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# A Night at the Circus

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Xenia Christian High School

Xenia, Ohio

Grade: 9-10

Genre: Creative

First place in the Creative Genre for the 2013 Best Midwestern High School Writing Competition.

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## A Night at the Circus

I buttoned my black pants and yanked a black blouse over my tight hair bun. I wrapped my sweater tighter around my shoulders as I walked through the cold drizzle to the car. My dad drove me to a large, tan, building where he dropped me off to walk inside alone. I was going to the circus.

This may not seem like the average trip to the circus, but I was about to perform with an act that had traveled all over the world. The Circus de la Symphony was a group of seven performers which included Olympians, strength champions, contortionists and mimes. They often joined local symphonies, displaying their talents in time to the classical sounds of hometown musicians.

As assistant concert mistress in the youth symphony, the Springfield professional symphony had invited me to join them in concert. My violin teacher's eyes lit up when I showed her the letter. She gushed about what a great opportunity it was and how I would learn so much from playing among professional musicians. I was less enthusiastic. When I received the thick stack of music in the mail, I glanced at the concert title. Then I did what any other lazy musician would do; I tossed it on the coffee table and didn't give it another thought until a week before the performance. I had far too much confidence in myself. When I attempted to play the music a week before the concert, I was in for a grave surprise. I was proud of myself when I was able to squeak through even a couple measures of each of the twelve pieces up to tempo.

I tried to make up for weeks of neglect, but the concert would not wait, and I was still grossly unprepared. I felt like a rowboat at the yacht club as I walked into the room full of experienced professionals. I was comforted when the manager of the orchestra placed an envelope on each music stand. It reminded me that these musicians had a motivating factor that I didn't; they were paid. Surely I couldn't be expected to play like they played with no incentive.

After maneuvering my way through the violins, I finally found my seat in the back of the

second violin section. There I became acquainted with my stand partner, Sheila. She must have been able to detect my distress with the music, and she gave me a few tips.

“In the professional world, you get the music two weeks before the concert and you are expected to have it ready,” she told me. I wasn’t sure she had the right to give me such instruction, considering that she too was in the back of the second violin section.

She chattered on and on about her mother’s attendance to the concert. “See that fluffy white head sticking out in the balcony? That’s my mom! I sure hope she can see me.” She said, revealing her crooked teeth as she smiled.

The concert began, and I partially succeeded in struggling through the slow sections and faking the hard sections of the music. I missed more than a few measures when I stole a glance at the juggling clown. I did not expect to be so entertained.

During “Waltz of the Flowers”, A long red ribbon dangled from the ceiling. A shirtless man and a woman in a leotard began flipping and flying on that ribbon. Before I knew it they were soaring above the symphony like planes practicing their maneuvering drills. They were only about four feet from grazing the conductor’s head. Instead of carefully counting my rests, I watched and imagined the acrobats losing their grips and toppling the tuba section. Sheila tapped my shoulder with her bow and gestured for me to watch the conductor.

The rest of the hour passed quickly, and I was surprised when I found myself turning the music to “Finlandia”, the piece that concluded the circus. My eyes widened when two men marched onto the stage clad in nothing more than briefs. Like statues from ancient Greece they were bronzed and muscled from their bald heads to their bare feet. I thought circuses were for children!

They made up for their lack of clothing when they began contorting themselves into positions that far surpassed any other human’s physical capabilities. Their muscles trembled like the strings on my violin, but they maintained that same statue-like countenance throughout their entire act.

The show ended and my heart was beating fast. Music still floated in my head. There had

been no sweet aroma of cotton candy and popcorn, only the familiar scent of the wood from my violin and my stand partner's cheap perfume. But that didn't matter. Lots of people have been to the circus and had seen the same clowns and lion tamers. They have all heard the familiar circus tunes blasted from low-quality speakers in stuffy tents. But the clowns and acrobats in my circus did not dance to that overused theme. My circus displayed elegance and uniqueness that no other circus possessed, and not only did I have one of the best seats in the house, in a very small way, I was a part of the act.