

Anna Wostenberg

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Dr. Rife

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### BBC Symphony Orchestra

The BBC Symphony Orchestra was certainly a once in a lifetime experience that I will never forget. Having never seen a professional symphony before, I had no idea what to expect going into the performance. I was blown away. To be in the same room as so many instruments and to listen to how loud or how quiet they could be was extremely interesting. The first piece with the two pianists was captivating; there was so much talent between the two sisters. To watch the transition, then, between the first group of musicians and the second, was almost as fascinating as watching the performance itself. But I must say, the second selection was my favorite because I am a huge fan of violins; I think they're the most beautiful instruments in existence.

What I have been most eager to explore after having seen this wonderful performance is a concept rather than a review. Perhaps what I find most fascinating about the symphony is how much of an effect the music has on one's mood. I was always aware that music could alter one's mood, but seeing the symphony live took that to a whole new level. What intrigued me was how during the slow movement of the second selection I found myself drifting to sleep. This was not because I was tired, however; it was because of the music. It was lulling me into a state of such comfort and relaxation that my mind was drifting into a world of its own. And as soon as the next

movement picked back up in tempo, my mind was right there with it, just as engaged as before.

I am a very visual individual, so I found myself actively engaged in watching the performers. I loved watching the violinists because their bows moved in such synchronized motions that reminded me of waves of water rolling over a beach. I found myself trying to listen as closely as I could and looking very carefully to identify specific musicians. I've had exposure to recordings of this type of music, but to watch the musicians in action was a completely different experience. I was really able to see the physical work that goes into playing such a long piece of music; timing is everything. I cannot even begin to imagine how difficult a task it is for these musicians to play in perfect time with each other, never missing an entrance or cut off. It is very hard work and I have a new respect for professional musicians.

The two featured pianists were especially incredible. With the pianos facing each other, they had to rely solely on eye contact for communication throughout the piece. While they are sisters, so they know each other very well, it is still an impressive feat to play in such a synchronized way. It also appeared that their exaggerated hand gestures helped to give cues to one another. They had sheet music, but it was rare that either of them looked at it. They had almost the entire entire twenty-minute piece memorized. I find that in itself awe-inspiring. From my seat, I could only see the face of one of the pianists, but it was so clear that she loved performing in front of the audience. And the audience fed off of that positive energy and gave it right back to her. When the pianists stood for their bows, they were greeted with standing ovations from nearly every

audience member. They even returned to the stage for a second bow, an encore of sorts, and it could not have been more deserved.

Having this wonderful opportunity to watch these musicians perform really helped me to appreciate all that goes into polyphonic music. I am used to seeing some of my favorite bands perform live, which takes talent, but to perform with 49 other violinists and 15 other horn players and 8 flautists is a feat I cannot even begin to fathom. I had no exposure, other than being dragged unwillingly to my older brother's Jazz Band concerts as a small child, to a group of musicians as large as this one. It opened my mind to such wonderful music. It gave much of Dr. Rife's Survey of Music History I class context and I found myself thinking back to many of his lessons, the pieces clicking together, making connections.

It was really interesting to compare this symphony to the Whirling Dervishes of Istanbul. To go from seeing a much older, monophonic performance to a more contemporary polyphonic one was amazing. I had the opportunity to experience two different cultures and learn about how each culture values different types of music in the span of only a few days. I loved having the exposure to both Eastern and Western cultural music in that regard. They were so different but I enjoyed seeing what music started as and then seeing what it was capable of turning into. I felt so enriched after watching this performance. The BBC Symphony Orchestra is certainly a performance I will not soon forget. The icing on the cake was being able to sit with Dr. and Mrs. Rife, who both have an avid appreciation for music, to enjoy their reactions as well as discuss the performance with them during the intermission. If given the opportunity, I would absolutely go see the BBC Symphony Orchestra again. And again.