**Secrets of a Memory**

The most vivid memory that I ever had of my childhood, was none other than the very first day I took step through the large mahogany double doors of the Esplanade concert hall. An unknowing child at a tender age of six, I begrudgingly followed my parents who were avid fans of classical music to “appreciate” a concert put up by an internationally renowned classical band when all I wanted to do was catch my usual dose of delight watching ‘teletubbies’ at home. Never will I know how this *classical encounter* could actually shape me to who I am in the later part of my life.

I could fully comprehend why the Esplanade concert hall could be one of the only five other halls with such state-of-the-art acoustics after having the first glance at the vast interior designs that were meant to adapt the hall to different musical purposes, producing optimum sound for every concert. The crystal lightings of the hall serve to amplify the grandeur of the hall even more and I was simply overwhelmed by how a place of entertainment could exhibit such regality. However, my perked interest rapidly dies down, and I reverted to my ‘bugging mode’ much to my parents’ chagrin and growing regret for bringing me along. To pacify my childish antics, my father passed me a slip of paper containing a riddle that could be solved if I enjoy the concert with patience and undivided attention. If the riddle is solved, my request for a pet cat shall be fulfilled. Without further ado, I scrutinized the paper with a keen zeal but could not make sense of the hints: [3, 2, 7, 7]\_[2, 4, 27, 8]\_[5, 2,14, 8]

After what seemed like an eternity, the concert started and it was a matter of minutes before I was bathed in the spirited melody of Antonin Dvorak’s New World Symphony, 4th Movement. The music started off with a passionate fast-paced tune with the brasses dominating before changing to a slightly slow-paced soft melody carried on by the woodwinds. I could envision myself being carried off by the wind onto an adventure beyond the skies, beyond the seas, as I allowed myself to be enraptured by the music.

Following Antonin Dvorak’s piece, there was Gabriel’s Oboe by Ennio Morricone, as well as a piano solo, Chopin’s Etude Op. 25 No. 11 – Winter Wind. Every piece of music was brought to life under the guidance of the conductor and musicians. They never failed to touch the depths of the audience’s souls with their beautiful notes and enchanting melody. As much as I appreciated all this soulful music that reverberated throughout the concert hall, it was the last two pieces that made significant impact on me. The violin duet, ‘Ave Maria’ and the violin solo, ‘Senbonzakura’.

From the start, the very moment the first note was played on the string instrument, I was already enthralled to the point that I almost forgot to breathe. Ave Maria and Senbonzakura, two hauntingly beautiful tunes that resonated deep within my soul, moved me to tears. I was in disbelief as to how music could convey such overwhelming sorrows and joys simply through notes. I could never take my eyes off those intricate hand movements on the violin as I sought to understand the untold tales performed by the violinists. A wave of fervor coursed through me as I imagined myself performing on that magnificent platform, me and my violin.

I was driven from my reverie as the performance came to an end. Along with all the others present in the concert hall, I gave a standing ovation to the musicians on stage. It was then that I realized there were hundreds of souls who were moved by the resounding music in the last 2 hours. Despite the tears that threatened to fall, my parents had the most radiant of smiles on their faces. Suddenly I realized what I wanted to commit myself to for the years to come. The riddle has also been solved.

“I want to learn the violin,” I said to my parents while waving the slip of paper at my father, before leaving the concert hall which I promised to visit once more in the future, not as an audience, but a musician.