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Winner, Sing for Hope Student Music Video Award & 1st Place Middle School Creative, Viva La Veta

FROM
TEEN
LAYABOUT
TO
MY HERO
WINNER

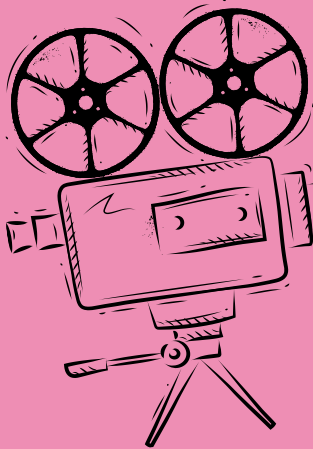




HOW I TRANSFORMED FROM PLAYING VIDEO GAMES TO WINNING AN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL



My name is Natalie, and I'm 14 years old. A few days ago, I found out after working on composing, singing, dancing, and filmmaking to make a music video for the past two years (after being a teen lay-about until age 12), I won the only prize in the world for my age, which has astonished me ([press release](#) + [My Hero article](#) + [my film on the My Hero website](#)). I thought my story and project could possibly help inspire other kids as if you had seen me a year ago, you would have never dreamt that I could do any of this. I barely paid attention at school and when I got home, I just played video games all day.

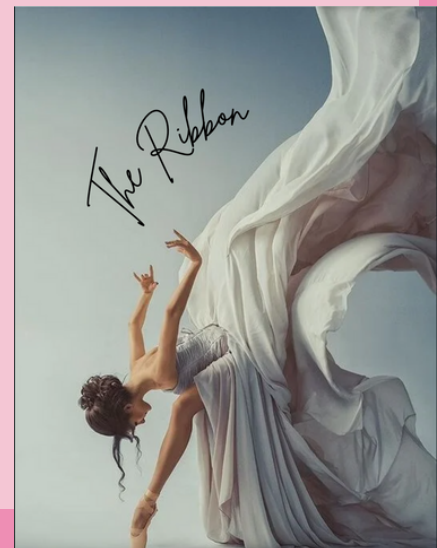


Natalie's Creations



You can see my award-winning [music video](#) here, which was just screened at the MY HERO International Film Festival in Santa Monica:

My [transformation story](#) here:



And my book I made in AI based on my music video lyrics here:

If this could be of any use to you, I would be thrilled to have my work and story inspire others.

With all my heart, *Natalie*



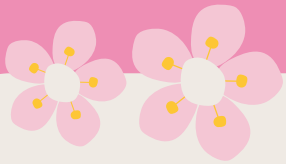
Q & A

Please share your story!

I am a reformed teen layabout! I used to not pay attention in class because I was bored in school and I didn't see the point, so I would get through it and then return home to play video games as it was the only fun thing I had to do at the time. This all changed when I met my teacher, Miss Clarissa, who showed me what I was capable of. She asked me what I wanted in life, and I told her, "To be respected, which is why I want to be an actress." She told me becoming an actress was not necessarily the best route to becoming respected (she showed me the video clip of a reporter throwing water in Tom Cruise's face) but that we would work on acting anyway. And we did!

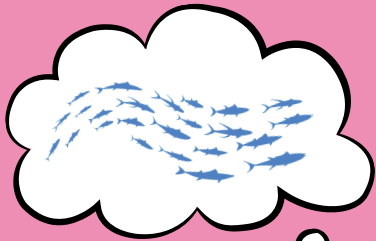
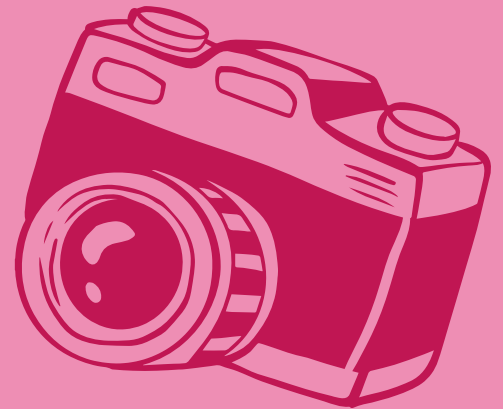
We started with writing a poem, then performing it in my teacher's garden. Then she introduced me to Steve Swanson for voice lessons and I started working on my singing and songwriting. Steve, Miss Clarissa, and I worked on turning my poem into a song and recording it professionally, and then, over time, Miss Clarissa helped me turn it into a music video. At first, I was intimidated with the thought of filling a three minute song with visuals, but Steve told Clarissa about all the latest and greatest AI tools, so I started with teaching myself how to generate images and video using AI and stock video. Then, over time, I learned how to dance in a flamenco fashion and how to act with my eyes and face and body so I could add clips of me dancing and singing to my own song! It took two years, but when I saw the last iteration of my music video, I couldn't believe it! I never would have dreamt two years ago that I could do anything like this. I think this is a story about the power of good mentors to harness what kids can do.





How long have you been making films? Have you made any others and, if so, what are they?

My second video was the spoken world version of Viva La Veta I filmed in Miss Clarissa's tiny garden called My Secret Fish Farm, which was a finalist for MY HERO and also won a Mattie Stepanek Honorable Mention. My third video is Viva La Veta, the music video that this year won your Sing for Hope Student Music Video Award & 1st Place for Middle School Creative.



Why were you drawn to making this film?

Many of my peers are worried about the way we abuse our planet right now, so I made this film because I want to spread the word about how to solve seemingly unsolvable problems in creative and delightful ways. After Miss Clarissa showed me double-Michelin star Chef Dan Barber's TED Talk, "How I Fell In Love with a Fish," I felt inspired to write a poem about Veta La Palma, a secret fish farm in Spain that produces the most delicious fish Barber has ever tasted by harnessing Nature instead of polluting it.



What are the issues that are most important to you and why?

I would say making sure we still have a habitable planet for my generation and all those to come.

And secondly, I am working on not procrastinating, which happens when I think the work I do isn't important or that I have more time than I actually do. That's why I'm super grateful to Miss Clarissa for bearing with me and encouraging me despite all my weaknesses, my voice teacher Steve for helping me find my singing voice and giving me the opportunity to learn something I've always wanted to do well, and to MY HERO for seeing the value in what I create despite all my weaknesses! You showed me the work I do is important...despite my flaws.



Who was on your team?

As for who produced the film, I would say it is part me for choosing the stock clips, generating the AI clips, singing and dancing in the live clips, and editing; part Miss Clarissa for filming + teaching me how to act, sing, write, and dance; part Steve for voice coaching, helping me turn my poem into a song, and recording and editing the song; and part my parents for funding the venture and driving me everywhere!



Last tips?

It's invaluable to have supportive parents. My dad drives me and my brother one hour each way to Miss Clarissa's house every week. They also cook me three delicious meals per day! My dad also drives me to my Cirque du Soleil style aerial tissu lessons where you do acrobatics wrapped in a scarf that falls from a high ceiling. I want to incorporate clips from that into Viva La Veta next.



What in your opinion is the importance of the film, and what are its strengths?

I would say the importance of the film is that it gives us good news we can do something about instead of bad news that paralyzes us and sends us plummeting into climate despair.



More tips



A pink graphic titled "Natalia's FILM TIPS" containing a "SUMMARY" section and a tip about inspiration. The summary mentions "12 year old Natalia" and "Viva La Veta". The tip says "To inspire yourself to do something amazing, think about what could inspire you for me. For example, my dad never meets in the future I was the one who got in this was the highlight for me. For me they don't seem to be respected. The best me up to do with work I don't really think I could do." Below the tip is a drawing of a girl and a boy, and the text "Candy thief brother = inspo".