BRENDA ALDERETE ’18

Between her studies and her sorority activities, this junior found the time to write, record and publish two singles.

INTERVIEW BY OLIVIA ABEL
PHOTO AUTUMN DRISCOLL

When Brenda Alderete began her freshman year, she thought she’d have to shelve her singing to hit the books. Happily, she’s managed to do both. In September 2015, the Paraguay native released her first single on iTunes, “Time Moves On,” which quickly shot to No. 1 in her home country. Since then, the junior sociology major and member of QU’s a cappella group, The Legends, has belted out the national anthem at a Bobcats home hockey game, sang solo at the United Nations on International Friendship Day and released her second single, “Believe Again,” in December.

How old were you the first time you sang in public?
I was 7 and I sang something from “Beauty and the Beast” at the local theater company’s summer camp show in town. I was shy, but being on stage was the only place I really felt comfortable.

“Time Moves On” was your first foray into song writing?
Yes. A high school friend, Noreen, who studies songwriting in Nashville encouraged me. She’d play the guitar and then ask me, “What are you feeling? What do you want people to hear?” We came up with a melody and kept singing it to each other until finally we said, “There, that’s it.”

How did that song get recorded?
A family friend has a studio in his basement. We met a few times and then he sent me five or six different versions until we found the perfect one. He mastered it, mixed it, and then he submitted it to iTunes for me. It was No. 31 on iTunes Top 100 Best-Selling Singer/Songwriter Singles on Sept. 22, 2015.

What was the reaction on campus?
I was in class when the song was released, and I started getting lots of text messages. I thought, “Oh. My. God!” I couldn’t believe the outpouring of good wishes from so many people. A few days later, I walked into my room, and all of my roommates were sitting on their beds listening to it and blasting it on their speakers. It was surreal.

What are your songs about?
“Time Moves On” is about how the world keeps spinning—even if we wish we could make it stop—and the difficulty of living apart from those we love. “Believe Again” is about growing up and losing the sense of magic that comes with the holiday season. I feel there are people in our lives who make it possible for us to believe in the magic again.

Tell us about The Legends.
It’s a co-ed group of 18. We perform on campus and we sang the national anthem at Madison Square Garden in January 2016 for the Rivalry on Ice hockey game. There were 12,000 people there. I was nervous—I’m always in the front row because I’m short. But it was an incredible feeling. Our group also was featured in a video distributed on social media and sent to alumni as a holiday message.

How about your solo national anthem gig?
I spent the whole day warming up and then went for a sound check. I was worried I’d mess up the lyrics. Our hockey team is so well respected, and I wanted to make sure I would do this school justice. They put out a little red carpet and you walk out onto the ice. The whole time I was imagining what would happen if I slipped and fell in front of everyone. But I felt really happy with it.

Do you have a favorite singer?
Carrie Underwood. She is an awesome writer and she really puts a lot of effort into her performances.

What else keeps you busy?
I was just elected president of my sorority, Phi Sigma Sigma—148 girls. I never saw myself as someone who would be involved in a sorority, but it’s so not like it is in the movies. These girls are some of my biggest supporters, and I’m grateful for the opportunities this organization has given me. Plus, I’m working on an album.

You moved from Paraguay to Long Island when you were 3. Do you stay connected to your roots?
I try to visit as often as possible. Being surrounded by so much family down there is amazing. I love authentic Paraguayan food like sopa paraguaya, the only solid soup on earth with fresh ingredients like Paraguayan cheese, milk and corn flour. It’s very similar to cornbread.

How did you decide on a global public health minor?
I hope to have an international career that lets me make an impact on the world, maybe at the United Nations, working on projects to eradicate poverty in less-fortunate countries, for example. The global public health minor has a component that requires me to go abroad for a month this summer and perform service work.

Have you chosen a country yet?
I have narrowed my choices to Barbados, where the university has agreements with the Heart and Stroke Foundation; Ecuador, where we work with an organization focused on reproductive health; or Paraguay, where my uncle is a surgeon. I might be able to do a service project at his hospital or work with the TECHO project building homes.

How did you get involved in student life?
I really felt comfortable. Between my studies and my sorority activities, this junior was 12,000 people there. I was worried—I’m always in the front row because I’m short. But it was an incredible feeling. Our group also was featured in a video distributed on social media and sent to alumni as a holiday message.

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