

# Eleventh Hour

by Marina Lehman

(Editor's note: This is the second in a series of essays by RBC students who were asked to write about significant events in their lives.)

*Rescue me from hanging on this line/ I won't give up on giving you the chance to blow my mind/ Let the eleventh hour quickly pass me by/ I'll find you when I think I'm out of time.*

~ Jars of Clay, "Eleventh Hour"

I settled into the polyester seat of my junker of a car and let the hope well up in me. It made me nervous. And happy.

It had all started with the advertisement in *The Columbus Dispatch* for Broadway Across America's production of *The Phantom of the Opera* at the Ohio Theatre in Columbus. I lived near Plain City, a 30-minute drive away. I briefly considered trying to attend, but theater was expensive, and I barely knew what *The Phantom of the Opera* was, although I knew it was significant to anybody who knew anything about culture. So I was excited about the rock opera but had no plans of being able to see it. Until, that is, my piano teacher brought it up.

"I know somebody who can get me group rates on tickets for *Phantom of the Opera*," Christine told me. "Would you like to go?"

Of course I wanted to go, and even a high school student with no summer job could afford a \$16.00 price tag. And there was a bonus: Christine had a niece, Melanie, close to my age, who visited her from New York on a regular basis. Melanie was visiting now, and the *Phantom* performance fell close to Melanie's birthday. Christine wanted me to join

their happy party at Buca di Beppo before the show. I had never been there before, and it sounded amazing.

"I think we have enough room," she said, counting on her fingers. "Christian, Melanie, me, Al...I reserved the kitchen table at the restaurant, so I can only have nine, but yeah, there's room for you."

My elation lasted for a day.

"I'm really sorry, Marina," Christine sounded apologetic over the phone. "I counted up again, and with Christian's friends we already have nine people. I really hope that you can find a way to meet us at the Ohio Theatre."

"I...I think somebody can probably drive me," I said, hoping that I wouldn't cry on the phone. "Or maybe Mom and Dad will let me drive myself."

I exchanged the correct pleasantries and hung up as quickly as polite to wait for the tears. I had been looking forward to a whole evening of good times with friends, and to settle for being driven to the show was a dim

consolation. But for some reason, the tears never came. Instead, Christine's last words hung in my mind: "I'll call you if something comes up. Maybe we can work this out."

*Rescue me from hanging on this line.* I've never been one to hope about such situations. I trained myself as a child, telling myself that it makes life less painful if you don't hope too hard for things that look as though they won't turn out. This was a perfect example of something that would hurt if I let myself hope for it. But something was different this time, something beyond my control. *I won't give up on giving you the chance to blow my mind.* Hope bubbled up inside of me irresistibly, with such force and joy that it could only be coming from God. I decided not to fight this new hope. I let myself believe it, repeated its words to myself: "Something will work out. I'll be at Buca di Beppo with the rest. I'll go with them to see *Phantom*. It will work out."

I lived several days in this hope. *Let the eleventh hour quickly pass me by.* I would think about it often, and just as





often I would pray about it. When I started to get anxious, I would remind myself of my mysterious hope and relax into it. The chorus for "Eleventh Hour" by Jars

of Clay played continually in my head. *Rescue me from standing on this line/ I won't give up on giving you the chance to blow my mind/ Let this eleventh hour quickly pass me by/ You'll find me when I think I'm out of time.* I knew that the song was written for big things, and that in the whole scheme of things this was a very small thing, but I knew that it was my song, for this occasion. I prayed it when I got nervous. *I won't give up on giving you the chance to blow my mind....*

My piano lesson was the same day as our *Phantom* performance. Christine's house was a tiny two-bedroom, one-bath in a development near Dublin, Ohio. It really didn't have space to teach piano, but she taught anyway. The piano was in her studio/office, a room that was always full but not cluttered. It was simply crammed with everything necessary: the piano against the wall, a filing cabinet full of music next to the piano, a desk strewn with papers, music and highlighters, a printer with stacks of music on top, boxes full of sheet music on the floor. On the wall hung a poster board chart with the name of all her students down one side, and the list of guild skills (scales, chords, chord progressions, etc.) on top. Christine sat in the desk chair beside the piano and in front of the desk. She was counting on her fingers again.

"Christian, Amy, Brian, me, Al, Melanie, Christian, my friend Danae, and her daughter... yeah, that makes nine already. I'm really sorry, Marina. Will you be able to make it to the show anyway?"

"Yeah," I said, "I think Dad's going to drive me to the theater."

"Good," she said, giving me her gentle smile, "now let's work on this Bach. You were having trouble with this part...."

I had errands to run that day, and I knew that I would get home at about 4:45 p.m. If Christine called Mom and told her that I could come with them after all, I would need to leave my house at 5:00 to be back in Dublin at 5:45. I settled into the polyester seat of my junker, letting the

hope well up in me. It made me nervous. And happy. The song looped continuously in my head as I drove home. *Let this eleventh hour quickly pass me by... I won't give up on giving you the chance to blow my mind.*

"Blow my mind, God," I prayed, "please do this...."

I pictured the scenario in my head. Me arriving home, going to Mom. Mom smiling at me, saying, "Christine called. You'd better get ready!"

I drove home excited, knowing this was dangerous. Hope could hurt. But still.... I thought of the outfit I had picked out the night before, relishing the chance to finally wear a dress that I bought earlier that year. I pictured the finished effect and smiled to myself. Almost home. Dangerous hope. *I won't give up on giving you the chance....* Rocketing down our long driveway in my little junk heap of a car. *Let this eleventh hour quickly pass me by....* Parking the car, gathering my stuff. *Rescue me from standing on this line....* 4:45p.m. *I'll find you when I think I'm out of time....* Walking inside, putting my books on the piano.

"Where's Mom?"

"In her bedroom."

Walking the hallway. *Blow my mind....*

"Mom?"

A smile.

Hope fulfilled.

Christine had counted one last time, and realized that she had been counting her son Christian's name twice all along. Counting him once left one empty spot. My spot. The silver grey dress with the long, puffy skirt went on, and the short-sleeved white shirt. The sparkly black scarf spent five minutes going from my shoulders to my waist to my neck and all over again before settling on my shoulders. The hair was combed, the black boots slipped on, the tiny purse filled with money, a driver's license, and some lip gloss. I was ready.

What I chiefly remember about the people from that evening is the silence of most of the ones that I didn't know, and the laughter and chatter of the ones that I did know. There were too many people any-

way for the kitchen table at Buca di Beppo, Christian's friends having accumulated some extra people, but when we arrived the host produced some long-legged stools and crammed us all in.

"Don't tell the fire inspector," he said, with a wink and a nod.

The kitchen table was so-called because of its view of the kitchen. We had a close-up view of chefs in white scurrying about, banging pots and pans and shouting at each

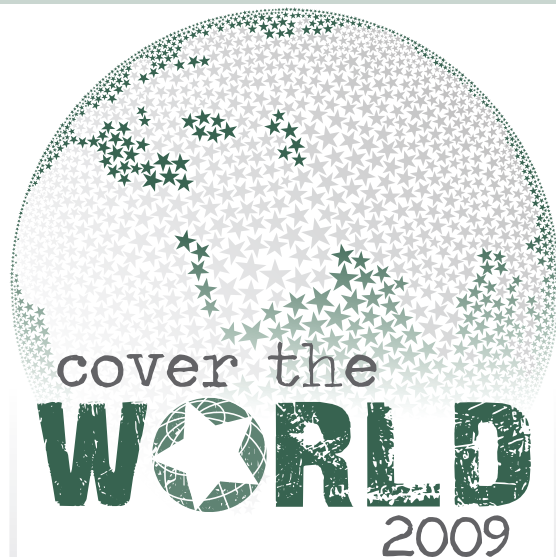




other. The smells of Italian food leaped out at us—tomato sauce, spicy meat, buttery white sauce, and sautéed vegetables. We shared huge entrees round the table, and Christine marveled that I had eaten Italian in a white shirt without it becoming a red-spotted shirt.

If Buca di Beppo was fantastic, *The Phantom of the Opera* was awe-inspiring. I had never sat so high up in the red and gold Ohio Theatre, but Christine assured me that up here we had the best sound and we could still see the action. I wasn't certain what to expect as I sank into my red-velvet seat and let my eyes rove over the familiar opulence of the place. As the show played out before me, I was startled and amazed by everything, from the sudden flash of the gigantic chandelier, to the sickening surprise of a noose around Raul's neck. A few individual scenes stand out in my memory, but most of it is just an impression, an exploding firework of beauty that I didn't know existed. The music stunned me, and the voice rang inside my head in new places. Hope fulfilled had led me to a new world. **BB**

*Marina (Shenk) Lehman graduated from RBC as valedictorian in May 2009. She lives with her husband, Landon, in Vincennes, IN, where she fills her time, when not working, with knitting, reading, and learning math. Landon and Marina attend Shalom Mennonite Church in Epsom, Indiana.*



The birth of Jesus marked the beginning of a movement that would spread rapidly. Thousands of years later, the story of His birth is still being told and millions all over the world will celebrate it this Christmas.

As you make plans for your celebration this year, we'd like you to consider helping us "cover the world" again with the news about Jesus. What better way to celebrate Jesus' birth than by helping workers take him to those who still haven't heard?

To do this, we are encouraging families in the Conservative Mennonite Conference to give a Christmas donation to support the work of RMM. It could be a portion of what they would spend on Christmas gifts, or a gift of any amount. There are about 6,000 households in CMC, so if every family gave even ten dollars it would raise \$60,000 for missions!

If you decide to give, we will place a star with your name on the main map in the RMM office. The stars will stay on the map through January as a visual reminder of how your generosity "covers the world."

Last year, 54 CMC households celebrated Christmas by giving \$6,050 for missions. We ask you to prayerfully consider doing the same this year. If you would like to help "cover the world" with your gift, please go to our website, [www.rosedalemennonitemissions.org](http://www.rosedalemennonitemissions.org), and follow the "cover the world" link. Or you can send a check to:

Rosedale Mennonite Missions  
9920 Rosedale Milford Center Road  
Irwin, OH 43029

## 2010 Engaged Encounters

### February 12-14

Comfort Inn, Dover, Ohio

### April 23-25

Comfort Inn, Dover, Ohio

### September 10-12

Rosedale Bible College, Irwin, Ohio

Contact couple:

Jerry and Jessica Yoder, 614-733-0887

