

TO COLLEGE WITH CREATIVITY

As a four year-old, when I first understood what a job was, I loaded my animals into my red wagon and pulled them to the end of the block for their vet appointments, where I asked the doctor how I could help. My career was decided: I was going to be a veterinarian. I've always loved animals and wanted to spend my life surrounded by them.

When I got a little older, I discovered the power of performance and how much singing brought joy to my life. I had been in a movie when I was three, but at that age, I never truly understood what I was doing. Over the next six years, I acted in four commercials, which were fun, but I wanted to experience something more heart racing and thrilling. At nine, I was in my first musical. As soon as I danced and sang on that stage, I knew I had met my calling.

But, wait a minute... maybe I also faced a problem? Yes, I was a full fledged artist, but I hadn't lost my passion for animals either. How can I ever choose?

I attended a Waldorf school from babyhood to fifth grade. At the beginning of each school year, we were given a blank textbook, where we would write our lessons in cursive and draw beautiful pictures about each subject. There were no computers. Creativity took priority over electronics. One of the things I valued most was the size of my grade: twenty-five kids. What a small number! This allowed real friendships with each classmate and my grade was like a second family. Waldorf taught me how to craft well formed thoughts and questions and to creatively problem solve.

When COVID-19 struck, my class of twenty-five turned to two as my mom took on the role of homeschool teacher for my brother and me. Our classroom was now the United States, and Headmistress Mom turned the car into a one room rolling school house. With a tent, water tank, and shower on the roof, we journeyed across the country, while towing a trailer containing a makeshift toilet and a library of books behind us. From national parks to historical and geological sites, homeschool was hands-on. This experience helped me understand that learning can be an adventure.

As my homeschool year rolled to an end, our exploration continued with a move from California to Pennsylvania. Anxiety gripped me entering sixth grade and my first public school with a class of hundreds of students. Acceptance into the elite choir and school plays helped me find myself amidst the chaos. Middle school brought new hurdles, as I faced using computers and navigating portals. I never would have predicted that moving from Los Angeles to a small rural PA town would open up new doors in musical theater, but it catapulted me into leading roles in everything from school productions and community theatre to the professional regional stage. You know what else surprised me? I took a third place award in the science fair without even being

there to present my project (because I was performing). The need to place focus was becoming evident, but the arts were in the lead.

I'm aware that artists lead grueling lifestyles and many don't make it. I was accepted into three honors classes setting my high school schedule, but was told by teachers that it would be better to only take two (dropping honors biology), because my artistic goals didn't necessitate so challenging a course load. I feel the skepticism when I tell people I intend to continue my professional acting, and though I don't want them to limit me, I also want to keep a diversity of options open for my future.

I've solved the crisis! I'll use the creative problem solving I learned in elementary school, my homeschool lesson that learning can be an adventure that takes many forms, and the middle schooling that taught me to reside in a constant state of discovery and diversity. I'm shooting for my goals in the arts and the sciences. I aim to attend a university that will receive me with authentic appreciation for my broad interests, even if my peer group is limited to myself as the only theater major who doubles in veterinary technology.