

## I've Got a Golden Ticket

by Vanessa Jump Nelson

Most days of the week, I have the shortest commute of anyone. I take a single step through the door from my house to my voice studio and am instantly ready to teach.

On Fridays, however, my commute to teach is a bit more unusual. The drive to the airport is about 13 miles and takes 30 minutes. I do my pre-flight inspection, open my hangar doors, and push my yellow 1946 J-3 Cub into the sunshine. I climb into the backseat (required when solo), grab the stick, and fire up the engine. After a brief checklist that includes a run-up to check the magnetos, I take off to the south, accompanied only by the sound of my 100 horsepower Continental.

My Cub knows the way. It's a 40 mile trip through the Willamette Valley, taking about 25-35 minutes. If the weather is warm enough, I fly with the door open. I let my mind wander, pondering the words and concepts that aviation and singing have in common: pitch, power, solo, "round sound", Bernoulli effect, float, lift, low, high, chord, control, airflow, and more.

Independence Airpark is a unique Oregon residential community. Each home has a hangar. The front doors and garages of the homes face the streets, but alternating between those streets are taxiways, like alleys. Hangar doors open from the back of each home onto those taxiways. I think of my parents, who spent 30 years in a similar airpark in Vancouver, Washington.

I land, and taxi my taildragger slowly, carefully down Skylane Taxiway, watching for children playing. Feeling like Mary Poppins, I arrive at my students' house, rev the throttle and whip the tail around 90 degrees before shutting off the engine. The prop stops spinning. I hop out and chock the wheels, using the seatbelt as a gust lock to fasten the stick back. I grab my backpack from the tiny baggage compartment behind my seat, and saunter in through the open hangar door, past whatever is the family's latest aviation project.



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Two brothers, aged 10 and 13, go through their customary bantering about which one is going to take his lesson first. They have a grand piano and their home is a lovely rhapsody of airplane parts and double reeds, brass, and keyboard instruments, including a harpsichord. It is not unusual to give a lesson with a propeller sitting atop the piano, or to have to move a model airplane or a real airplane part from the piano bench before we can begin. I feel right at home there, as I grew up with airplane parts on the piano, too.

As I work with the younger brother, recently cast in Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory, his feature song is "I've Got a Golden Ticket". I chuckle to myself that it seems that I am the one with a "golden ticket." The lessons conclude, I hop on my "bad motor scooter" and fly home, enjoying the view.

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### Quotable

"We owe it to our students to be able to take advantage not only of everything that was known 200 years ago, but also of everything that is known today."

- Richard Miller, in *Vocal Health and Pedagogy*