was excited and at peace with the thought that I was to stay in the city where I am to move a few months after I graduate. This was my chance to prove to myself that I was ready for what the performance world and the city that never sleeps had to offer me. My parents departed and I made myself at home and got some rest knowing that the next day I was to sing.

Rehearsals began

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before, someone who was willing to become friends with more than just my close-knit group of people. I don't know exactly what it was; maybe it was because I was singing constantly or there was something

and I knew I was doing exactly what I needed to do and was exactly where I needed to be. Each morning I would wake up, work out along the Hudson River, and on my way back home stop at the nearby corner store where I made friends with the owner, Hasaan. By the end of the trip I was getting something free about three times a week—coffee, egg sandwich, muffin, you name it. In a city like this, it's good to have people that have your back. This is a concept I have since thought a lot about and realized that I had never done something like that before. I had never gone somewhere so often that I was a regular, never made friends with the owner of a restaurant or store... When I was in New York, I realized I was evolving into exactly the kind of person I wanted to be—someone who worked hard at what they loved to do, someone who was willing to explore parts of a city I had never seen



in NYC's extra-filtered water that made me feel this way, but I realized I was happy. I was my truest self. More than anything else, I will say that is the greatest gift this fellowship could have given me.

Along with finding myself, I began to find my voice again. It has been a difficult subject to talk about in the past, but there was a time where I had to take a break from singing for medical reasons. After that break, it took a lot of courage to begin again even though I knew that all I wanted to do was sing. Constant, nagging fears kept popping up—what if I'm not good enough, what if my voice gets hurt again, what if my voice doesn't sound

the same? Logically, of course, I knew these fears were not anything to listen to, but I think these internal thoughts are what everyone struggles with at least once in their lives. Through my time in the city, though, I could take on these negative thoughts and feelings, create space for them, and turn them into something positive. What if I'm not good enough? You wouldn't be here if you weren't. What if my voice gets hurt again? You've never sung in a healthier way than you are now, no matter what you sing. What if my voice doesn't sound the same? Of course it won't because you are still growing and changing! AND your voice sounds even better now.

My hardest day of the summer was when I sang for a panel of

professionals—directors, musicians, agents, etc. and was told I had “tall



girl syndrome”. With some thought, I found I was carrying my fears into the audition room with me and hanging my head. After that, I have since realized I am a strong, beautiful woman, with a beautiful voice. I should walk into an audition room like someone who doesn't need anyone else's approval.

When rehearsals got tough, I was stressed, and I didn't think I was good enough, I reminded myself that I could handle what life threw my way if I was singing. After all, I was selected and given the opportunity to sing at the National Opera Center for a cabaret showcasing upcoming artists. This summer was more than just about learning opera roles, it was about finding myself and realizing I was pursuing my true calling in life. All in all, I just want to say thank you to Mr. Burch, New York City, and my voice.

