

My Music Teachers

by Nicholas Hernandez

In the early Spring of 2015 I landed in London, England, anticipating the next eleven days I would spend touring the United Kingdom with the Bakersfield Youth Symphony Orchestra. The journey was one of length, seemingly an eternity of preparation; it took four years, three teachers, two schools, and one inspired student.

When Mr. Geoffrey Ruud handed me a double bass on the first day of junior high, I assumed not that I would study with the finest musicians in America, or travel the world performing in a youth orchestra. The year was 2011, and I was in orchestra because woodshop was the alternative. I was compliant, however – eager, almost – to learn the ins-and-outs of the giant mass of wood. I adored Yo-Yo Ma's rendition of *The Swan*, and that was enough to fuel my earliest creative practices. Mr. Ruud noticed I approached the bass curiously, not quite accepting the instrument as it was. So he encouraged me to audition for the Bakersfield Youth Symphony that summer, despite my lack of sufficient experience. I have since served as the principle double bassist.

The following year, Mr. Ruud transferred schools, and Mr. Kyle Dooley was his replacement. Among my first memories of Mr. Dooley is the day he told me that Mr. Ruud had kept an eye out for me. Mr. Ruud told Mr. Dooley I had potential, and to help me where he could. Mr. Dooley recommended that I audition for the junior high All-State Orchestra, but he had to explain to me multiple times what it was, and even after I did not understand. I did not understand until I was accepted. 2013 was the year that changed my life; I collaborated with the best musicians in California, and I realized that in an orchestral setting I had found a sense of belonging. Because of Mr. Dooley, I auditioned in high school and was accepted again in both 2014 and 2015.

Entering high school, I wasn't sure what to expect. I had begun practicing 2-3 hours a day, motivated to explore the world of music and hone my technical and musical skills for the 4 days out of the year that I spent at All-State. My new orchestra director, Ms. Regina Montañó, saw my passion for the instrument. Because of my



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mom's new job, I was walking my double bass to school every morning and walking it home every afternoon – I refused to give it up even when I was faced with no automobile transportation. Generously, Ms. Montañó and Principal Vasquez sat down with me and discussed the issue of transportation, and they soon purchased a second instrument to eliminate the daily walking of the beast. The high school administration and staff have provided an invaluable amount of support in the past three years. The choir accompanist serves as my accompanist for auditions, the multimedia teacher records my auditions, the administration provided the wonderful instrument I now play, and Ms. Montañó helps me find new opportunity. We have begun discussing college auditions and, in July of 2015, she helped arrange a special lesson in which I received instruction from the co-principal double bassist of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Christopher Hanulik.

In the past five years it has been my music teachers that influenced me the most, and encouraged me to practice and develop a strong work ethic to balance my studies with my music. I dedicated myself to the art, so much, that in March of 2015 I played as a substitute in the Bakersfield Symphony with the Bakersfield Master Chorale in a performance of **Mozart's Requiem**. I have toured Europe with a youth orchestra, and I have met the co-principal bassist of the LA Phil. And I cannot begin to imagine where I would be, or what my life would be like, had I not been blessed with such dedicated, amazing teachers.