

Insights from Boston Youth Symphony (BYS) Musicians

Though it has only been three years that I've been a student at Boston Youth Symphony Orchestras, they've been the three most meaningful years of my life. I joined the Repertory orchestra (Rep) two years ago with no idea of what lay ahead of me. I liked music and I enjoyed playing the viola, but being a serious musician or pursuing music was never really on the menu. During the two years I spent with Rep under Joel Bard's guiding baton, I played more music than I ever thought I would, (and ate more New England Music Camp food than anyone should ever have to), and finally made it into the BYSO this year, as a senior. It was always my goal to be accepted into the BYSO under Federico Cortese, but as I had college applications, a large workload, and a four-season varsity sport coming up, I initially almost quit. I have at some point or another doubted or regretted nearly every decision I have ever made. But I have never doubted or regretted my decision to join the BYSO. Through this program I have met the best friends I will ever have; been conducted by a man who quite literally exudes passion; and been so inspired by my fellow musicians, conductors and coaches that I've decided to pursue music in college and in life. These past three years, and especially the past few months with BYSO, will have forever changed my life, in the most remarkable way possible.

– **Emily Saly, 17, Viola**

BYSO has been an integral part of my life since 9th grade. The time I used to spend doing homework I now spend rehearsing music with other people. But for such a small cost of giving up my Sunday afternoons, I have gained so much more. For the past four years I have been able to spend time with peers that share a common inter-

est and passion towards music as I do, performing a vast range of repertoire that has greatly deepened my appreciation for classical music. The organization has also given me the opportunity to perform at renowned venues that I otherwise would not have had the chance to perform at. Being part of such a great ensemble has not only helped me mature and evolve as a musician, but also it has given me an incredible experience that I will take with me in the years to come. Thanks, BYSO!

– **Kenny Kang, 17, Clarinet**

It took only one day of rehearsal for me to realize that giving up Sundays would be easy. I don't think you can just play in BYSO; the experience is so compelling that at some point you are absorbed into it and part of you lives there. Playing in the BYSO is an amazing experience in itself. There's so much to learn from our conductor, Federico Cortese, and from the other players. Being so close to musicians more skilled than I am has been invaluable motivation. And, of course, the sound is incredible. The most I am ever moved by music is when I am sitting in the middle of the orchestra. The community adds to the experience. Everybody in BYSO is united by a shared enthusiasm for music, but at the same time you find so many different personalities. It's hard to find a friendlier set of people. I don't know whether I want to go into music yet. I hadn't been planning to, but playing in BYSO made me stop and think. Whatever the case, I know I will keep music very close to my identity. This year has been the most exciting year of my life.

– **Isaac Julien, 17, Horn**