

## Soundtrack of My Life

I'm going to tell you the story about a little girl. A little girl that loved traveling before she even knew what it meant to get on a plane.

She was born in Mexico and was loud everywhere she went. She loved listening to Payaso Oscarin's hit song "Ven a Cantar." Yes, a Mexican clown entertainer, with probably too much make up and hair gel, singing songs in Spanish for kids. In retrospect, he was a really weird clown, but he taught her a lot— to tap into her artistic and creative side. The side of her that will unashamedly sing at the top of her lungs about a circus seal. He gave her the confidence that would've taken years to come out otherwise. At school, she would sing the national anthem with her classmates, having no clue what it meant to be patriotic. At birthday parties, she sang "Las Mañanitas," which would later in her life become the much simpler version— "Happy Birthday."

At the age of four, her family packed their lives into 30 suitcases and moved to Brazil. It was in Brazil where she learned two things— that feijoada is the best cuisine ever, and that Brazilians are the kindest, most accepting people that she would ever meet. They were welcomed with open arms, like that of Christ the Redeemer. Immersed in their rich, vibrant culture of Bossa Nova and Samba, she learned to flow with the music and the rhythm that Brazilians carry themselves with. She dressed in yellow and green, rooted for soccer teams as they yelled "GOOOOL!", and ate more brigadeiros than needed. She ran around the neighborhood barefoot with no sense of time and climbed every tree there was with her sister. While her parents listened to Michel Telo's "Ai Se Eu Te Pego" with their friends, she was listening to Palavra Cantada's "Bolacha de Agua e Sal." The first taught her parents that Brazilians are party people, and the latter taught her that intellectual development is equally important as staying active and healthy, all through the power of music. Of course she didn't know that at the time, but she would later come to realize it. Their songs encouraged self-expression as they talked about how water and salt cookies are better for the body and how language and literature are complex yet an

open door to creativity. Not a week went by when she wasn't dancing at school or singing at home. She knew she had to be different from the Brazilian kids but somehow she fit in perfectly with them. Whether that was their kind culture or her childlike innocence, she would never know. Still, her culturally diverse experiences in Brazil equipped her with resilience and augmented her appreciation of other countries.

At the age of eight, they packed everything up again and headed to the United States of America. The yellow and green turned to red, white, and blue. They added two new holidays to their list– the Fourth of July and Thanksgiving. Schoolhouse Rock taught her how a bill becomes a law and the Preamble to the United States of America. During her teenage years, she fell in love with five British singers known as One Direction. Their music showed her that other countries could still reside in her heart despite the long distance. Harry Styles would become the first artist whose concert she attended, alongside her sister. They had grown to be completely different from each other, but his music had found a way to bond their differences. It created a space for them to be girls together. When her childhood pet died, she had “Fine Line” by Harry Styles on repeat. The lyrics, “*We’ll be a fine line, we’ll be alright,*” were engraved in her heart, offering her comfort. She went on to attend fifteen more concerts because when she didn’t find the words to express her feelings, she found that music did.

Living in the United States was when she realized that she was Mexican. Her accent stood out– it wasn’t Mexican nor Brazilian. Her voice was made up of two different tones. Her personality always shared two sides, now having to make room for a third while her parents chased the American Dream.

During her junior year, she attended a concert with her parents. Natalia Lafourcade. Their favorite Mexican singer, in Dallas. Seeing Natalia embrace her culture on stage in front of the diverse audience left her awestruck. As Natalia sang “Hasta La Raíz,” tears filled her eyes. Hearing someone sing so beautifully about her home country and the love it brings, no matter where you are, astonished her.

“Music truly does have no borders, no limitations,” she thought. It reaches all audiences, bypassing the language barrier. Music moves with the listener, sharing its rhythm and melody. She walked out of the venue, proud of her origin.

Senior year, she applied to four colleges, one of them being Abilene Christian University. She was drawn to it by its tight-knit, faith-based community and its outstanding Journalism and Mass Communications Department. As she arrived on campus, headphones blasting the soundtrack to *Monsters University*, she was unsure about many things, but one thing was for certain— she wanted to take her education abroad.

That little girl is me, and she’s not so little anymore.

I will study abroad in Oxford, England, in the summer of 2026 to make little me proud. To absorb another country’s culture and beauty. Its welcoming warmth. My experiences have shown me how much love unfamiliar countries have to offer. They have broadened my perspective on life and given me a deeper understanding of the different cultures that make up our world. All of those songs, and countless more, have shaped me into who I am today. They cultivated a sound, orchestrated a symphony, created deep connections between my life and those of others.

Each country I have been to added a new song to the soundtrack of my life. While in Oxford, I will be able to discover new songs, new rhythms, new tones, and new audiences. I will engage with history, literature, and methods of learning that will reflect my own journey around the world as I enter this next chapter.

As a journalism student, I am captivated by storytelling and how it connects people across various cultures, just as music bridged the gaps in my life. British artists once reminded me that distance does not diminish connection— England will be the place where my global identity and academic goals converge. My storytelling voice will be strengthened abroad as I take in diverse narratives shaped by Oxford’s rich historical and literary culture.

