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Arts Abroad

Dr. Rife

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London Symphony Orchestra

I absolutely love the London Symphony Orchestra. I have only had the opportunity to listen to it twice in my life but on both occasions I have been blown out of the water. I like to see orchestras multiple times because it allows me to experience pieces from another spot in the audience, which can make a very big difference to the overall experience. Being on the second level at the center this time as opposed to the first level to the left side was a very different sound and I loved it. The London Symphony Orchestra is the most incredible orchestra I've seen and I always leave completely in awe of what I just witnessed.

When I see the London Symphony Orchestra, I feel as though I am listening to a professionally recorded soundtrack. Having been familiar with Ravel's works, I was very excited to listen to them performed live. It baffles me how one person can write a full orchestra piece for every instrument. The mastery that these composers had to have of understanding how all the instruments work and their ranges and what is possible to play is astounding. I literally cannot fathom how Ravel's brain worked but I am so glad that he wrote the brilliant works of music and that they have survived to be played by professionals because they are truly incredible.

My favorite piece performed was the piece from *Daphnis et Chloe* and I think that was the favorite of most of the students in our class. While I still cannot seem

to remember where exactly I studied *Daphnis et Chloe* I can say that I loved every moment of this piece. It was so active and engaging that I was not bored or distracted at all, not even for a second. It is so encouraging to watch the performers be so involved with the music that they fidget or cannot sit still in their chairs as they play. That is how I know that these people truly love what they do for a living and it makes me enjoy the performance so much more.

I appreciated the middle piece with the beautiful young woman who sang the poems. It was unlike anything I had ever seen before and I did not expect to listen to something of that nature at the London Symphony Orchestra, but it was beautifully done. The support that this young woman had of her voice was extraordinary and her delivery was phenomenal. I do not think she messed up a single note. It was perfect. It helped that she was a very beautiful exotic woman in a stunning gold dress. She was extremely pleasant to watch and I instantly became envious of her. All the years of choir that I loved would never give me the same talent as she. I felt very fortunate to be able to listen to her sing. It was a wonderful treat.

This concert, I felt, was a very great selection of pieces by French composers. I enjoyed reading about them in the program because it helped me to understand their motivation behind the pieces. After I heard the piece with oriental influence, I learned that Ravel was often inspired by the oriental culture. But I enjoyed listening to music by a composer that I did not know previously. I like being exposed to new musicians.

Now, I promise I'm not sucking up when I write this next paragraph, but I especially enjoy seeing these orchestras with you, Dr. Rife, because you answer all of

my amateur, inexperienced questions. When I do not know what a particular instrument is, I can rely on you to tell me and to also tell me about the instrument, which enhances my appreciation for the performance so much more. I can articulate aspects of a piece, for example I noted the oriental sound in one of the Ravel pieces but I could not have articulated that it came from a dulcimer. Sharing these orchestral performances with you has enriched my college experience immensely and I'm forever grateful that you've provided these opportunities for me to grow and learn as a student and as a cultured adult.

Traveling abroad helped me to realize that I want to experience other cultures enough to move to Paris for a whole year after I graduate. You can bet that part of this yearlong endeavor will be to attend as many orchestras and plays as I can because that is one of my favorite ways to learn about other cultures. So I want to thank you, Jer Bear, for helping me come out of my shell as a nervous little freshman and allowing me to thrive these last four years. Knowing that you have always been there for me and will continue to be there for me has been one of my favorite parts of my Rider University experience. You are the reason that Rider is my second home and I am forever grateful to you. I am still in denial about my impending graduation and I am so sad that I cannot travel on Arts Abroad anymore, but I promise I will do my best to meet up with your trip next year (because, let's face it, you can never really retire from doing Arts Abroad). Thank you a million times over for everything you've done for me. I wouldn't be the strong, independent, confident woman I am today without you. You are the best professor and mentor ever.