

Dear Youth Symphony,

I am writing to you to give my highest recommendation for Mr. David Barg to be conductor of your youth symphony. I am a junior in high school, and I have had Mr. Barg as a conductor in orchestra and a teacher in conducting class at Sound Encounters for the past three summers. This man changed my life. Working with him is what made me certain that I want to have a career teaching music. Mr. Barg will bring the music out of all of the kids in your program, without a doubt - but he will also change them on a personal level, so that they all leave as better people than they were upon entering the rehearsal.

I live in Lawrence, KS, and I recently attended a program for high school students at KU. After the orchestra rehearsal at this program, the professors were asking my teacher, "Who is she? She is so far above of everyone else." They did not say this because I was a better player; other students at the workshop had much more talent on their instruments than I do. The reason the professors noticed me is because I still use the rehearsal tactics that Mr. Barg taught us - or rather, that he *required* of us. Simple things like breathing and watching the conductor that other conductors might mention, but Mr. Barg does not allow you to forget.

If you don't breathe, he doesn't just remind you. He says, "Put your instruments down. Everyone breathe with me ... Okay so now 45% of the orchestra is breathing; how about everyone? .. Ready, and...No, you there ... You didn't breathe ... EVERYONE needs to breathe ... Here we go ... Good Now let's take that measure again ... No, there's still someone who didn't breathe! Let's practice again ... " until everyone breathes. Mr. Barg demands excellence without yelling or losing the fun in rehearsal, and what he ingrained into me at Sound Encounters rehearsals has paid off once I returned home.

Mr. Barg will make your orchestra rehearse well, but he also taps into the real soul of the music, the part that is inside of every person in the orchestra, the reason we all keep playing music. My most vivid experience with Mr. Barg, and the one that made me certain that I want to play music as a career, was in conducting class. We had done simple conducting exercises, so Mr. Barg went ahead and gave us the opening to the Verdi Requiem. I was conducting, and I don't even remember exactly what he said or what happened, but the next thing I knew tears were streaming down my face and I felt like I finally understood what the purpose of music was. It was the most profound musical experience I have ever had, and the only music it consisted of was a cellist in the room playing "mi, do, la." Mr. Barg touched something in my soul that day, and I don't know exactly what it was, but it has changed my perspective on music ever since.

While this may not be the most important thing to you as employers, it is definitely the most important thing about Mr. Barg to me: He makes his students better people. He sees That Thing inside each kid - the completely beautiful part of them that they're proud of, that makes them special. He also sees That Thing that they struggle with, and he somehow plays off the one to fix the other. I have seen him take a girl who had no confidence in herself and begin that transformation in her, so that at the end of the week she was truly standing straight and speaking her mind. I have seen him take the one kid in the orchestra who just did not care at all, and by the end of the week that kid was watching Barg closer than anyone else, breathing with everyone else ... doing an amazing job. I have seen him take multiple kids who cared about nothing more than what the people around them thought, and turn them into leaders who could give instructions without second guessing themselves or collapsing into self-conscious laughter. He took me, a person who tended to look at a situation and be overwhelmed and paralyzed by it, and taught me how to take things step by step and find joy in small victories.

"The first time a little baby walks," he told me, "it falls down. What do you say? 'This kid has to learn to walk, jog, run, skip, gallop ... If he's falling down now, throw him in the incinerator!' No." It was a silly way to present it, but that analogy has gotten me through so many situations that I would have otherwise been totally overwhelmed by.

There are so many things that Mr. Barg has changed for the better in me, I could write pages upon pages for this recommendation letter. And that's another thing. His students really, truly love him and respect him. But I guess those pages upon pages wouldn't necessarily be any more helpful than these few. To understand the rest you just need to meet him. Personally, I think you're incredibly lucky that he's interested in this job - and I'm not just saying that to spruce the letter up. Mr. Barg is the conductor high school-level students dream of. But like I said, at this point you just need to meet him. Maybe he will change your lives as well.

Sincerely,

Victoria Gilman