

Harvard, Hobbies and interests: Violin

Struck with sudden panic, I hastily flipped through the many papers in my travel folder until I spotted the ticket. I nervously thrust it toward the beaming stewardess, but took the time to return her wide smile. Before stepping into the caterpillar tunnel I looked back at my parents, seeking reassurance, but I sensed from their plastered-on grins and overly enthusiastic waves that they were more terrified than I. I gave them a departing wave, grabbed my violin case, and commenced my first solitary journey.

Seated in the plane I began to study the pieces I would soon be performing, trying to dispel the flutterings in my stomach. I listened to some professional recordings on my Walkman, mimicking the fingerings with my left hand while watching the sheet music.

"Where ya goin'?" smiling businessman-seatmate interrupted.

"To the National High School Orchestra," I answered politely, wanting to go back to the music. "It's composed of students chosen from each state's All-State ensemble."

After three days of rehearsal, the orchestra would be giving a concert at a convention center in Cincinnati. I focused back on the music, thinking only of the seating audition I would have to face in a few hours.

When I arrived at the hotel in Cincinnati, instruments and suitcases cluttered every hallway, other kids milled around aimlessly, and the line to pick up room keys was infinitely long. In line I met my social security blanket, a friendly Japanese exchange student, [name], who announced proudly and frequently, "I fro Tayx-aas!" Both glad to have met someone, we adopted each other as friends of circumstance, and touched on a few of the many differences between Japanese and American culture (including plumbing apparatuses!)

Soon all of the performers received an audition schedule, and we went rushing to our rooms to practice. I had an hour until my audition, and repeated the hardest passages ad nauseam. When my time finally came, I flew up to the ninth floor and into the dreaded audition room. Three judges sat before a table. They chatted with me, futilely attempting to calm me. All too soon they resumed serious expressions,

and told me which sections to perform. They were not the most difficult ones, but inevitably my hands shook and sweated and my mind wandered. . . .

I felt giddy leaving the audition room. The immense anxiety over the audition was relieved, yet the adrenaline still rushed through me. I wanted to yell and laugh and jump around and be completely silly, for my long-awaited evaluation was over. After dinner the seating list would be posted and I would know just where I fit in with the other musicians, all of whom intimidated me by their mere presence at the convention.

Solitary, having been unable to find [name] or any of my three roommates, I entered the dining room. I glanced feverishly around the giant room which swarmed with strangers. I gathered up all of my courage and pride for the first time ever, and approached a group I had no preconceived notions about. I sat quietly at first, gathering as much information as I could about the new people. Were they friend material? After careful observation of their socialization, I hypothesized that these complete strangers were very bright and easy to talk to, and shared my buoyant (but sometimes timid), sense of humor. I began to feel at home as we joked about S.A.T.'s, drivers' licenses, and other teenage concerns. I realized then how easy it is to get along with people I meet by coincidence. I became eager to test my newfound revelation.

The flutterings returned to my stomach when I approached the seating lists which everyone strained to see. "I knew it; I got last chair," I heard someone announce. My flutterings intensified. I located the violin list and scanned for my name from the bottom up. My tender ego wouldn't let me start at the top and get increasingly disappointed as I read farther and farther down. "There I am, seventh seat. Pretty good out of twenty," I thought. . . .

Every day at the convention seemed long, only because we did so many wonderful things. We rehearsed for at least seven hours each day, made numerous outings, and spent time meeting new friends.

On the second day, during a luncheon boat ride on the Ohio River, [name] and I sat together, both dreaming of Japan. Looking over at her as we talked, I remembered that in two days I would be torn from the young, promising friendships I had been building. When some friends-including a few I had met at the dinner table on the

first night--approached us, bearing a deck of cards, I became absorbed in a jovial game and quickly forgot my sorrow.

Rehearsals were magical right from the start, because everyone rapidly grew accustomed to the strangely professional sound of the group and began to play without reserve, with full dynamics. I continually gazed, wide-eyed, around the large, bright room, watching others, admiring their skill. We were surrounded by pure talent, and the sky was our limit. We blossomed under the conductor's suggestions, using our pre-developed technique to its fullest.

Each time the orchestra played, my emotion soared, wafted by the beauty and artfulness of the music, bringing goose-bumps to my skin and a joyful feeling to my soul. I felt the power of the group--the talent and strength of each individual--meld into a chorus of heavenly sound. I was just where I wanted to be. I had everything I'd ever need. I was no longer doubting myself among strangers; I was making music with friends.

Comments:

This essay contains a good example of wowing the committee with a good closing sentence. Last lines are usually hard to manage. However, this essayist does a great job with hers, and the panel definitely noticed.

The last sentence of the essay is wonderfully composed.

The last line of this essay captures what I think are the two strong points of this piece. First of all, the author is an accomplished musician. No matter what sort of institution you are applying to, be it a music program, a liberal arts university, or a technical institution, strong musical ability will always be a big plus with the admission committee. This is because they know that proficiency in music requires self-discipline, a desire to improve and a willingness to learn. If you have achieved a notable level of accomplishment in some area of music, and have also succeeded in maintaining good grades, it tells an admission officer that you can manage your time well and set your priorities. The second strong point of this essay is the author's description of how she made friends and became completely immersed in appreciating and enjoying the entire experience. This tells an admission officer that she will almost certainly take to the college experience the same way, that she will overcome initial shyness, throw herself into a new situation, and soon extract

every ounce of pleasure and personal growth from the experience. She will certainly be an asset to the incoming class.

Good essay, well written and heartfelt.

This was a nice essay. The writer took her time to formulate her ideas about this experience and was keen to stay focused on telling her story succinctly. She took this very important opportunity in her life and was able to tell the reader a vivid account without overdoing it.