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Arts Abroad

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20 January 2016

Paris, Je T'Aime.

I will start off this paper with a disclaimer. I am not a musician, nor do I claim to know much about orchestral music. However, I thoroughly appreciate and enjoy watching and experiencing symphonies. I have a gargantuan amount of respect for the musicians because I can only imagine how much time and effort and callouses or exhausted lungs go into preparing for the careers for which they strive. I took piano lessons for about two years in elementary school and it was clear that I am not cut out for the instrumental world. I have no idea how these musicians come together to create this illustrious and beautiful cohesive piece of music but I will forever be in awe.

The Paris symphony orchestra that we saw, I will admit, was not the best one that I have seen. I enjoyed the performance as a whole, but I found that the choir made the entire orchestra seem a bit more juvenile. Having been in a choir from the third grade through high school, I feel I can comment a bit on the quality of the choir. I have no concept of how the choir was chosen or whom it consisted of, but it seemed to me as though a school choir had been chosen to sing this beautiful piece and they did not do it justice. I thought the soloists were wonderful. But the choir itself lacked the discipline of a professional level. The formation of their vowels was weak and they did not always cut off at exactly the same time. They also did not

look engaged with the piece they were performing. I understand that they were singing in English, which is not their first language, but when I toured Europe in high school with my choir, we studied the English translations of the songs we performed so that we could sing with the appropriate emotion. I understand that some of the children were quite young, but a well-trained choir would have addressed that in rehearsal. Fortunately they did not sing in every piece and they were not forced to sit on the stage the entire time.

The orchestra itself was really great. They can't compare to the London Symphony Orchestra, though, but they were still very talented. I thought that the cello solo had a huge amount of potential but I felt that the rest of the musicians sometimes drowned her out. This may have to do with the fact that we were sitting behind her, but I wanted to be able to hear her during that piece. I also felt that her encore was far too long, even though it was beautifully performed. She was clearly a very talented young woman, but I will admit that I began to doze during her encore. It is significantly more difficult for me to remain engaged in a musical performance when there is only one instrument involved. I also wished I could have seen her face while she played so that I could have felt the emotions she was trying to convey throughout both the orchestral piece and the encore. I lose much of the emotion behind the piece when I cannot see the performers.

I enjoyed where our seats were located, however, because we were very close to the musicians. I could see very well the standing bass players (and one of them was very cute) as well as some of the other strings players. I really enjoyed how they would glance at each other throughout the piece and bounce their energy

around the orchestra with a simple look. It was flirtatious almost and I felt as though I was included in the experience simply because the performers were having so much fun. I also love to watch their reactions to the audience's applause. The smiles on their faces as they look around the crowd really brighten my day. Everyone fundamentally wants to be appreciated and I can tell that in those few moments of applause, all the hard work that these musicians have expended is completely worth it.

I really enjoy experiencing different orchestras from around the world because music is such a universal language. No matter which language someone speaks, the musical notes are always the same and it is a common vernacular that brings people from many different places together for a few hours. I have had the privilege of seeing orchestras from New York, San Francisco, Paris, London, and several other European cities and I have never been disappointed. It is fascinating for me to watch the magic that these professionals create for a few short hours. My hands and/or lungs would hurt and I'd be so exhausted. Not to mention all the time these professionals have to put in on their own in order to perfect the pieces and have them performance-ready. That is a discipline that I lack and I will forever respect them for creating such a beautiful event for me to attend. My ears are constantly overwhelmed in the best possible way when I listen to symphonies because they are such powerful works of art and they convey such strong emotions. I am very grateful for having had the opportunity to listen to a symphony in Paris, France. I will make it a point to experience another one during my stay there in the next year.