

had been performing on the platform, not one person had passed. Yet he somehow, mysteriously, had found me. It was all very magical and somewhat surreal. I shook myself out of my semi-stunned stupor and started to set up again, this time feeling far more confident knowing I was in “the spot.” The platform was still dark but there was a large overhead light above me, which gave the space a stage-like feel. As I knelt down and unpacked my guitar for the second time, I looked across the three subway tracks to the downtown side. There I noticed a small figure, completely covered head to toe all in black, wearing sunglasses, methodically stacking large white buckets one inside the other. Curious as to what he was doing, I continued to watch, when a minute later the express train ruined my view, so I went back to setting up.

I played, this time to a rush of bustling commuters coming and going, off and on the 1 train. I watched as dollars landed into my guitar case, accompanied by nods and smiles of approval. *This is more like it.* As I was singing, trying to gauge the noise of the trains (which, by the way, is deafening at times), I felt a transformation taking place. I got that “singing in the shower” feeling. That feeling you get when you’re singing all by yourself without a care in the world. It’s a feeling that you’re completely free when no one is listening. But I had this feeling there, right there, smack in the middle of New York City. I was performing on one of the busiest subway platforms in the city and yet that same, uninhibited feeling washed right over me. Despite the cold numbing my fingers, the noise, pigeon feathers, pigeon poop, rats, garbage, and hordes of people rushing by at breakneck speed, I actually felt a sense of contentment there. I felt a sense of freedom that I had rarely experienced performing anywhere else. Then my voice went. It’s happened only once in my life. But, there it was again. My voice was backing out. Darn it. This was just getting good.

Reluctantly, I packed up my guitar, wishing I could stay just a little while longer. But competing with three parallel lines of trains for the first time in my life proved too much for my voice this first day. Something left me, something dropped away underground today. I can’t say exactly yet what that “thing” was that left me, but whatever it was, its absence allowed me to be completely free and one hundred percent present in the music. I didn’t know what it was. All I knew was I’d be returning.