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Jenna Mulvey

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From the Lab to the Stage

Biology major Samantha Casale details the honor of singing the national anthem at this year's Commencement Ceremony



May 15, 2013 | Jenna Mulvey '13

BRISTOL, R.I. — Samantha Casale '13 has had what some may call a lifetime flirtation with the performing arts. At Roger Williams, she currently performs with a capella student group Special Delivery and tore up the dance floor with the Dance Team during her freshman year. As graduation draws near, a bright new spotlight will shine on Casale at the University's most high-profile event of the year when she delivers the national anthem at the undergraduate [Commencement Ceremony](#) on Saturday, May 18.

Casale, a biology major and music minor who says she has never sung "The Star-Spangled Banner" solo, has certainly dedicated more hours to a biology research lab than to the stage. She competed against other members of her class in an "American Idol" style competition to earn her spot as the senior Commencement singer. Before soaking up the spotlight at Commencement, Casale told PDQ@RWU how she discovered her passion for singing at a karaoke event, reflected on her time at RWU, and shared her post-graduation plans – a future she hopes will involve working with animals, with some singing on the side.

How does the national anthem inspire you?

It's a symbol of the strength of America, and I feel like music in itself inspires people. It's a good way to show the strength and the nationalism in America through music.

How do you think you stood out from the other contestants?

One of them I've never heard sing. But I know the other ones that I've heard are all very good, so I must've had something that the judges liked in order to be picked. Not really sure what I had that stood out, but it must've been something!

How did you react when you found out that you were chosen?

I was kind of shocked because they called me 10 or 15 minutes after I auditioned. I was expecting to not hear for a while! They said that they just wanted to congratulate me. I was really excited and when they first told me; I just kept saying thank you. I think I may have been a little annoying with that, but I was very excited and I called my mom right away and told her, 'I got it!'

What does it mean to you to be the national anthem singer at your Commencement ceremony?

It's definitely an honor to be picked to represent the senior class and sing the national anthem, and I feel like it's kind of a way to say thank you to Roger Williams for four years of giving me a great education. This is my way of saying thank you – but with music, which I love.

What ignited your passion for singing?

I've been singing since I was really young. I never started taking voice lessons until college. But I watched a lot of Disney movies and went through a phase of being obsessed with N'Sync, and I would sing along with them. I used to play the violin and I was in orchestra for a while. Once, we had a karaoke day with the band, orchestra and chorus and my friends were kind of like 'Hey, you can sing. Why don't you go up and sing something?' So I sang "Can You Feel the Love Tonight?" from "The Lion King" – my first time ever singing in front of anybody. The violin teacher came up to me afterwards and said, 'You should probably stay in orchestra but also do some singing in the chorus every so often.' And then I realized that I loved it, and from then on dropped orchestra, kept singing, and was in every chorus group and did theater.

What will you remember the most about RWU?

How beautiful the campus is and the professor that really inspired me to want to learn more about biology and the associated fields. And also the memories I've made with the people here. My favorite memory was watching the meteor shower behind GHH, and how everybody from the school goes out and camps out behind GHH to watch the meteor shower. I thought: 'This is what a college should be like: everyone coming together for an event and being social.' And, obviously, the a cappella group for bringing music back into my life again.

How has being at RWU prepared you for your next steps after graduation?

The [biology department](#) tells you about places that are hiring and job opportunities, and one of my professors, Paul Webb, has a link on his Bridges account titled, "Possible Careers in Each of These Fields," and includes a number of different organizations and careers that you can go into in each biology field. They really try to introduce you to a wide number of fields in biology, to help students find out where your interest is so that you can pursue that in a career.

What are your plans for after graduation?

I want to work with animals. A dream job would probably be some kind of animal rehabilitation where you can take injured or sick animals, fix them up, and then send them back into the wild again. That would be what I would love to do. And then I want to keep doing music on the side because that's where my passion is.

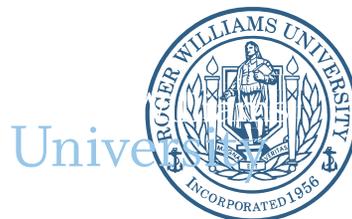
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