



“A Special Performance”

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I STOOD BEHIND THE CURTAINS LISTENING to the applause to the previous act. I exhaled, realizing that this was a moment that fulfilled my childhood wish. Tonight was special because instead of an alto aria or a jazz lick, I had prepared a song unique to my identity. I curled my fingers around the microphone and waited impatiently as the curtains opened.

My love for performance stemmed from my appreciation of music as a child. In the city in China where I spent the first ten years of my life, I never found a choir to join and never laid eyes on a grand piano. Nonetheless, I treasured my passion for song and sought ways to bring music into my life. I sang with our old record player when I was barely tall enough to reach it. On certain afternoons, my best friend and I would tape bed sheets to the ceiling as curtains and invite neighbors to come listen. There, we sang in duet, danced, and bowed while clasping each other's hands. Captured in our own musical sanctuary, we never noticed the hours that passed by.

Music evokes in me the emotions that words and pictures cannot. I also revel in the intellectual challenges that music offers. I find it thrilling to tackle difficult, delicious repertoire, and I enjoy composing my own melodies. Through music, I can share and celebrate my past. When I was asked to share my cultural talents at my high school, I looked for a song that my mother sang when I was young, but I could not find the sheet music. A week before tonight, I sat down by the old piano in the practice room at school. With only the old tune ringing faintly in my mind, my hands soon took a life of their own and experimented with chords, arpeggios, and trills. I superimposed these on the original melody and composed variations. My voice, too, frolicked with the piano as I sang the tune repeatedly. I was lost in another musical paradise. I felt like a child again, tucked under the covers, listening to my mother's song as I drifted away to dreams.

Now, dressed in an old Chinese dress that my mother had worn in her youth, I stepped onto the empty stage illuminated by pale blue light. I held the microphone up to my lips and smiled before starting. Then, I brought to life the beautiful ballad that had brightened my



childhood in China. My mind overflowed with warm memories of that faraway city as I lulled the audience with my melody. When I caught my mother's face in the audience, I knew she nestled in the same air of nostalgia.

Music allows me to present my native culture and contribute to the diversity in my community. It has stimulated my mind and provided an outlet for my creativity. To me, nothing is more pleasurable than being imaginative. Carrying my childhood love of music through my teenage years has been a gratifying experience, and I look forward to continuing in my undergraduate years.

ANALYSIS

The beauty of this student's essay is that she opens herself up to us, the readers. She starts with a catchy opening, explaining in rich detail how she is standing behind the curtain and why the night is especially meaningful to her. We can feel what she feels as she stands there. She gives a detailed visual description and explains her thoughts as well.

The author then explains the roots of her interest in music. By sharing her childhood experience, she demonstrates how this has been a lifelong passion for her. We can imagine her as a child with her friend, putting on performances for the neighbors. Knowing how an author's interest in a given field of study began can add depth and dimension to the reader's overall characterization of the student.

In the third paragraph, our musician shares what goes through her mind. This is valuable to admissions officers because they can see her ability to analyze her thoughts and her level of self awareness. Self reflection demonstrates maturity and the capability to take a step back from a situation and see the deeper meaning of it. She explains why she is so tied to music and why it is an intellectual experience for her to recall her childhood song from memory and slowly piece it together.

Through her essay, we understand why this specific performance holds such great meaning. We see the connection to her past and to her mother. She makes several accomplishments through her writing—sharing an extracurricular interest, touching on her childhood growing up in China, revealing the intellectual side of her talent, and showing the connection that she has to her heritage and her family. After reading this essay, the admissions officers probably felt that they had a deeper understanding of who this student was and that she was someone they'd like to get to know better.