

TDHS grad accepted to top music school

By Neita Cecil
Columbia Gorge News

ARIANA ACEVEDO knew she wanted to study music in college. Aiming high, she looked into Juilliard, but found the famous school leans more to the classical side: Think music theory and Mozart.

But the Berklee College of Music in Boston, another top music school, hit just the right note. She can major in songwriting and music production, which is exactly what the senior from The Dalles High School wants to do.

"I really love school and I love learning," said Acevedo. "But my passion has always been music."

In high school, her only musical outlet was playing flute and serving as drum major in band. She taught herself music production and songwriting.

"I enjoy playing flute. It makes me happy, it's music."

She also loves being on stage. "I think that might have come from cheer," which she did all four years of high school.

"I really love to have a lot of energy on the stage because I love doing it."

She admires all the singers who do dance routines as part of their show, and that's what she aspires to.

"I love to do energetic music because I feel like I'm super energetic, so it really fits with me."

She wants to write and produce songs, and figure out staging, lighting to stage outfits and what dance to do in what order.

Saying she was "a very busy person before COVID," Acevedo listed her activities: Cheer, band, work, basketball, and taking three college-level Advanced Placement (AP) classes at once.

She's taken every AP class the high school has offered, figuring it would make college easier. She found she likes going to school, doing homework and getting good grades.

Her enthusiasm befuddles both of her siblings. "Why do you like school?" they ask her.

She explained, "I'm a very social person and I like to be busy and I like to be involved and I just like to be there."

She said, "I did do a lot in high school. I tried to do as much as I could. I felt like everything is tying up right now, everything is clicking."

If she can't swing Berklee financially, she also got accepted to Portland State University, which has a strong music program.

She's always on time for everything and works for her



Ariana Acevedo, who just graduated from The Dalles High School and was accepted to the prestigious Berklee College of Music in Boston, is pictured here in the artwork that accompanies the release of her song "Mask," on Spotify and YouTube. Contributed photo

grades. "This is not something my parents told me — 'You have to get really good grades and be involved' — it was something I wanted to do myself.

"I've always been super responsible because I'm the oldest. My parents don't speak English, so I do a lot of

the translating." "Very strict" about getting eight hours of sleep, she wakes, eats breakfast, "and I get started with my day right away. That's how it is being a busy person."

Her friends razzed her for never answering her phone. If she is on her phone, it's to

put a reminder in her calendar, or to finish a document for class.

Junior year, Acevedo was in the Distinguished Young Woman event. For her talent, she sang a song she wrote. It helped earn her runner up in the competition.

For her audition with Berklee, she decided to write her own three-minute song and perform it live over Zoom. She credited her interview experience from DYW with helping in the audition.

The song talked about how she was feeling before heading off to college. She wanted it to give them an insight into her as a person, beyond her teachers' letters of recommendations.

Asked how she comes up with her songs, she said, "This probably sounds really weird but it's usually a vibe that I get from the track I'm making."

She wanted to release an original song of hers, "Mask," as part of the Berklee application. "I posted on Spotify and YouTube and iTunes. I was very, very scared."

She didn't know how people would react to her creation. It is posted under her nickname, Ari.

(You can find the song on Spotify at open.spotify.com/track/5ex7MmC2a8l4JdLgh-fbsJa?si=t-mkDaomQ_Uk7i-

idJODeg and on YouTube at youtu.be/-M8cEF1t8io)

She played with many synthesizers and band music to get nostalgic. She wanted the song not too dark, but a little dramatic, "like the person was going through something."

"If I do make it somewhere, in the future, I want to represent that you do have a start and there's always room for improvement."

She recorded the song on her "old" iPhone 7 Plus. "I'm not kidding."

She said, "I don't even know if I'm doing any of this right. I'm just posting what I know, what I can do on my own. I want to get better."

Her five-part audition included improvising vocals, seeing if she could sing in tune, repeating rhythms clapped to her, recognizing chords and sight-reading music.

She didn't know how to sight-read vocally, but she can do it with the flute, so she imagined what the note would be on a flute and sang it. "I was very slow, but I got there."

Acevedo's uncle, who taught himself violin while growing up on a farm in Mexico, is her musical influence.

"I've noticed a lot of

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