

My Musical Journey

My journey with the trumpet began in second grade. As the youngest in my class, I advanced more slowly than others. When many classmates gave up, I chose to persevere and eventually produced clear notes. Having devoted months to deliberate practice, I gradually rose from one of the slowest learners to one of the top students.

It was this same resilience that carried me into the high-pressure world of music competitions. Through relentless practice, I earned advanced performance certificates and became the principal trumpet in my elementary school band. Yet success came with a cost. The joy I once felt was replaced by the pressure to win. I practiced for judges, not for myself. I felt a deep sense of frustration when I hit a plateau or was outperformed. By the time I reached high school, I gave it up due to my increasingly heavy academic workload.

The turning point came during my first year of university. With more free time, I decided to open my instrument case again and joined the university orchestra and concert band. This experience brought a new perspective. There were no judges or rankings. We were playing for the joy of it, perhaps for the New Year's concert, or for graduation ceremonies. I rediscovered music not as a competition, but as a form of collaboration and self-expression. This shift taught me the value of intrinsic motivation over external rewards.

Driven by this mindset, I became more proactive. In my second college year, I stepped up to become the president of the concert band. My role shifted from just being a good player to being a leader. I was responsible for guiding rehearsals, organizing performances, and managing the team. We played everywhere, from campus events to the local hospital and even an anime convention. Gradually, I learned how to motivate a diverse group and manage a team toward a common goal.

My exchange year at **UC Berkeley** transformed this personal passion into a cross-cultural experience. Joining the student-run marching band, I was astonished by its scale and spirit. Hundreds of students from diverse academic and cultural backgrounds performed together, working in perfect harmony. Moreover, I could have easily joined the large trumpet section, but I noticed the baritone horn section was small and needed support. To strengthen the band's overall sound, I chose to volunteer to train a new instrument from scratch to fill a gap in the ensemble. The band became my window into American culture and taught me that the most valuable member isn't always the star, but the one willing to adapt for the team's success.

My musical journey has taught me more than just notes and rhythms. The diversity I bring is this perspective, the resilience to face steep challenges, the wisdom to value collaboration over competition, and the adaptive leadership to put a team's needs first. I am confident these skills will allow me to be a valuable and supportive member of your community.