

A Language I Can Understand

Transcript

By Juliana Taomin Giacone

Juliana Taomin Giacone:

AMBI: sounds of the street outside of the club, people talking.

JTG:

It's dusk on a brisk fall evening. I'm waiting in line outside The Red Pavilion in Bushwick Brooklyn.

The building looks like a big garage-warehouse and it takes up the entire corner.

(SOUND: ticket scanner beeps)

It's, painted firefighter red.

SECURITY GUARD:

You can go in.

JTG:

Inside, there's a warm smoky glow.

AMBI: sounds of the inside of the club – pre-show music, people talking, bar sounds

JTG:

There's a neon sign in the back - depicting Chinese characters.
The club evokes the mood of a Wong Kar Wai movie.

– intentionally so.

A circle of red lanterns sway above my head.

And I smell something, something pleasant, that I can't identify.

AMBI: female singer singing in Chinese

JTG:

A woman on stage is singing. She's wearing a traditional dress, with crimped hair and sparkly jewelry. She's singing a Chinese song.

There are all kinds of people drawn to this place.

Like the two 20-something women at my table.

Jen is Vietnamese and she's from Williamsburg.

(SOUND: Jen's voice)

Hailey is Black and she's also from the area.

(SOUND: Hailey's voice)

JTG:

This is the type of intimate place where you impress a date. Or it's where you bring a group of friends to show them you know the chicest spots in town.

But I came here alone today.

MUSIC: "Chaunce Libertain" Vermouth - Blue Dot Sessions

JTG:

I've never been to a jazz club before and I've certainly never been to an Asian one. I'm by myself but that's not what scares me. I grew up in New York so I'm used to going places alone.

I want to belong here. But the problem is, I don't quite fit in.

As a Chinese-American adoptee, I'm drawn to my culture while also feeling like a stranger to it.

Not knowing my native language, is something I'm ashamed of.

...

At one point in the night, a waiter interrupts our table. He serves Jen and Hailey their cocktails and bar snacks.

WAITER:

Vegan onigiri

JTG:

I see them looking at their onigiri, confused about how to open them.

They're wrapped in a tight piece of plastic – and like Japanese origami, with one wrong move, you can break them.

“Do you need help with that?”, I ask them. I'm proud that I know how to unwrap this little Asian puzzle.

...

Later in the night, the band plays an instrumental piece
The song starts with the chorus, all together.

AMBI: instrumental with solos – chorus plays

JTG

I realize that jazz can be a bridge between different cultures.

And melodies and harmonies speak their own language.

A man in a suit plays his clarinet.

(SOUND: clarinet)

Then the trumpet.

(SOUND: trumpet)

Cue the trombone solo.

(SOUND: trombone)

And there's the piano man.

(SOUND: piano)

And where's that bass?

(SOUND: bass)

At The Red Pavilion, jazz brings people together – even if they can't literally understand it.

AMBI: cheering and clapping

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MUSIC: "Soothe" Jazz Lines – Blue Dot Sessions

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