

Essay winner: Sally Horton, Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama

Remember back to when you learned your ABCs? When you jumbled the LMNOPs then rushed to the TUVs? Remember when that was your greatest struggle and your biggest achievement?

“Awesome!” Mom said as I finished the song,

“Beautiful,” said Dad after humming along,

Can't Deny my Ecstasy from Finishing this Jingle,

That wacky experience when Music and Performance mingle.

See, I'm still jumbling the LMNOPs, and I'm Rushing So To reach the Ultimate Verities -

Firstly, that music was an early love; performance and I fit just like a hand and glove. Secondly, that no matter how hard you try, there's no full explanation of how and when and why. Going through school, that love gets confused. You divert your attention to academia and getting bruised on the court. Now that you've got that sport and volunteer work under your belt, you start to wonder about the passion for music you once felt.

Don't.

Here's what a UK Conservatoire will bring: A place where every day's an opportunity to sing, a standard of teaching that trumps a University one, a platform for performing that's second to none.

Here's what you'll learn from a Conservatoire: that no performer is a better you than you are, that the process is much more important than being a star, and that constant practice and persistence enable you to go far.

Here's what to expect from your Conservatoire study: leading professionals in your field are your conversational buddies, a close-knit aggregate of fellow advocates, and the gumption to push yourself beyond assumption.

You'll become not just a scholar but also an exceptional performer, you're prepared not just for teaching jobs but touring jobs; stages of different shapes and sizes, for audiences that applaud or gasp and laugh at surprises. You learn to adjust to every drawback, to treat your work as a game, where mistakes are what excite you, not the lure of fame.

You learn so much more about yourself when you're a performer on your feet, where your feats are not typed in essay format but are shown through your latest moves in stage combat. You sing, you dance, you turn up on time, you are treated like a professional, and you become one way before you hit the "real world". A UK Conservatoire will prepare you to be well-rounded, where your knowledge of performance intensifies and is abounded, where your hobby turned passion turned searing obsession, forms into a higher education certificate, your most prized possession.

Now is the time to remember the old days, back when you didn't live in fear of pursuing performance. When your ABC rendition was yours, and that's what made it special. That's what makes you special and what drives you to achieve more. Imagine just how much more you can find when you're surrounded by like-minds and those who encourage you to become someone you forgot existed: that happy, excitable child that just wants to play the game of performance.

Happy playing.