

Peterson Cabrillo Orchestra Concert

By Emily Cameron, 12/12/2013

The icy winter air tingled on my bare, exposed arms as I hurried across the school campus. The night was dark and the moon was shrouded with black clouds, but there was enough light for me to find my way around. Spray-painted on the side of a building was a picture of a large cat snarling viciously, with the words "Cabrillo Cougars" above it. My hair whipped around in the wind as my eyes darted across the buildings, wondering where I was supposed to go. A faint, yellowish light illuminated a room somewhere off to my left, and I could hear voices inside. I strode toward the room, clutching my heavy violin case in one hand and my music binder in the other. Jerking open the door, I stepped inside, the warm atmosphere feeling pleasant on my freezing body.

Several other middle school kids glanced up at me as I eased the door shut behind me. I couldn't recognize any of them, so I assumed they were from Cabrillo, but they were wearing similar shirts to mine: a simple black, short-sleeved shirt with a high, stifling collar and yellow treble clef embroidered on the chest with the words "Peterson Orchestra" surrounding the symbol. The only difference was their shirts had a royal blue symbol instead of yellow, and theirs said "Cabrillo Orchestra." Several of the kids were unpacking their instruments and rosinning their bows, so I knew I had come to the right place.

A girl around my age stared at me and demanded, "Are you in the orchestra?"

"Uh, yeah," I said, gesturing to the lemon-yellow symbol on my shirt. "Where's the stage?"

"It's through there." She pointed to a door at the back of the room. "But you're supposed to unpack your instrument here, backstage."

I placed my case on the floor and unzipped it, my numb fingers fumbling with the latch. My fingers brushed away the dust on the smooth, dark surface of my violin and I slipped on the padded shoulder rest. Smearing some rosin on my bow, I closed the case, grabbed my instrument, and stepped through the back door into the stage.

The sound of chairs scraping across the floor and the anxious chatter of the musicians rang in my ears as I glanced around the cluttered stage. My orchestra teacher, Mr. Pickard, towered above us on a raised platform, his flannel shirt tucked tightly into his pants. Being very short-tempered, he was shrieking at his students about where to position the stands and chairs. I spotted my friend, Erin, struggling to

carry a chair across the stage while gripping her violin in her left hand. Erin had been assigned to be seated next to me and share a stand with me, since Cabrillo didn't have enough equipment for fifty kids. I grabbed a chair and lugged it across the stage, setting it down next to Erin's. "Hi, Erin," I said.

"Oh, hi!" Erin placed her black music binder on the stand and settled herself on the edge of her chair. I did the same, with my freshly rosined bow in one hand and my violin perched on my lap.

Mr. Pickard grabbed the microphone, warned us to be quiet, and began the concert by droning on about the many accomplishments and successes of the Peterson and Cabrillo orchestras. "We will start off with a song called Chorale," he concluded, setting down the microphone and turning toward us. Erin shuffled through her binder and pulled out a crumpled sheet of paper titled "Chorale."

Mr. Pickard swished his conductor's baton through the air and the song began. It was a simple song, and the notes were easy to play, but it had a sweet melody that rang through the air as my bow glided across the strings. On the last note, my bow lingered on the strings for a moment longer, and this created an effect as if the music were slowly fading away. The audience clapped furiously, and I spotted my family among the other two hundred people in the crowd. Two hundred people? I swallowed nervously. That was a pretty large audience.

We performed several other songs, each one increasingly more complex and difficult to play than the previous. Finally, Mr. Pickard announced that this was going to be our last song for the night: 21 Guns by Green Day. The moment the words left his mouth, interest and energy level of the audience rose, since this song was a classic and many people had heard of it. Mr. Pickard glared at us, his dark eyes glowering under his close-cropped white hair. "Remember," he said, "it's a C sharp on the G string. *C sharp!*"

He swished the baton through the air four times, and the song began. The music was slow at first, ringing through the air with its sweet, soft melody, enchanting the audience. Then the steady, rhythmic sound of the drums thundered throughout the room, and the song picked up speed, the notes higher, the tempo faster. I could see the audience bobbing their heads up and down to the beat, and a smile played across my lips. We actually sounded really good—despite the fact that I wasn't very good at playing violin. When the song ended, the audience clapped and cheered furiously. Mr. Pickard thanked all the parents for coming to the concert, wished them a great night, and dismissed his orchestra students. I slipped my violin and my bow

back into its case, grabbed my music binder, and walked swiftly out into the cold night. I entered the cafeteria where the audience were rising to their feet and preparing to leave, and found my family among the others in the front row. I shoved my heavy violin into my mother's hands. "You did great, Emily!" my mother said.

"Yeah, it was a really good performance," my father agreed. "I recorded a couple of videos and took lots of pictures on the iPad."

We strode out into the night. I lugged along my heavy violin, humming "Dance of the Harlequins" under my breath. I stuffed my violin in the back of our Toyota, and clambered into the car. The performance had gone surprisingly well, and the audience had seemed to enjoy it. Even Mr. Pickard was satisfied with our performance. I grinned. I could barely wait for our next concert.