

What Being Tall Means to Me - Jane Morris

At nearly 6'0", I have spent most of my life being told I am "so tall." For a long time, that comment felt like something I had to explain — "Thanks...My mom is Dutch," I'd say. In middle school I slouched in photos, wore sneakers at school dances instead of heels, and I learned how to fit my legs under classroom desks. But now, as a senior preparing to study dance and musical theater at The American Musical and Dramatic Academy (AMDA) in New York City, being tall has become something I claim with pride. It is not just a physical trait; it is part of how I move, how I tell stories, and how I understand myself.

In dance, height is both a challenge and a gift. Long legs mean longer lines and extensions, and movement that can travel across a stage effortlessly. When I kick above my head, people notice; when I stretch into arabesque, the line looks endless. Directors often talk about "using the full stage," and I've come to realize that my body naturally does that. My height gives me reach — not just physically, but expressively.

But being a tall dancer also has its challenges. In studios and rehearsal rooms, I have often been the tallest girl in the line, which means I'm always placed either at the center (if I'm good enough) or the very end (if I'm not). Since I much prefer dancing in the center, I've learned how to adjust spacing, soften my movement when needed, and remain aware of the ensemble picture. I've learned how to calibrate my movement so that it matches the group without diminishing it and in doing so I've discovered that blending doesn't mean shrinking — it means refining. I understand that partnering may look different for me, and that lifts, lines, and formations may need to be adjusted. Being tall has made me hyper-aware of the picture onstage and that awareness has undoubtedly made me a better dancer and performer.

In musical theater, presence is power. Height brings a certain visibility before I even sing a note. When I step into a rehearsal room, I am noticed. For a long time, that felt intimidating. Now, I see it as an opportunity. Musical theater demands bold storytelling — characters who feel larger than life. My height supports that when I stand tall. Whether portraying a commanding lead or a comedic supporting role, I can embody strength and confidence physically. Even in vulnerability, there is something compelling about a tall performer who allows herself to soften. The contrast creates texture.

Beyond the stage, being tall has shaped my sense of identity. As a teenage girl, there is subtle pressure to be small — to take up less space, to be quieter, to blend in. Height makes that nearly impossible. I stand out in crowds. I am easy to spot in photos. Over time, I've realized that this visibility is a gift. It has taught me not to apologize for occupying space. I have quite literally grown into myself over the past few years. My body has become my instrument, and I am learning to use it with intention and confidence. Conservatory training will demand courage — the courage to audition repeatedly, to risk failure, to be vulnerable in front of peers and professors. My height has already trained me in a version of that courage. It has taught me to walk into rooms with my shoulders back and my head high. It has reminded me that shrinking is not the same as humility.

Being tall is important to me because it represents strength, resilience, and authenticity. It reminds me daily that I was never meant to fold myself smaller to make others comfortable. I was meant to rise — onstage, in the studio, and in my own life.