

I'm going to start with a story my mom always loves to tell. Anyone who knows me well knows that I absolutely love Disney movies. When I was four or five, watching *The Little Mermaid* or *The Lion King* was a daily occurrence. One morning while my older sisters were at preschool, my mom wouldn't let me watch my movies. I apparently ran into the living room and started pouting on the couch. She worked from home at that time, so our kitchen table was her office. She was trying to work but kept hearing what she thought was *The Little Mermaid* coming from the living room. She stormed in, intending to yell at me for watching the movie when she specifically told me not to, but stopped short when she realized I was staring at a blank TV screen singing that one melody from the movie to myself (you know, the one when Ursula is stealing Ariel's voice).

She says that that was the moment she realized I could sing – and sing well.

Ever since then, I've been involved in countless musicals, contests, variety shows, and concerts. I auditioned for all-state four years in a row. Never got in, but hey, I'm over it...

I sang because I was good at it. And, though I hate to admit it, because I loved the attention it got me. To say I had a rude awakening when I came to college is an understatement. Being involved in A Cappella Choir, Chamber Singers, and Combos has made me realize that singing isn't all about the attention I received. There is so much more to music than just singing it, or playing it.

Like you hopefully read in the *InChoirer*, the thing I love most about being in this ensemble is the fact that we have the chance to move people, to touch them in ways words can't. Believe me, I love words, as every good little English major does. But there is something to be said about the beauty of the musical language. It is truly universal, which we saw plainly in Brazil when we watched our audiences laugh or cry during songs they couldn't even understand. That concert in Rio Mr. Babcock spoke about last week was literally life-changing for me. I thought I knew what music was all about, but that concert showed me I had no idea what power music holds. People turn to music all the time: to dance to when

you need a brain break, to sing to in the shower, to comfort in times of trial. I knew all that – but I never really saw it in action until that concert.

That is what music is about. Not the attention, not even the fact that I sing well. No, music is about that moment when I walked out in our processional in Rio and could barely maintain my composure after seeing the church was packed from wall to wall. Me, who does not cry. That's what music does to people. It drives you crazy, messes you up in the best way possible. Music speaks even when people can't understand your language. Music is a constant. Music is powerful. Music is passion.

So, freshman, I challenge you to fully embrace this choir and the people in it. That way, when you experience that moment, that *understanding*, I'll be right there to share it with you.

I am Makaye Smith, and I believe in music.