

Competitive Singing: Narrative by Charlie Allen

I waited nervously. The sweat on my palms was irritating and I wiped it away on my black trouser, careful to avoid the white of my shirt. The loneliness was engulfing in the dim lights of backstage. He could see the stage through the tiny fold in the velvet curtain – and he could see the sea of faces in the crowd. Soon it would be his turn out there. Then it would be a different kind of loneliness. Many emotions swam through my brain; fear, anxiety, happiness. “Focus,” I said to them. Immediately the noise invading my mind turned to silence, allowing me to breathe. I visualized my goal, myself walking out onto the stage, staring out into the crowd, then the melodious Soprano music would start and I would nail the song perfectly. I smiled at the thought of the months of practice finally at rest. I smiled at the thought of my parents face after my song. I smiled at the thought of winning. But I hadn’t won – not yet, anyway.

Hearing faint applause, I snapped back to the real world. A girl appeared through the curtain from on stage, rushing past me into the loving arms of her mother. “It’s alright love,” said her mother as she ushered her away into the on-watching crowd. “It’s alright.”

Instantly all my doubts returned, clouding my plans. “Stop it!” I ordered myself, “Don’t be ridiculous. You’ve done this so many times before; you’ll be alright.” But they wouldn’t leave. Doubt, Fear, Anxiety, they were all there, all yelling at me: “But what if you make a mistake? What if you forget the lyrics? What if you leave the stage in a crippling mess, just like this girl has done?” I could almost feel them creeping along my shoulder and whispering, “It’s your turn now, it’s your turn now, it’s your turn now.”

Suddenly I really DID feel something touching my shoulder. I yelped out in shock, but my mouth was quickly covered. I opened my eyes to see a lady standing in front of me. Slowly she lowered her hand. “Are you alright love?” she asked. I nodded slowly but hesitantly. “Did you hear what I was saying? It’s your turn. They’re waiting for you.” Looking around, I noticed I was the only under 16-year-old waiting for my turn. Instantly I jumped up. I breathed in and out slowly, then briskly walked across the room the opening of the stage.

With one last deep breath, I stepped out into the bright lights of the auditorium, ready to perform.

I looked out into the crowd of smiling people. I couldn’t see my parents, but I knew they were there, beaming up at me. I breathed in. I breathed out. I waited for the music to begin. I waited. I waited. I waited. But nothing came. The speakers sat quiet, as if judging me. I looked to offstage. A man was wrestling for dominance with a silver laptop. Sweat poured down my temple. Quickly, I wiped it away with my sleeve. I looked to my other side. There was my mum, looking encouraging. I wished so hard that I could run off the stage, straight into her arms. She gave me a little, knowing smile, but I could see in her eyes that she knew I wanted to run. And I knew I would, too. Then she mouthed a word to me; Just a small, little word. But it was the exact word I needed to hear. “Sing.”

In that moment, joy swelled within me, filling my heart. Despite my nerves, the smile escaped me; big and wide, I saw her catch it. And then I knew all was as it should be. That’s

when I turned away, facing again the crowd, now staring at me with confused, worried faces. Then with surprise when I started to sing.

The song was a short one, but it was pretty. The high and challenging notes of Soprano had all been nailed. I thought I saw some wipe tears from their eyes. The music stopped. I stood there awkwardly. Silence fell throughout the hall. Then one, singular, solitude clap echoed from the very back of the space. It was my dad. His gaze crossed mine and he smiled at me. Then, before I knew it, the whole audience was on their feet, cheering and clapping, whistling and yelling. Waves of relief rolled over my shoulders. Beaming back at the adoring crowd, I did a quick curtsy, then quickly ran off the stage. I hugged mum so tightly and she whispered loving words into my ear. "You were so brave. So, so brave." Then I was ushered back onto stage along with the other competitors to hear the winning singer.

The main adjudicator talked to the crowd, but I didn't hear anything she said, my mind too flooded with mixed emotions. Then finally, the moment of truth came. I held my breath as the adjudicator made the official announcement. "The winner off the under 16s vocal championships is...," she paused for effect, "Madison Harris!" The crowd erupted with cheering and clapping. My heart filled my chest, threatening to burst. That was my name! I beamed as the adjudicator shook my hand and handed me the trophy. I held it above my head. Move waves brushed over. Once more the auditorium was filled with cheers and clapping. My parents beamed up at me from the crowd. And I beamed back.