

Marianna Ban

Who am I Who I am

Lately I have been really interested in the spirituality of it all. I grew up in a Catholic Italian family though I never remember believing in God or actually praying, I seem to only hold close my grandmother trying to hold in her laughter as the ladies in the church choir sang horribly off-key or my papa feeling such a strong guilt that he wouldn't receive communion. But ever since leaving my beloved parents home for the big city, I have been called to a higher power of sorts. I could chalk it up to my late night binges of Long Island Medium or the fact that I miss my grandmother so much that every time I find a right side up penny on the street I have convinced myself that it is her sending me a sign and this urge from deep within me that I have to bend down to pick it up. To be frank it could be that this life I have chosen to lead is an extremely difficult one and I am holding onto this idea that my life, more so my artistry, has already been laid out before me. This is what I have decided is true. But because this whole spirituality thing is new to me I have laid out the facts to support this statement. My fathers father spent his days as a principal of a small Wisconsin High School and his nights auditioning time and time again for the role of Tevye in Fiddler on the Roof only to ever book a Villager. My mothers father spent his days at his bakery making Italian cookies and pastries and his nights in a barbershop quartet do-op group. They planted music in my DNA. And it was my father with his annoyingly perfect pitch and my tone deaf mother with her CDs and records that read "Miss Saigon" and "Les Miserables" that set this path up before I even had any say in the matter. The fire of that artist glow burned within me from before the moment I was born. The word that first came to my mind in thinking of the artist that I am is a passionate one. A fiercely passionate one. I saw everyone in my family be so in love with what they did. I saw my mother's eyes sparkle when she created a dish for the restaurant, I saw my aunt light up whenever she walked into a dance room to teach, and I saw my papa walk through his business with such an honor. They loved it and also did not hide the hardships of it. Because I knew from the beginning that these two things exist in tandem I couldn't shy away from being an artist just because it is hard. Or just because I am scared sometimes. So much about being an artist scares me. I am scared I am not doing enough. I am scared I am too much. I am scared I wont find a place for myself where I can sustain this as a job for the rest of my life. I am scared of getting hurt and I am scared of letting down my community. And that is why I have to do it. Everyday I am so excited to do more, and to take up space, and look for roles and shows, or frankly create roles and shows, that have a place for me. Some days when I'm feeling really crazy I am even excited to get hurt. I always learn more that way and I am one step closer to finding the peace within that hurt and within the knowing that it wasn't meant for me. I am incredibly excited to try everyday to

uplift my community of artists. These ideas of loving what I do and having it be hard as shit is what also drew me to the art that inspires me now. I am so incredibly inspired by work that is done by real people about real people. I love seeing stories about families and where people came from. Why people became who they are. Who came before them. This is the art I intend to create. I crave art that is about real people that reflects and uplifts its communities. I want to create art that gives back. This community made me who I am and it is so important that I make work that makes people want to create. Whether that is creating a new piece of art or just creating a better world than what they were given. Art that inspires me, the art I intend to create, will inspire others. The dream is that decades from now I will just be working. In better terms I hope decades from now I still sit in rooms everyday that inspire me. I hope that decades from now I will see one of my projects on a stage done by people who also have this fire deep within their bellies. I hope I will perform my one woman show for little audiences that have followed my career and are now finally ready to meet me. I hope I have the chance to work with strong female writers like Mindy Kaling, Jeanine Tesori, Greta Gerwig, and Phoebe Waller-Bridge. I hope that I will be performing in shows that are free for schools and free for underprivileged kids. I hope I will be writing, a play, a book, and also just letters to my kids one day. I hope that decades from now I will be able to honor my family in something written and dedicated to them. I hope decades from now I can create art because it is my choice and because I love to do it and not because I have to pay my bills or make someone else happy. I also hope that these dreams aren't decades away. I was born to be an artist. I have never wanted to do anything else. And believe me, they tried. My mother put me in tennis, I made my racket into a microphone and turned the doubles round into a battle of the bands. My father put me in Taekwondo and I would doodle on my uniform. They put me in soccer, I begged to be goalie just so I could recreate Enjolras death when the soccer balls would come flying at me. I did baton twirling, volleyball and kitty-cat zumba, I am not joking you, that is what the class was called. None of them stuck. I was always called to be onstage. It always feels like true love when I am up there. When I dance or sing I feel no pain. This is why I choose to do this everyday and why I will keep choosing it for the rest of my life. Even if choosing it looks a little bit different everyday.