

To a Youth Orchestra,

Let me start by saying that though my encounters with Mr. Barg have been few, the times we have worked together have been nothing short of magical.

The first encounter I had with Mr. Barg was during the summer after my Freshman year in high school at a music festival in 2002 called Sound Encounters. We played the 2nd and 4th movements from Tchaikovsky's Serenade for Strings. I had played in orchestras before but I had no idea what was in store for me. He showed us far more than the notes on the page. Mr. Barg opened my eyes to what music could actually be, that playing in an orchestra was more than sitting in the viola section and knowing your own part. You have to listen to the other sections more than your own sound. The one thing he cared about more than anything was keeping your eyes on the conductor. I remember having the hardest time with this but was reassured when he boldly said that he didn't care if there were wrong notes so long as you look up. This effort was not in vain because once you looked up you could see exactly what he wanted musically and he got it. When it came time to perform no one cared if they played a wrong note from time to time because we were making real music. The ensemble operated as one unit and the result was greater than the sum of its parts. It was nothing short of pure magic. Playing in this ensemble put me on the track that I am on today. Pursuing a career in music.

While this encounter with Mr. Barg was rewarding from a musical point of view it was also rewarding from a personal point of view. Mr. Barg is big on teaching music of course but something else he does in the process is teach you about life. One of the big life lessons that I have learned from him came from my first year at Sound Encounters as well. Having not even been a year since the September 11 attacks, these memories were still fresh in many people's minds. Of the people in that ensemble the memories were perhaps the most vivid for Mr. Barg since he was living in New York City at that time. He proceeded to give us a life lesson about how events like this happen. When we go about our lives in the "same old, same old" style that most of us live in we become complacent and lazy. To keep things from becoming "same old, same old" we need to constantly be trying new things. This idea and life lesson apply directly to music as well. If we play the same way day after day then the music becomes lost and we don't progress. I have carried this lesson with me ever since, and every time I hear someone describe how their day is going as "same old, same old" I pause and think to myself... "what have I done today to make this day different."

Though I have focused on one encounter with Mr. Barg the other two encounters I have had with him have been equally magical. I will try to speak of these two encounters with some brevity. On two separate occasions I played two separate pieces that I had already become quite disenchanted with. The first being Mozart's Eine Kliene Nacht Musik and the other Pachelbel's Cannon in D. I can say beyond a shadow of a doubt that a finer performance of both of these two pieces has never been heard. Maybe they weren't a note perfect performance but we made music on both of those nights in a way I never thought possible. In 3-4 rehearsals Mr. Barg took two pieces (of which many people had played more times than they cared to count) and gave us a gift of knowing

just how amazing these pieces can be if you don't treat them with a "same old, same old" attitude.

Though I am young, only 23, I have never played under a finer conductor. Every concert I play I hope and pray that at sometime in the future I will have the opportunity to work with Mr. Barg again so that I can be reminded of what music can be made if the conductor can bring the group together.

Warmest Regards,
Stephen Luehrman