“NEVER GIVE UP”

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my cousin Zhen Cao, in hope that she will never give up.
I would also like to dedicate this project to my family for their unending support.
Our greatest glory is not in never failing, but in rising up every time we fail.

Ralph Waldo Emerson
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

“Never Give Up”
by
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The short film, “Never Give Up,” features a talented musician, Wen, a Chinese girl who loses her hearing as she is well on her way to a successful career as a violinist. Wen is devastated, but when nobody believes that she can continue playing, a young violin player gives her hope.

The thesis will examine the problems of deaf identity and artistic representations of the deaf community, as well as the role of music in the deaf community. The audience will see how the main protagonist overcomes all the difficulties to go after her dream, even as the audience also hears Johann Pachelbel’s Canon in D performed on the violin.

Finally, the thesis examines the themes of hope, moral fortitude, and perseverance in the context of art and personal adversity. The thesis will discuss the way similar themes have been treated in related literature and cinema, and will specifically consider how these themes have been treated from a craft perspective both in Hollywood and foreign cinema.
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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

You Can Shine is a Pantene shampoo commercial, the story is similar to this thesis film: both tell the story of a deaf girl overcoming difficulties to be a successful violinist. The commercial obviously goes to great lengths to show the actress’ hair while telling an emotional story. The primary point of the commercial is to sell hair product, that’s why you can see lots of quick cuts in the commercial. The relationship of this thesis film to the Pantene commercial is a key problem here. The content of the commercial story is reductive. It inspired the thesis film by way of unpacking this story and creating a more complex story about the will to overcome and how this works.

This thesis film addresses how the deaf girl practices violin after losing her hearing ability. Furthermore, it addresses the conflicts between a Chinese mother and her Chinese-American child showing the audience an important aspect of Chinese culture.

Influential on this aspect of the thesis, Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother is a book illustrative of how Chinese parents force their children to study and get good grades (Chua). However, it is important to note that not all the parents in China play the ‘tiger role’. There are many parents that respect their children, and that teach their kids about right and wrong but that nevertheless allow their children to make up their own minds.

Representing deafness was another problem of this project. Generally, an individual who accepts his/her deafness is willing to be a member of the deaf community. He or she generally would want to build the feelings of “involvement” and “wholeness” within that community. The individual would feel free to make deaf friends and would feel comfortable using sign language to communicate. Traditionally, members of the deaf community have experienced frustration in communicating with the larger hearing society, have encountered embarrassing misunderstandings, and have experienced the loneliness of being left out of interactions with family members, neighborhood acquaintances, and others residing in the hearing community. (Scheetz 24)
However, there are always exceptions; there are some who do not identify with the deaf community. They are deaf audio-logically, but not socially. For instance, if children are brought up in an “oral” environment and have to attend public schools, they might not want to be members of the deaf community; “they may not be fluent in manual communication and view themselves as hearing people who have difficulty understanding some words, rather than as ‘deaf’ individuals” (Scheetz 24).

Additionally, people with disabilities have greater difficulty working, studying, and so on. Generally, people with disabilities are very sensitive about the reception they receive from people outside of their community. They worry about being discriminated against by majority communities. This anxiety persists in many rural areas of China that disability is a punishment given to people to account for the sins of their parents or sins in past lives.

In one study, Chinese international students were more positive toward people with physical disabilities than toward people with developmental disabilities and mental disorders. However, they were less positive in their attitudes toward people with physical or mental disabilities than their American counterparts. Chinese people, by in large, are generally more accepting and sympathetic toward an acquired injury that causes physical limitations than toward a congenital physical or mental disorder. (Waldman, Wong, and Perlman 15)

The role of music in the deaf community was another central problem in the production of this film. The hearing impaired have bars and clubs where they can enjoy music and dance. However, people outside the deaf community have little interest in understanding the music of the hearing impaired.

There are many cases of famous musicians with hearing impairments, including Beethoven, and Evelyn Glennie. In addition, there is another study, this time regarding Nicole Hurt who was born deaf but still involves herself with music. Music is a vital part of her life, but she cannot hear any tones within her music. Nicole doesn’t sing in the choir, but she does use sign language. Nicole studied drama at Golden West High School in Visalia, California, and landed lead role in a play. Just like other teen girls, she enjoys watching MTV and likes to dance, even though she could not hear tonality from the music, nevertheless she can read the words and feel the physical vibration made by loud music. “If you turn on bass really loud, I will feel air pressure in my ears” (Neff 3).

Telling the story of deaf music as a person outside of deaf community is another problem. How can one represent a community they don’t have direct experience with? As an
outsider, there are many obstacles and challenges to be faced. It is hard to understand on a linguistic level, hearing impaired people’s thinking, their behavior and their reactions. So, in order to build a truthful story about a hearing impaired individual, extensive research about hearing impaired communities was necessary.

Nanci A. Scheetz’s *Orientation to Deafness* explains a lot about the deaf community and culture. She claims that the most important and unifying feature of deaf culture is American Sign Language (ASL). She dispels the widely held belief that the hearing impaired cannot hear at all.

We deaf people have our own center, whereas hearing people have theirs; therefore, conflicts have arisen. For instance, our idea of silence and theirs are not alike at all. They think that silence means lack of sounds. As for deaf people, silence is feeling lost in a room of hearing people who chat with their mouths and do not use ASL. (Scheetz 231).

She also states that while most hearing impaired people accept their deafness and become part of the hearing impaired community, there are still a certain number of hearing impaired individuals who do not consider themselves to be members of the deaf community.

If the child has attended public schools and has resided in primarily an ‘oral’ environment, he may not be fluent in manual communication and view himself as a hearing person who has difficulty understanding some words, rather than a hearing impaired individual. He or she does not want to identify with this population and will seek membership in the hearing impaired culture. Some of these people may choose to participate in activities hosted by the hearing impaired community but are not members. While audio-logically they are deaf, socially they are not. (Higgins 40)

Some hearing impaired individuals who do not sign are opposed to this mode of communication and their opposition may be a source of ill feelings within the community as it is interpreted as a lack of respect for deaf identity and deaf culture (Scheetz 24).

Since a hearing impaired cannot not hear music in the way that a hearing person does, the hearing impaired experience of music is clearly different. So if the film were to be made by a hearing impaired person, the film may have a different set of sensory registers as if it were made by a hearing person. Similarly, the politics of representing the hearing impaired community is a difficult challenge. It requires sensitivity, openness, and a willingness to step outside of one’s traditional perceptions in order to represent the hearing impaired without reducing their experiences or cataloguing in a way that can be detrimental.


**SUB-PROBLEMS**

The use of melodrama as a storytelling device represents one of the sub-problems of this thesis. Melodramatic films are typified by a plot which attempts to heighten emotions of the mass audience. This relies on stereotyped character development and interaction and also on strong emotional themes. This thesis film seeks to use plots that deal with emotional and physical hardship.

Designing a soundtrack to a film representing the hearing impaired is also a large problem. The soundtrack in the thesis film includes music, dialogue, and other sound effects. For this specific project, the soundtrack focuses primarily on background music and sound effects. Therefore, creating a dramatic soundscape using applications such as Logic Pro and Sound Track Pro, represent yet another subproblem. Using extremely specific sounds, and specific instruments, as well as their sequencing creates a story in itself by way of association. Also, while using distortion in Logic Pro, this can achieve a realism specific to the hearing impaired of varying degrees. This is important for non hearing impaired people to experience other lower ranges of hearing as well as for the hearing impaired to participate more directly in the soundscapes of the piece.

This engineering of a soundscape tied directly into the question of how the hearing impaired actually do “hear” or feel music. Influential on this thesis project was the documentary *Touch the Sound: A Sound Journey*. This documentary is about woman, Evelyn Glennie. She is an extraordinary solo percussionist. She has been deaf since the age eight, but she is so sensitive to the vibration that she can actually “hear” through her sense of touch. Ben-Han is a Chinese musician who lost his hearing at the age of three, but because of his highly developed ability to capturing sound through the vibrations of music, he became a good violin player when he was in primary school. Later on in his life, he took part in many performances. This contributed to a general understanding of music, vibration, and the physicality of “hearing” music.

Another sub-problem for this project is the representation of the hearing impaired. Simple research questions included, How do the hearing impaired understand their deafness, how do outsiders understand the condition, and how will this film portray the deaf. To intervene in reductive or stereotypical portrayals of the hearing impaired, the characters have been portrayed in a positive way, in accordance with the protagonist’s optimism and
persistence in pursuing her dreams. This is both for the hearing impaired community as well as to introduce these issues to a wider audience.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The primary goal was initially to make an impressive 20-minute short film with a compelling plot (see Appendix A, B and C for budget, script and treatment, respectively). The deaf community is a minority community, and deaf musicians are a minority within that minority. Ludwig Van Beethoven was a deaf composer and pianist; Evelyn Glennie is a deaf percussionist. There is still, however, no reported case of a deaf violinist. Ben Han was a deaf violin player at the age of 12, but he moved to piano afterwards, and his name is not as notable as those two mentioned above. In “Never Give Up” the character Wen persists in playing violin after losing her hearing, and perseveres to become a famous violinist.

The hearing impaired have a distinct identity and culture. Their way of viewing people outside of their community is unique. They are understandably very sensitive about discourse and preconceived notions from outside of their community. Like other minority groups, the hearing impaired demand equal rights and access. However, the truth is, in this world, many disabled individuals are not treated fairly on account of their disabilities. Even though there are laws protecting disabled people, they are still the victims of discrimination. In addition to reaching a broad audience, the film hopefully offers a special appeal to people with disabilities as well as individuals from outside the deaf community, to hopefully understand in a more intimate way, the lives of people with disabilities.

Finally, I would hope themes of struggle and optimistic perseverance in the pursuit of art might have inspirational impact on my audience.

Through researching this thesis project, it has become clear that the psychology of perception is just as tied to sound sensing as sight. It seems that even in wider academic disciplines, even within disability studies, the audio perception of the world takes up a minor position to visual communication. Perhaps this project contributes in some small way to the dignity of the hearing impaired community, making the extraordinary talents and perseverance of its musicians more well known, and perhaps even making more audible the importance of sound design in the film making process, even rivaling that of the visuals.
themselves. Clearly the significance of music, the appreciation of it through all different filters and perceptions, can open new pathways of hybrid community.

**DISCLAIMER**

This project will not center on the pathology of hearing loss nor the specific causes thereof. It will not go into detail about how Wen loses her hearing ability. Rather, the film will focus on how Wen overcomes her loss of hearing to play violin on stage once again.

Also, this film will not focus on disability rights movement, nor the politics of disability.

Finally, this project will not go into the subject of legal aspects of disability.

**DEFINITION OF TERMS**

- **Disability:** Physical disability differs from mental disability. The former is an impairment of a person’s body, and the loss of a certain ability; the latter is psychosocial deficit affecting cognition, intelligence, emotional development, etc.

- **Severe hearing loss:** People who have severe hearing loss can still hear very quiet sounds. They do however have to rely on sign language, lip reading and other visual cues, even when they are using hearing aids.

- **Hearing impairment:** Individuals who can’t receive any sound from outside. Generally, a politically correct term for people who have no hearing ability.

- **Profound deaf:** People who are ‘profoundly deaf’ are people who can barely hear any sound. Only very faint crackles are audible if the source is close to the ear.

- **Long take:** In film, a continuously running shot that can last for up to several minutes. A variation of this, involving intricate blocking including close-ups, medium shots, and long shots is called the sequence shot. In the thesis film long takes are employed to contrast shorter shots and supply a different rhythm at the end of the film.

- **Sign language:** Instead of speaking, sign language users employ hand, facial and body movements to communicate with other individuals.

- **Vibration:** This term refers to any mechanical oscillation. In my film the young actress lost her hearing ability. Later in her life the character relearns hearing through the physical vibrating oscillations of her violin. The physical vibrations of music became a platform for her to learn a different side to music production, something more intrinsically tied to motion.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND FILMS

LITERATURE ON PROJECT TOPIC

“Never Give Up” required research into the representations of the deaf community, deaf culture, as well as the role of music in the community of the hearing impaired. Nanci A. Scheetz’s *Orientation to Deafness* describes the differences between the hearing impaired and those outside of that community. First of all, individuals within the deaf community use American Sign Language (ASL). ASL is a means of communication that uses visual signs instead of oral auditory communication to build social networks. Secondly, members of the deaf community share certain experiences:

traditionally they have experienced frustration in communicating with the individuals from outside deaf community, have encountered embarrassing misunderstandings, and have experienced the loneliness of being left out of interactions with people from hearing community. The community also includes the sharing of folklore, historical antidotes, and a rich legacy of storytelling. (Scheetz 24)

The deaf have clubs, sporting events, and religious services which are specially designed for individuals in the deaf community. “At the heart of their socialization is involvement in activities that are established by and for them” (Scheetz 25). Scheetz indicates that there is diversity in deaf culture. Just as the hearing is heterogeneous, the same diversity can be observed in the deaf community. They differ by means of “social class, religious preference, educational attainment, and communication modes” (Scheetz 24).

Finally, Scheetz notes that not all those who are hearing impaired identify with the deaf community. “If the child has attended public schools and has resided in primarily an ‘oral’ environment, he may not be fluent in manual communication and view himself as a hearing person who has difficulty understanding some words, rather than as a ‘deaf’ individual” (Scheetz 24). This article is incredibly useful in theorizing the complexities of inside, outside groups, as well as the cultural difference down to the individual’s relationship to group dynamics in deaf culture.
In an article by Waldman, Wong and Perlman, describe the attitudes of Chinese individuals to the people with disabilities.

In many areas of China, disability is viewed as a punishment for the disabled person’s parental or past-life sins. When encountering health problems, many religious people (especially those from rural areas where medical resources are not readily available or sufficient) will visit temples or Taoist priest houses to pray, worship or perform rituals in order to find out the cause of and/or the solutions to their diseases or disabilities... In one study, Chinese international students were more positive toward people with physical disabilities than toward people with developmental disabilities and mental disorders. However, they were less positive in their attitudes toward people with physical or mental disabilities than their American counterparts. Chinese people are generally more accepting and sympathetic toward an acquired injury that causes physical limitations than toward a congenital physical or mental disorder... In another study that compares three different places (Beijing, Hong Kong, Chicago) employers’ attitudes to the people with disabilities while hiring people, and the result is that employers in Beijing are less likely to hire people with disabilities. (Waldman, Wong, and Perlman 15-17).

In “Never Give Up,” Wen’s mother has the typical Chinese mindset that Wen’s hearing loss will cause people to treat her differently. Wen’s mother does not want this to happen to Wen. This is one reason why she pushes Wen to practice violin to become a successful violinist. Now seeing as though music is an unlikely but crucial part of deaf culture, Wen’s mother believes that a person with hearing impairment could play instruments again.

Following this theme, Alice-Ann Darrow has examined the role of music in deaf culture. She finds that like hearing people, the hearing impaired involve themselves with music quite often. She goes on to point out, “certain factors related to family involvement with music and musical training seem to be indicators of the role music will play in the lives of individuals and deaf individuals do not participate to the degree that hearing individuals do in common ritual uses of music” (Darrow 91).

Similarly, “Sound of Silence,” written by Noel Neff, examines the role of music in a deaf girl’s life. Music is a big part of Nicole’s life. Just like other teenage girls, Nicole Hurt also enjoys music. Although Nicole could not hear even a single tone, she still watches the actors’ behavior from the screen, she still reads the subtitles and most importantly, she experiences the music through physical vibration. Nicole says: “if you turn on bass really loud, I will feel air pressure in my ears, but I have no hearing at all” (Neff 3). Nicole took
four years drama class at Golden West High School in Visalia, California, and once even got the lead role in a play about a deaf girl.

A related case study in Phil Tajitsu Nash’s “The Sound of Deafness” details the life of an Asian-Pacific American, Wendy Chen. Born in Taiwan, at age 9 she was diagnosed deaf in her right ear and with moderate loss in her left ear. Even so,

She studied classical piano from age 7 to 15, and in college, she started learning violin and has participated in string quartets and full orchestra workshops. Her love of music continues in the next generation, as she serves as a Suzuki mom to one daughter who is studying violin and another studying cello.

‘Growing up hard of hearing is not easy; the temptation to minimize any problems we have not hearing well is really high among American Pacific Associations parents who have hearing-impaired children,’ Wendy said in an online interview. ‘Most APAs I know don’t like to admit that they have a disability and hesitate to seek help. I think it goes back to Asian culture, where the harmony in the family is more important than your individual needs and dreams.’ (Nash 5)

Touching on similar familial issues of disability, Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother written by Amy Chua, that describes a Chinese-American mother’s relationship with her two daughters. In “Never Give Up,” Wen’s mother has the characteristics of the Tiger Mother, forcing Wen to play violin even though she loses her hearing. However, the main subject of Chua’s article is how her mother endeavored to raise her two children in America the same way her parents had raised her as Chinese-immigrants:

For Chua, a professor at Yale Law School, the Chinese way includes lots of rules and high expectations and disciplinary techniques that can come across as cruel and unusual. She makes one daughter stand outside in the frigid winter weather—at age 3—for not practicing the piano as instructed, and she berates both for the sloppiness of the handmade cards they created for her birthday. The book has come to be seen as an indictment of the kind of permissive parenting that permeates the country’s affluent neighborhoods, where kids get trophies even when they lose and ice-cream sundaes just for making their beds. The climax of the book occurs in a restaurant, with 13-year-old Lulu screaming, ‘I hate the violin. I hate my life. I hate you, and I hate this family!’ She throws a water glass to the floor, where it shatters...Chua wants to set the record straight: Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother is not a how-to book. It’s a memoir about her struggles with child rearing. She passes no judgment on anyone else. ‘I believe that there are many ways of being a good parent,’ she says. ‘My husband’—who is Jewish American—’was raised in a very permissive, liberal family, and he came out great.’ The critics, she says, fail to understand that her book acknowledges the limitations of the Chinese way. The narrative centers on Chua’s efforts to make musical prodigies out of her daughters by forcing them to practice three hours a day, minimum, starting in nursery school. With Sophia, the elder daughter, this
authoritarian approach works beautifully: she begins winning competitions at 10. But Lulu, despite her musical gifts, rebels. (Miller 14)

**LITERATURE ON PROJECT STYLE**

The text that follows is a literature review of literature related to adaptation theory and melodrama theory, which are important to the thesis project at large. Also included in this section is a brief review of films influential to the style and content of the thesis film.

**Adaptation Theory**

The style of “Never Give Up” is adapted from a shampoo commercial entitled *You Can Shine*. The theme of the thesis is similar to that of the commercial: both argue that willpower and persistence will help a person through what might otherwise be a hopeless situation. A positive attitude can make the impossible possible. The difference between the two films is the main character in the thesis project must contend not only with her hearing loss, but also with her strained relationship with her mother. Wen is worried that if she can no longer win trophies in violin competitions then her mother will not love her anymore. Also, the thesis film illustrates in a more detailed and complex manner, the experience of the hearing impaired.

In working through the production of the film, *A Theory of Adaptation*, a book written by Linda Hutcheon discussing how to adapt a story from novel to film, was very useful. Specifically helpful passages referenced the intertextuality of media culture and how adaptations are happening constantly, everyday between various forms of media and how this creates a story loop.

Adaptations are everywhere today: on the television and movie screen, on the musical and dramatic stage, on the Internet, in novels and comic books, in your nearest theme park and video arcade. We constantly tell and retell stories; we show and reshown stories; we interact and re-interact with stories—and these three different modes of engagement (and their interactions) allow us to rethink how adaptation works—and why. (Hutcheon 17)

“Never Give Up” expands upon the commercial *You Can Shine*. Just like *You Can Shine*, “Never Give up” employs a very touching story of a deaf girl overcoming her obstacles to become a successful violinist, which encourages the audience to believe that anything is possible if they are determined and brave enough to overcome difficulties on the way to their success. Unlike *You Can Shine*, the focus of the conflict of “Never Give Up” is
no longer the conflict between the main character Wen and her competitor, instead, the main conflict happens between Wen and her mother. Another conflict present is Wen’s dream of being a violinist and her physical struggle. First, as a traditional Chinese mother, Wen’s mother expects her daughter to become a very successful violinist when she grows up. But Wen’s unexpected deafness makes it hard for Wen to be a violinist. Wen’s mother tries to force Wen to keep up with violin even though she is deaf. However, Wen’s lack of confidence and sensitivity lights the fire between mother and daughter. In addition, *You Can Shine* is a commercial, which was made for Pantene shampoo. Thus there are many scenes, obviously, which hide the clues of advertisement and focus the attention of the viewer on the hair of the actress. “Never Give Up” is a short film, not a commercial. So the actress’s hairstyle, clothes, and the set design itself all serve the story in a completely different manner. Instead of persuasion, the visual design of the film attracts the viewer into an emotional setting.

It seems to be popular belief that adaptations are often inferior to their original counterparts. But, like many popular conceptions, this is not always the case. Consider DJ culture, but borrowing and adaptation has a long history. “Shakespeare transferred his culture’s stories from page to stage, and no one begrudged him his borrowing” (Hutcheon 37). Yet, it seems adaptations are becoming increasingly more acceptable and even more successful than the originals.

**Melodrama Theory**

“Never Give Up” is a melodrama. Melodrama is typified by story lines emphasizing emotions taken to the extreme. This differs from the larger genre of drama realism is exaggerated in building characters and dialogues that are considered even more emotional than in reality. Interpersonal crisis, family problems, and individual illness or emotional disturbances are considered the touchstone content of this sub-genre (Rand).

A helpful introduction to melodrama, Mary G. Hurd’s book *Women Directors and Their Films* states, “Melodrama is a genre of film which tells the story from inside out. It charts the interior journey of a character, and their actions happens as a result of what’s going on inside of them. In most films you have the action going the opposite way...I think it all heightened by people’s need to address their spiritual yearning” (Hurd 26).
Melodrama focuses mainly on the internal experiences of characters, how they view themselves and other characters and the light of their own feelings. In my film, this is evident in the actions and thoughts of Wen who looks at the world from a very exaggerated perspective.

Douglas Sirk is also an important director in the genre of melodrama. Born in Germany and later moving to Hollywood in the 1940’s, his melodrama films became famous in the 1950s Tag Gallagher wrote an article titled “White Melodrama: Douglas Sirk,” which discusses Sirk’s melodrama:

Sirk’s emphasis on women, then, was not only political but artistic. Women are great vehicles for the physical emotions of melodrama. We can see Sirk turning angles into thoughts and motions into emotions during the mother-daughter fights between Lana Turner and Sandra Dee near Imitation’s end. Their words are crude, incomplete, theoretical compared to their motions - the motions of their mouths and eyes, but principally Sirk’s constant framings and reframings; the way their bodies retreat and attack within the frame; the sadism and masochism that changes with each change of whose shoulder we’re looking over; finally the way a character drops down out of the frame in defeat (or in change of tactics). ‘The camera is the main thing here,’ Sirk said, ‘because there is emotion in the motion pictures. Motion is emotion, in a way it can never be in the theatre.’ This is why so much of academia’s struggle to grapple with movies is backwards and fraudulent, and blunts rather than encourages our sensitivity to cinema. We have to learn to feel movies. (Gallagher 16)

Sirk’s works of the 1950s were remade by many other filmmakers more recently. Examples include Rainer-Werner Fassbinder’s *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* and Todd Haynes’s *Far from Heaven*, both of which are remakes of *All That Heaven Allows*. In his article “The Price of Heaven: Remaking Politics in All that Heaven Allows, Ali: Fear Eats the Soul, and Far from Heaven,” Salomé Aguilera Skvirsky specifically talked about Todd Haynes’s *Far from Heaven* in relation to Sirk’s *All That Heaven Allows*. “Like Sirk’s original, Haynes’s remake is set in a suburban hamlet in the northeast, circa 1957. Unlike the original, Haynes’s film dispenses with the class and generational conflicts of *All That Heaven Allows*, replacing these with conflicts over interracial love and sexual orientation” (Skvirsky 90). This work is very helpful in understanding adaptation to fit rather specific social moments.

**Films Related to the Topic**

Randa Haines’ romantic film *Children of a Lesser God* is about a love story, which happened in a deaf school between a deaf school cleanser and a hearing teacher. Mark
Medoff wrote the book *Masterplots II: Juvenile & Young Adult Literature Supplement*. In the book, Medoff analyzes the movie *Children of a Lesser God* that:

The play deals not only with the relationship between James and Sarah but also with the cultural conflicts that take place within the deaf and hearing-impaired communities and with the larger hearing world. Young adults may not be fully aware of the difference between being profoundly deaf and hearing impaired, the considerable training and practice required for lip-reading and speech, or the difference between American Sign Language (ASL) and various forms of signed English. It is also important for them to understand that much of deaf culture revolves around residential deaf schools such as the one in the play and that the community is often very insular. (Medoff 18)

The topic of film *Children of a Lesser God* and “Never Give Up” both are revolving around deaf actors. In the film *Children of a Lesser God*, the main actress is a deaf and mute, and she does not have a good relationship with her mother. In “Never Give Up,” similarly, the main actress is a deaf girl who also does not have a good relationship with her mom. Besides, in the film *Children of a Lesser God*, the hearing teacher teaches the deaf students to feel, touch, and enjoy the music by vibration and even holding a performance for the school students. It is a scene that individual deals with deaf community. Just as similar as “Never Give Up,” the main character Wen after losing her hearing, under the guide of a street boy—a hearing person, and still keep up with playing violin by means of touch and feeling the vibration.

*Touch the Sound: A Sound Journey* is a documentary film, which is about profoundly deaf percussion player Evenly Glennie’s journey with sound. The film is directed by German film director Thomas Riedelsheimer. Unlike *Touch the Sound: A Sound Journey*, “Never Give Up” is melodrama; however, both films are similar in that they feature deaf musicians who employ alternative means of experiencing sound.

Subtitled “A Sound Journey with Evelyn Glennie,” thoughtful documentary *Touch the Sound* follows the prolific, profoundly deaf Scottish percussionist for a year as she makes her brand of joyful noise with various collaborators in picturesque locations around the world. Fans of the Grammy-winning musician will revel in the proximity to their idol, though second pic from talented helmet Thomas Riedelsheimer plays a tad long to those unfamiliar with his, or her, work. Fests will reach out, some specialized theatrical is possible, and ancillary is a given...Bright-eyed, wiry and pointedly articulate, the tattooed and wild-haired Glennie seems to never have met a surface she couldn’t coax noise from. “My whole life is sound,” she avows, proving this by playing not only a series of conventional percussion instruments - the humble snare drum is her avowed favorite - but railings, tubes, buildings, detritus from a pub table and even a
Films Related to the Style

Korean director Lee Cheol-ha’s melodrama *Love Me Not* tells the story of a man who must pretend to be the long-lost brother of a blind heiress in order to clear a debt that threatens his life. “Never Give Up” and *Love Me Not* share a similar degree of exaggeration in their plot and setting. In Lee Cheol-ha’s film, a blind heiress falls in love with a man who she knows is falsely claiming to be her brother to extort her money. The notion of a woman falling in love with someone who she knows is trying to kill her and steal her money is a fantastic example of the type of exaggeration used in a melodrama. Similarly, in “Never Give Up,” the protagonist ultimately becomes a violinist through an exaggerated series of events despite her hearing impairment. Also, “Never Give Up” shares aspects of the *Love Me Not* aesthetic, such as smooth, elegant camera movements, angles, and lighting that enhance the film’s exaggerated, melodramatic plot.

Another influence on the thesis film’s style is Charles Shyer’s 2004 remake of the 1966 film *Alfie*. This film is about a British womanizing limousine driver in Manhattan who is surrounded by beautiful women. *Alfie* has a very distinct visual style. Specifically appealing is the way the in which the film often uses different colored backlights, keys, and ambient lights on its subjects. “Never Give Up” incorporates a similar electro-colored lighting style.

*Amélie*, directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet, is another film with a great visual aesthetic. The story centers around a naive Parisian girl who decides to help those around her discover love. The picture has a distinctively warm tone, soft lighting, and unconventional camera angles. The film’s production design complements its cinematography in a remarkable manner. “Never Give Up” also employs a similar production design which will adhere to a color palette psychologically appropriate for each portion of the film.

Finally, Bernardo Bertolucci’s 1987 film *The Last Emperor*, photographed by the widely renowned Vittorio Storaro, tells the story of Pu Yi, the last of the emperors of China. Storaro made extensive use of color theory and symbology. Each segment of the movie centers around a different color, which is used to symbolize the emotions and themes relating to Pu Yi’s character in that segment. “Never Give Up” similarly depicts four main segments
in Wen’s life and will use a unique color palette for each stage. This will help enrich not only the melodrama of each scene but also the subtext and emotions of the characters, and finally better serve the theme of the film. Also, the relation between these color palettes and the intricate use of sound design will create a symbiotic relationship where the sound design is equally important and referential to the visuals.
CHAPTER 3

AESTHETIC APPROACH

The aesthetic approach to “Never Give Up” is very important to the film’s story. The aesthetic is a formalistic, melodramatic visual style that incorporates swift, fluid camera moves; expressionistic and soft lighting; extensive and symbolic use of colors in costumes, props and set decoration. The formal style of the film reflects its main themes. It breaks the rules of reality and traditional cinema making the impossible possible, much like Wen becoming an excellent violinist through so many difficulties. This is the great quality of the cinematic art form, the ability to make impossible things come to fruition.

CASTING

When interviewed by “Fresh Air Weekend” Alexander Payne, director of Sideways and The Descendants, said that:

Finding a young actress is very hard and time consuming...because the young actors who have acting experience often don’t seem the age that they really are, it’s like 17 going on 30. They seem like actors, they don’t seem like people. Take after take after take. and if you try to cast someone off the street (or un-professional actors) they may not have the acting experience, they may not remember lots of dialogue or they won’t remain focused...all you have to do is take after take after take. (National Public Radio)

The main character in “Never Give Up” is a 12-year-old Asian-American girl who is a deaf violin player. After several auditions, we found a girl who is Asian American and half deaf; but she lacked the screen presence required to make the character sufficiently compelling. It was not until the last audition that a girl was discovered who projected a compelling on-screen presence, who took direction very well, and who also plays instruments. The actress filled the role admirably. Her eyes were penetrating and charming. She seemed to possess the right combination of physical features, talent, and body control to convey the representation of the character scripted. Surprisingly, the ability to direct and communicate with an actress more easily, as well as the reasons mentioned above, made the decision to forgo working with a hearing impaired actress quite easy. The realism of a
hearing impaired actress may be sacrificed but ultimately the performance from the actress chosen was well worth it. Authenticity was not compromised either as significant research and consultation with hearing impaired communities was done.

**LIGHTING AND CAMERA**

Soft diffused light is employed throughout the film. Lighting was based heavily on the mood of a given scene, and was used to exaggerate an emotion. Different lighting and colors were used for each character. For Wen’s mother, harsher, colder light was used when possible. Less fill will be used for Wen’s mother in favor of high contrast ratios, more backlight, and less diffusion, adding to her “sharp” look. The lighting in the film, like other aspects of its visual style, is more formalistic and less realistic. Liberal use of colors in the lighting helped to complement the thematic, visual, and emotional aspects of the scene. The lighting in the world of “Never Give Up” is beautiful, enhanced, and very stylistic. Also, colored gels were used to accent the primary colors and the “look” of each section of the film. Examples of similar styles can be found in the 2004 remake of the 1966 film *Alfie* (starring Jude Law), and the 2001 French film *Amélie*. Both of these films use heavily stylized and colorful lighting which helps add to the films’ melodrama. This approach was also taken in “Never Give Up” to challenge norms and make the impossible possible.

Camera movement in the film is mostly smooth and fluid and at times grandiose, to exaggerate the melodramatic style of the film. An example of this is the scene where Wen finally regains her feeling of the music in an outdoor park. We used a jib and a circular dolly to create a “swirling” camera move while Wen is playing violin, raising up and lowering down while tracking around her, like the emotional ups and downs in her music. Most, if not all, of the film were shot on a tripod; very few handheld shots were used.

**COLOR**

Color is also a very important element to a successful movie. In an interview in the September 2007 issue of *American Cinematographer*, Vittorio Storaro said “Color is part of the language we speak with film. We use colors to articulate different feelings and moods” (Gallotti). It is just like using light and darkness to symbolize the conflict between life and death. I believe the meanings of different colors are universal, but people in different cultures
can interpret them in different ways” (Gallotti 56). He also said that in his movie *Tango* he uses color in different way to represent different his ideas and concepts (Gallotti 56).

As Vittorio Storaro said in an interview about *The Last Emperor*:

My idea was to make the relationship between life and light; different emotions compared to different colors, because in order for him to visualize the journey within himself, I was doing a color journey within the color spectrum. So I gave him a red color when he remembers when he was born as an emperor. Red is the symbol of birth and life. That’s why we did it at night so I could use torches and have a very warm color palette. The second color was orange to represent the warmth of the embrace of his mother and the family when he is living in his own house. The third color, yellow, represents consciousness, when he became Emperor. Green means knowledge and this was connected to the English tutor coming to the Forbidden City educating him to know what is around him in the world. He arrives in a green car, he gives him a green bicycle and so on.

When he is liberated, we see blue for the first time, which is the color of freedom. When he decides to accept the proposal from the Japanese government to build another empire, he is no longer a child and you see indigo. This is the color of maturity—the moment when you have the chance to use all your physical pleasure and power. The last color was violet, which is when he is in the screening room and he realizes the kind of life he leads and how many people have died because of his weakness. This is the color of introspection.

When he has finished his education, we put the snow on the floor to represent the color white; the unity, the end of the journey. So we used the entire symbology of the different colors to represent an entire journey. (Gallotti 86)

Just as in *The Last Emperor*, “Never Give Up” has many different color palettes. Basically it is in four color palettes which allow the viewer to perceive Wen’s emotions changing between each stage in her life- before Wen loses her hearing, when Wen is diagnosed as deaf, when she spends time with the street boy, and finally when Wen stands on the stage confidently playing violin. Orange-yellow is the main color palette for the first stage; The second stage is in black and white; Green is the color for the third stage; and red, the color of the final stage. Each of these “stages” not only have their own color palette, but their own distinct approach to lighting, costume and set design as well. For example, the second stage (in which Wen becomes sick and is being seen by a doctor) is in black and white, and appears hazy and dream-like, mirroring Wen’s point of view at that time.

Color theory informed the production design decisions. During any given stage of Wen’s life, all aspects of art design incorporated colors that are complementary to the scene’s main color. In the first stage, where orange-yellow is the predominant color, costumes, set
decoration, and props contain the complementary colors of blue, green, purple, and yellow. Working with a production designer to determine the specifics of this visual aspect of the film was very helpful.

**MONTAGE**

Montage plays a very important role in “Never Give Up.” The main character Wen is depicted at age 5, age 12, and age 18 and montage is used to transition between these periods. The film also employs montage as Wen is feeling the music and feeling the sound of the nature in a park, which has a large expanse of green grass, tall trees and flowers.

Influential montages in other successful movies include, *The Devil Wears Prada* which is a successful film in which a montage depicts Andy (played by Ann Hathaway) becoming more and more fashionable as she changes her outfits from day to day. In contrast to the montage in *The Devil Wears Prada*, Gongfu Zuqiu features another type of montage—the sports training montage (and a comedic one at that). The montage in the thesis film is a blend of both examples, but predominantly the first.

**SOUND TRACK**

The following subsections outline briefly, the importance of sound effects and music on the thesis film both in subject matter as well as stylistically.

**Sound Effects**

After Wen loses her hearing, she is only able to hear faint crackling noises. So the sound Wen hears is no longer the same as what hearing people experience. Sound effects imitate the way that Wen hears and gives the audience some understanding of the experience of deafness. Research was done with an editor, trying to find a sound similar to the what people who have only 30% hearing experience. A hearing impaired individual helped to test authenticity.

Wen’s hearing at certain points was simulated by making the world sound muffled, almost underwater. Low pass filters, reverb and possibly other effects on the scene’s audio were used, as was adding the subtitle “underwater” sound effects. A good example of this technique can be found in Paul Thomas Anderson’s *There Will Be Blood*: The oil derrick explodes while the protagonist’s son is standing next to it, blasting him back and causing him
to lose his hearing. This loss of hearing is portrayed by using an equalizer to take most of the high-end frequencies out, leaving only lows (around 50-400 Hz), and by seemingly adding slight reverb and what sounds like a recording taken underwater. They cut back and forth between the son’s “hearing perspective,” if you will, and the original audio. A similar approach was taken in “Never Give Up,” portraying Wen’s hearing at certain points in the film. This is in search of a realism that is a key to the success of the thesis film.

**Music**

Music is a very important element of this thesis movie. Good music can enhance the story. James Cameron’s film *Titanic* is very successful in its choice of theme song, “My Heart Will Go On.” This music not only enriches the romance between the two main characters but also raises the whole level of the movie.

Equally powerful, Johann Pachelbel’s *Canon in D* is a very famous piece of music. After listening to this piece, most listeners feel very supportive and optimistic. In order to avoid infringing upon any copyrights of this music, a recorded performance of the piece was used in the thesis film.
CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS

PREPRODUCTION

This project takes some inspiration from a shampoo commercial, *You Can Shine.* Upon analyzing the commercial’s plot, it became obvious that it could have been more interesting if “Never Give Up” could focus more on how actually the protagonist overcomes all the physical difficulties as well as disparaging words from people around her. Shortly after this revelation, the first iteration of the storyboard for “Never Give Up,” was developed. It resembled an adapted version of the shampoo commercial. To what extent should a faithful adaptation be created? When the first draft of the script and the storyboards were presented in a thesis proposal seminar, the Professor and student filmmakers concurred that what was being proposed was a rather direct adaptation of the commercial. As detailed in Chapter 2, this prompted deeper research into the problems of adaptation, or more precisely, the adaptation of various media and other formats into film. So another question arises: Should this project be an adapted movie? and the quick answer was no. In order to find the inspiration for the plot, a wide variety of short films relating to the topic of deaf musicians were investigated. Evelyn Glennie’s *The Journey of the Sound* was particularly valuable in the shaping of the story. It is a long documentary with very little dialogue, and is less centered on plot than on the physics of sound. What emerges is a fascinating portrayal of how Evelyn Glennie trained herself to feel the vibration of the sounds in order to create remarkable music. This suggested an entirely different, and more interesting way of imagining than was suggested by the shampoo commercial. The result was a second screenplay draft that focused chiefly on how the protagonist learns to feel, and relate to, acoustical vibration in the environment. Besides this, in the second draft of script, the street musician/mentor is replaced by a young male violinist who serves as an ally to the protagonist, who rebuilds her confidence in order to achieve her dream.
CASTING AND REHEARSAL

Casting can make or break a film. The actress, Shelly Shinohara, accounts for a big part of the film’s impact. Her obvious talent compelled a third draft of the script to accommodate what we believed she could contribute. Her eyes could tell a story on their own. She is also extremely natural on camera and minimally self-conscious. This resulted in a somewhat diminished role for the older Wen. This shifted the story to that of Wen as a young girl, which I believe was ultimately a successful strategy, as it gave the film a more naturally compelling character by using the talents of actors to enhance and shape a script. In a sense this actualized the story that wanted to be told.

There were some logistical problems that, were the film to be made again, might be solved differently. For example, the locations were not as easily accessible as they might have been. The distance from each other cost time and resulted in a difficulty in overcoming inertia each time the film crew had to re-locate.

PRODUCTION

The shooting of “Never Give Up” lasted six days. Two more days were dedicated to pick up shots. Difficulties during production included directing young actors and actresses. Coordinating the schedules of nine actors was difficult as well and was compounded by the rules surrounding employment of child actors. Specifically, the restrictions of shooting times for scenes including young actors.

The biggest difference between directing adults and children was that the same methods of directing adults could not be used with young actors and actresses. Communication barriers were the main challenge. In some cases the use of body language was the only way to convey direction notes. The main actress was 10 by the time we were shooting. Luckily, she was much more mature for her age, she understood quickly and preformed well. Sometimes she even took on a leadership role by creating a better attitude in the scene, keeping the younger children focused.

These production issues were helpful in developing my critical methodologies of directing and cultural production at large. Communication barriers, scheduling conflicts, and organizing a cast during a shoot may seem trivial, but these methods of organization speak to
a larger question of the economics, labor issues, and writing tactics crucial to the field of Television, Film and New Media Production.

**Postproduction**

We spent two more months in finishing the postproduction work. This was a slow process of bringing the footage needed onto the timeline in final cut pro. It was difficult to match footage and to get the perfect shot. During this process, the inspiration for making the sound track dwindled. To regain inspiration needed to finish the project, all kinds of commercials, movies, and shorts, were used to regain some inspiration. Sound design then became the crucial link between the ideal film and the actual film. The sound track ended up filling in the gaps where the images were not exactly what was needed. Voice over was employed to enrich the imagery, as was audio software to create discord in key scenes and create audio landscapes, which enhance the experience of the protagonist as she was losing her hearing. This is important in the representation of deafness and decentering or creating new perceptions of the hearing impaired.

**Goals, Objectives, and Conclusion**

The primary goal for the film was to make an impressive 20 minutes short film with a compelling plot. However, this changed over the course of shooting and postproduction as the film is now 15 minutes in duration. First, the film is more concise and the significance to this is that the narrative weight falls for on the viewer than on the film by way of explanation or redundancy. Metaphor and abstraction also have more weight, symbols then seduce the viewer into extrapolating their own stories in the old adage—“show don’t tell.”

Another goal here was for the film to have a special appeal to people with disabilities as well as for people outside of the disability community to have a sharper insight into the experience of the hearing impaired. This goal shifted a bit as the postproduction work attempted to make the film as visual stimulating for the hearing impaired as possible, yet some elements of the film are still difficult for the hearing impaired to experience. The bulk of the film’s audience then becomes those outside of the hearing impaired community.

Finally, the aim to inspire the audience through the theme of optimism in the face of struggle, and the pursuit of art as triumph. This remained a constant throughout production as the core content of the film became the power of music’s ability to unify people from
different walks of life. Also, The difficulties overcome throughout the production of this film contributed to the affects produced by the film itself. Furthering this project, it may be interesting to continue on with a study of films surrounding disability and the difficulties the filmmakers had in their productions. Clearly, deeper research on how the deaf violinist experiences sound by way of physical vibrations is needed in order to convey this through the visual conception, so the hearing impaired can experience this crucial moment.
REFERENCES


*Ali: Fear Eats the Soul.* Dir. Rainer-Werner Fassbinder. Tango Film, 1974. Film.


APPENDIX A

FINAL BUDGET SPREADSHEET
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**SUBTOTAL** 1,120

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**SUBTOTAL** 5,200
APPENDIX B

FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT
“Never Give Up”

by

Layla Wu
Christine Qin
EXT. BEACH – EVENIGN

WEN (10) stands on the beach, looks at the sunset.

Wen (V.O)
My mom told me that I have a Gift Which enables me to quickly capture and enjoy the natural world of the music

EXT. MUSICAL INSTRUMENT STORE - DAY

A sleek silver Mercedes pulls in at the curb.

INT. MUSICAL INSTRUMENT STORE - DAY

Wen opens the door and steps inside. Soon, Wen lost in the wonders of the musical world, Wen checks out each piece of instrument: guitar, trombone, cello etc., touching it gently with her index finger. Suddenly she spots a shining piece of instrument displayed in the glass shelf. It is a small violin. As the sunlight bounces off its glossy tanned surface, Wen finds herself unable to take her eyes off it. She draws closer and closer and smiles.

Wen (V.O)
When I was 10 years old, my Mom sent me to pick out an instrument from the music store.
There is so many instruments to choose from, especially guitars. I have no idea which one to pick, the one that meant for me. Until...

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Wen trails behind TARA, a violin teacher as they head toward Tara’s studio at the end of the hallway. Wen tries to catch up with her new mentor whose high heels make loud tapping sound
on the marble floor. Violin music becomes louder and clearer as they approach the door.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

The music stops as soon as Tara opens the door. Holding tight of her violin case, Wen follows Tara in.

TARA
Okay, everyone, come and meet a new member of the family - Wen.

Wen smiles at ANGELA, 12, a girl with smooth caramel skin and bright eyes. ANGELA smiles at Wen, and shares the music sheets with her. Then she see PETER, 14, pale skinned from years of indoor practicing, nods at Wen with a smile. Wen shyly smiles back.

TARA
(to the class)
Peter is one of my best students, the most talented young musician I’ve seen in my life. Listen and learn.

(to Peter)
Please continue.

Peter tucks the violin under his chin and closes his eyes. The violin he is holding seems to be a natural part of his body, an extension of his hand. Wen notices his expressions shift with the flow of the music. With a big smile on her face, Angela is also watching Peter admiringly. But when Angela notices that Wen is staring at Peter and smiles, She is angry.

INT. WEN’S BEDROOM ROOM - 2 YEARS LATER

Six months later, Wen practices violin feverishly. The trophies she won over the years neatly line up along the wall. Her eyes are partially closed. Her thick long eyelashes trembles like the wings of a butterfly. She has exhibited the seriousness and self-assurance that are rarely seen among kids at her age.

EXT. STUDIO - DAY

Tara walks into the studio beaming with joy. She approaches Peter who is showing Angela a technique.
TARA
Peter, have you decided who will be playing the second violin for your album?

PETER
Yeah but I haven’t asked her yet.

Angela looks down at her shoes immediately, waiting for Peter to ask her.

PETER
(to Angela)
Excuse me for a second.

Angela is stunned but quickly hides her disappointment as she watches Peter walks over to Wen.

EXT. STREET – EVENING

It rains very hard after school; Wen runs all the way home without umbrella.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

MEI, Wen’s mom, places an ice bag on Wen’s forehead. Wen’s cheeks are flushing and lips are dry and pale. Wen seems to hear her mom talking to someone on the phone. But her voice becomes distorted like a record player running out of battery. She also hears the alarm ringing, birds chirping, dogs barking, even distort violin playing...all kinds of sound.

Then she hears a violin playing. The music grows louder and more high-pitched as it arises to a crescendo. The music pierces through the wet thin air, sharper, jarring and ear-splitting... Suddenly the music stops. The world becomes extremely quiet after that.

INT. LIVING ROOM

DR.NANCY, 55, shakes her head and hands Mei’s husband STEVE the diagnosis. Mei drops down onto the couch picks up the diagnosis from Steve’s hand with her shaking hands. Mei’s husband, comforts her regardless of the pain he feels inside.

INSERT: DIAGNOSIS

A drop of tear smears the words “Severe Hearing Loss”.
INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Tears stream down Mei’s face. Steve squeezes her arms as if trying to pass his strength onto her. INT. LIVING ROOM

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Wen sits at her desk looking out of the window. She looks down at a piece of tiny skin-color hearing aid lying on her desk. Wen picks up the device and tries it on in front of a desk mirror.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Tara is instructing the kids when she hears a knock on the door. Wen sticks her head in from behind the door. Tara greets her with a warm smile and signals her to come in. Wen edges her way in trying not to pay attention to her classmates’ gazes. Wen finds her place at the end of the violin quartet next to Angela, who gives her a curious look.

Wen lowers her head, letting her long hair cover the tiny equipment around her ear. Tara awaits until Wen is setup.

TARA

Okay, ready? One, two, three, go...

The quartet starts playing. It goes smoothly at the beginning until one violin starts acting out. Everyone looks towards the source of the dissonance. Wen casts down her eyes blushing.

WEN

I’m sorry.
Wen tucks her hair behind her ear face burning like hot coals. Angela notices the hearing aid Wen is wearing.

TARA
That’s okay. Try again.

The quartet is back to position again.

TARA
Here we go again. One, two, three...

Beautiful classical music once again fills the room. The moment of harmony doesn’t last long. The music coming from Wen’s violin is much louder than the rest of the quartet. Wen is completely unaware of it. Angela presses her hand on Wen’s bow to stop her from playing.

Wen looks up at her in shock.

ANGELA
Why are you here wasting everyone’s time?

TARA
Angela...

ANGELA
She is deaf. She should go to a violin class for deaf people!

Silence engulfs the room. Tears well up in Wen’s eyes.

WEN
I’m not deaf. I can hear...

Angela pulls the hearing aid off Wen’s right ear and waves it in front of her face.
ANGELA
With this? My grandpa hears better than you do!

Wen drops her violin and darts towards the door. Tara grabs Wen’s hearing aid from Angela’s hand. Before she runs after Wen, Tara turns and shoots Angela a look.

TARA
You should feel shamed.

PETER
You are so mean.

Angela casts down her eyes.

EXT. BEDROOM - DAY

Mei, still in her suit, pacing back and forth outside Wen’s bedroom door. She knocks on Wen’s door impatiently.

MEI
Open the door. I want to talk to you.

No answer is heard from the other side of the door, except Wen’s weeps. Mei knocks again, harder this time.

MEI
OPEN THE DOOR. I’m getting mad.

Silence once again. Mei relents when she realizes she is too harsh.

MEI
Look, it’s no big deal. Angela is a spoiled brat. Don’t listen to her. Be a good girl. Open the door...
Before Mei is able to finish, the door opens, just enough for Mei to see Wen’s face. Wen utters the words with the resolve and coldness Mei has never seen in her daughter before.

WEN

I will never play the violin again.

Wen slams the door shut, leaving Mei standing outside not knowing what else to do.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY LATER

Wen’s violin gathers dust in the corner of the room. Torn music sheets are strewn all over the floor. A small TV buzzes on top of a dresser. Wen flips through the channels without paying attention to anything.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Something on TV catches Wen’s attention. She leans closer.

INSERT: TV

Peter is greeted by fans and journalists at an airport.

BACK TO BEDROOM

Wen mutters to herself.

WEN

He is back...

INT. BEDROOM - DAY LATER

Wen sits up from her bed. She looks pale. Her once bright eyes look dull and lifeless. She pours herself a glass of water and lets the streams of water run down her parched throat. She pulls the curtain aside as she stands by the window. She peers through from behind the curtain and sees Peter is playing right outside under her window. Wen quickly fixes her hair and puts on the hearing aid.

Wen smiles when she hears her beloved Canon in D again. She closes her eyes letting the music carry her away. THREE KIDS from next door chase after one another in the street. Peter is so deeply immersed in his music that he doesn’t pay any attention to his surroundings. The oldest kid JASON runs into Peter and knocks him over. Peter’s violin falls onto the ground and cracks. Peter freezes, eyes fixed on the broken violin. Three kids run away, scared, leaving Peter and the broken violin there. Peter picks up his violin. He runs his
finger along the crack, eyes moistened. Wen runs back inside.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Peter sits besides fountain, mourning over his violin. Wen hands Peter a tape and takes a seat next to him. Peter looks at her and gives her a bitter smile.

PETER

Thanks.

Wen tears off a piece of tape with her teeth, and hands it over to Peter. They continue patching it up until the violin once again shins in the sun.

Peter tries a few notes.

PETER

See? As good as new.

Wen chuckles.

PETER

My mom once told me that many things in this world are damaged or broken.

Peter looks at Wen in the eyes.

PETER

But they can still make the most beautiful and unique sound.

Peter rests his violin on his left shoulder and tucks it under his chin. He starts playing a piece of heart-wrenching music.

The cracks of violin add to the music a layer of rare beauty.

PETER

It’s not the end of world if you can’t hear.

Wen looks down at her feet. Peter extends his hand to Wen.

PETER
Come with me. You need to learn to hear music again.

Wen hesitates for a second and puts her hand in Peter’s.

EXT. FLOWER FIELD

A vast field is surrounded by smoky green mountains. Wild purple, pink and white flowers dance in the wind. Birds chirping, crickets whistling, water flowing. Wen closes her eyes, and feels the wind circling her fingers and the sunshine tickling her cheek.

EXT. FLOWER FIELD

Wen places a piece of leaf against her cheek and listens to the quiet whisper from the leaf.

INT. STUDIO

Wen practices violin under the guidance of ANDY, her new violin teacher. Andy asks her to close her eyes. Andy plays the first note. Wen feels a tickle on her left cheek. Andy smiles.

INT. AUDITORIUM - A COUPLE YEARS LATER

Wen in a red dress, plays with a PIANIST in front of a group of audience.

10 years later, Wen (20) in a pink dress playing Canon in D so well that at the end of her performance she receives a thundering ovation from the audience.

Fade Out
APPENDIX C

THE TREATMENT
“Never Give Up” is a short subject film that centers on the power of art in overcoming adversity. The film will be shot in San Diego. The main character is a young concert violinist named Wen. She loves sound and loves music, until a high fever robs her of her ability to hear. Wen’s mother tries to help her overcome her frustration and rebuild her confidence, but Wen resists her mother’s support, and this jeopardizes their relationship.

Wen is depressed because her classmates laugh at her when they notice that she is wearing a hearing aid. She feels shy and embarrassed and at the time she still continued to think of herself as outside of the deaf community. This transforms though as she realizes she is excluded from the community of those with full hearing. She realizes she cannot chase her dream of becoming a violinist. However, Wen is given hope and renewed confidence in her pursuit learning the violin by Peter, a young violin player from her class. He teaches her to feel the music with her body, to appreciate the music on a more profound level than mere sound. Encouraged, Wen resumes her own musicianship, and within a few short years achieves a glorious triumph on the stage.