

Musical Treasure Chest #9

As I walk about my community and see the lawn signs "A Senior Lives Here," I have started thinking back to my own high school days. The end of high school is such a special time, excitement buzzes in the air, as new doors open and life's potential beckons. This time is also in my mind this week because Erich, my oldest child, just found out he was accepted for graduate school at Waseda University in Tokyo, Japan, and as his mother I am tremendously proud and yet a little apprehensive—life is complicated now and much is in turmoil on many fronts. But I remember vividly my own eagerness in my youth to embark on musical journeys and adventures, and those experiences, I think, are essential to a fulfilling life. In the midst of my reminiscing, a few of these moments from my high school years stand out as seminal to my decision to pursue music.

When I was a sophomore at Niskayuna High School (which has always had an outstanding music program), we had a wonderful student teacher from SUNY-Potsdam. A fine violinist and a good teacher, with a warm and energetic personality, **Lisa Joy** took me and a few other serious musicians under her wing. She organized a student string quartet, which she coached and arranged little performances for. She assigned us the ***Sunrise Quartet of Haydn*** (I already loved Haydn's music even then). Playing this quartet was blissful (it remains one of my favorite Haydn works), I couldn't get enough of it. The opening chords in the lower instruments and the gentle melody rising in the first violin, which later turns around descending through the instruments, oh my, it's stunning. When Lisa left at the end of her months with us, I was bereft, I felt as though I had lost my musical mentor, but she had given me such a great gift: she had shared her great love and knowledge of music with me. I have given you a wonderful recording with Amadeus Quartet recording.

Enjoy! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bjyy2tzMb8M>

One of the musical highlights of my high school years was playing in what they called Area All-State orchestra. A once a year event, the best students in the region got together for a two-day intensive of music making. I played throughout

my high school years, but the year I remember most was my junior one. Our conductor was Julius Hegyi, then conductor of the Albany Symphony. A tall and rather intense (that translates, when you are young, to intimidating) man with a ring of white bushy hair around his bald pate, Maestro Hegyi was highly focused, all business, with high expectations and little tolerance for error. But he was a great and knowledgeable musician, who had a lot of wonderful ideas and technique to share with us. For his repertory he chose a single work, **Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 5, The Reformation Symphony**. In preparation I bought a recording with the New York Philharmonic conducted by Leonard Bernstein. I fell in love with the piece. What a blast I had playing. The long hours of rehearsal, so tightly crammed in (5 hours on the Friday of the weekend, followed by 6 the next day, and the concert that evening) flew by, though I knew they were grueling because my shoulder was so tired from holding my violin. Hegyi was passionate and fun in the performance, kind and interactive in a way that couldn't have been predicted at rehearsal. To this day I simply adore this symphony. The transition to the fourth movement where Mendelssohn works in the Luther Chorale "A Mighty Fortress is our God" gives me goose bumps. I found the old recording I used to listen to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RE5IL_3O46k

My last high school experience I share today was as an audience member. The Union College Chamber Music Series (which still thrives today) brought in an early music ensemble to play the Brandenburg Concerti, and as a gift my mother took me to hear them. We sat in the balcony, and I had an excellent view of the stage. Already enjoying the program immensely, we arrived at **Brandenburg Concerto No. 5**. The first movement bubbled along to cadenza. I had never heard the concerto before—all the instruments dropped out save the harpsichord, who played what seemed to me to be the most amazing pouring out of notes I had ever heard. My jaw dropped. At the time I belonged to what was the Columbia Record Club, and following the concert I went home and immediately ordered a boxed set of Bach with Igor Kipnis. Another discovery was in there too: the Italian Concerto. Anyway, I have found a recording with Kipnis on YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=brandenburg+concerto+no+5+kipnis

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Allow me to use this final paragraph to say that I am struck, as I write this Musical

Treasure Chest, by the importance of these experiences for me as a musician. How crucial it is for students to have this introduction to music and the opportunities to play and perform with great musicians and to hear outstanding concerts. Having passionate teachers (such as Lisa Joy), who love music and go beyond what is required to create special situations for students, is key. Thank you to all of them for having shared their incredible insights with me.