



Viola Durfee from Washington, DC

Song: "Free"

Mentor: Jay Adana

Musical Director: Anessa Marie



Viola Durfee loves music and theatre and composed her first song at age nine. She is currently working on a musical called *The Computer that Ran Away*. She received Superior rating in piano performance at Maryland State Music Teachers Association festival in 2019. As a member of School Without Walls Choir, Viola received the third-place trophy at Festival Disney March 2020. She has performed in school musicals and plays including *Schoolhouse Rock*, *High School Musical*, *Aladdin*; *Much Ado about Nothing*, and *The Wiz* (cancelled due to Covid). She has participated in programs at Signature Theatre, Imagination Stage, and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts on playwriting, directing, improvisation, acting.

Song Description: Lila is a 15-year-old girl with autism. Intelligent and quirky, she is proud of her low voice which has placed her as the only tenor in her choir of sopranos. Lila sings this song to herself, as she imagines what it would be like to be free from the taunts and teasing she regularly endures and to stop having to pretend she's someone other than herself. Eventually, the voices inside her head telling her she can't achieve what she wants get louder and louder until she lets it all out at once. But that release sends her back to basics and she decides that while not accepting others' negative opinions about her is hard, it's not impossible and she can "spread these wings and fly away / And I think I know just the way."

Durfee's mentor Jay Adana (she/her) is a free roaming hapa musical artist. *The Loophole* (Public Theater Studio, music and lyrics), *Fingerpaintings* (Playwrights Horizons Downtown, music and lyrics), *The*

Woodsman (New World Stages, lyrics), *LeFay* (Musical Theater Factory, libretto), *The Last Tiger in Haiti* (Berkeley Rep/La Jolla Playhouse, contributed music and lyrics). Currently developing several musical movies. 2020 Richard Rodgers Award, 2018 Jonathan Larson Grant, 2019 Dramatist Guild Foundation Fellow. Work featured by PBS, The American Theater Wing, Joe's Pub, and *The Dramatist* magazine. Alumni: Public Theater #BARS residency writer, SPACE on Ryder Farm, #BARS workshop founded by Rafael Casal and Daveed Diggs, BFA SUNY Purchase Conservatory.

Durfee's musical director Anessa Marie is a singer/songwriter, composer/lyricist, music director, pianist, and orchestrator based in Manhattan. In 2019, Anessa was awarded the Artist Fellowship with NYMF and presented her song cycle, *Finding Beautiful*, written with Danny Bristol. Current theatrical works in development include *Reign*, an original rock opera based on Edward II, *Footprints in the Sand*, and *Transitions*, her one-woman show to debut in early 2021. She is also currently writing *A New York Renaissance* for piano and symphony orchestra to debut in 2022, and composing the score for three upcoming film projects. She has been featured at venues such as Signature Theatre, 54 Below, Joe's Pub, Green Room 42, and Carnegie Hall, and was featured in *The Advocate* magazine in July 2018. She regularly music directs concerts in the NYC cabaret circuit, and serves as resident music director for Trans Voices Trans Cabaret (TVTC), a bi-monthly cabaret featuring an all-TGNC identifying cast. She also works as a gender consultant in theatre, film, and TV. She is also the founder, artistic director, and conductor of the Phoenix Trans Chorus of NYC.

Recent theater credits: COMPOSER/ORCHESTRATOR: *Finding Beautiful* (NYMF), *Queering the Canon* (Joe's Pub), *Beautiful: The Music and Lyrics of Anessa Marie* (various NYC), *A Glimpse of the Rainbow* (Green Room 42); MUSIC DIRECTOR: *Miss Step* (5th Ave- Reading), *Hammer* (NYU), *Interstate* (NAMT), *The Office Musical Parody* (Jerry Orbach Theatre), *Finding Beautiful* (NYMF, Signature Center), *American Girl Live* (Nat'l Tour), *Into the Woods* (OOTB), *City of Light* (SHE NYC), *The Addams Family* (Fordham), *Canceled* (Keen Teenz).