



KAREN PIKE PHOTOGRAPHY

A Day in the Life: From Vermont to Juilliard and Back

In honor of the centennial of Juilliard's Pre-College program, we asked current student Rowan Bauman Swain, a violist, to write a bit about a recent Pre-College day. Each Friday night Rowan, an 11th grader, and her mom and sister drive six hours from their home in Vermont. The next morning, bright and early, Rowan arrives at Juilliard. During the day her sister practices her cello or hangs out with friends and her mom goes to teacher workshops at the New York Historical Society or does research at the Schomburg Center—and “she always gets something delicious from Zabar’s for dinner on the drive home.”

By Rowan Bauman Swain

At 7am, I am awakened by a spiritual slap in the face in the form of my custom Shakira alarm. Just like a school day! But this morning, instead of immediately going back to bed after turning off “Waka-Waka,” I feel a real spark of excitement, so I stumble to get dressed and gather my things. My mom, my younger sister, Celilo, and I arrived in the city late yesterday evening and have spent the night at the apartment of our friend Margaret on the Upper West Side. Celilo and I are out the door around 7:30.

Every Saturday, Celilo and I walk down to Juilliard from Margaret’s. We often have a tiff about which avenue to walk on—I say we should go along the park, because the light is so captivating this time of day; she advocates for Columbus or Broadway, because they’re “more New York-y.” Today we make our way over to the commercial avenues to get bagels and juice. I’m neither a morning nor an exercise person; Celilo has better things to do than escort me to school like she’s my Victorian governess. In spite of those concerns, we really like this walk. From our home in rural Vermont, you can’t get much of anywhere on foot. It’s a 20-minute drive to our high school, on country highways that wind through the gentle hills of forests and farms that make up our home state. Here, we can walk to school, and in those 30 blocks pass apartment buildings that house more people than live in our entire town. We gaze in boutique windows—“I love that romper!”—and enjoy the casual thrill of “trying to look like real New Yorkers.” (Spoiler alert: It’s not working. I’m weirdly terrible at crossing streets.)

Within 45 minutes or so, we arrive. So much has changed in the six years since this was established as my typical Saturday, but the character of the moment I arrive at

Juilliard for my Pre-College day has been surprisingly constant. I push through the revolving doors, feeling the inevitable obligatory dash of worry that the change in temperature will cause trouble for my instrument. And then I gather myself in anticipation as I climb the stairs.

After warming up a bit, I go to my 9am class, which is a chamber music coaching with Francesca dePasquale (MM ’14, *violin*). For the second year in a row, I’m lucky enough to play in a string quartet with three of my best friends and all-around favorite people: Clara (*violin*), Enako (*violin*), and Isaiah (*cello*). When we arrive at the coaching we haven’t seen each other since last Saturday and we won’t meet again until the next. But we have no trouble picking up right where we left off, absorbing love and inspiration from each other, monkeying around and sharing the week’s highlights in viola jokes. Right now, we are learning the first movement of Beethoven’s String Quartet in E Flat, Op. 74, “The Harp.” It feels ridiculously special to interact casually with the effusive genius of this music; to try out my own opinions and expression on it, hear it shaped in the familiar voices of my friends. The hour is over before I come down to earth and remember that time is passing.

At 10, I have Chorus. I’ve taken this class for the past four years, and it’s always filled me with uninhibited joy. I’m an aspiring opera buff, dazzled by the unique, wondrously organic expression which occurs when the instrument is the musician’s body. Like many instrumentalists, I am constantly trying to replicate that kind of ownership and ease. I embarrass myself when I try to sing along to *Don Giovanni*, but it feels great to do my best Renée Fleming (’85, *voice*) impression while I belt the alto line of a Schubert Mass knowing that no one will hear or cringe at my individual

voice. Also, I sit with my hilarious, lovely friend Aviva, and we have a beautiful tradition in which I distract her with fourth grade potty humor while she tries to sing.

The most important hour of the week takes place from 1 to 2 pm, when I have my lesson with Carol Rodland (see Faculty Portrait, p. tk). My work with her is the ultimate reason I come to Juilliard. Sometimes I get rather worried beforehand, frantically considering that whatever I do in these 60 minutes must justify the discomfort my family undertook to get me here, that my performance must fairly reflect my effort in the past week. But without fail, Ms. Rodland erases the need to prove and gives me the clearest sight of myself I’ve had all week. Not only does she fully comprehend the best version of “me,” she lovingly, relentlessly expects me to embody it. I play, we talk, and when I leave, I have a nice solid feeling of everything making just a little more sense. The gift of this clarity will spark my focus through the rest of my Saturday classes, comfort me on the long ride home, and fuel six days of preparation and anticipation for next Saturday.

Pre-College violist Rowan Bauman Swain holds a Sidney E. Frank Scholarship