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## Physics, Philosophy, and Philharmonia: College Admission Essay Sample

Albert Einstein remarked, "If I were not a physicist, I would probably be a musician. I often think in music...I cannot tell you if I would have done any creative work of importance, but I do know that I get most joy in life out of my violin". Today, Albert Einstein is a hero to me. We share a birthday and even an interest in philosophical physics. Most meaningfully though, we share a love of music. Through all my intellectual pursuits, my artistic priorities have stood unwavering. Be short though it may, my career as a flutist has been the most rewarding endeavor of my life. In this time, my engagement with the All-National Symphony Orchestra was an experience that has changed not only the stylistic nature of my appreciation for music but also how I see my role in the world.

Rewind one year. I fumble to collect my belongings as the plane slows to a halt, and it's not long before I'm headed down the terminal. After a long flight, the liveliness of the airport is refreshing. A nice lady at a kiosk directs me toward a bus, and as I pass through a set of sliding doors, the hot, Tennessee air hits my face. En route to the hotel, a chaperone rambles excitedly about all the things to do in the area, but I can think of only one: sleep. The next day, we're up bright and early for our first rehearsal. The conductor says a few words, and we dive into the finale of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5. The timpani roar. I have yet to lift my instrument, but I'm already grinning too ecstatically to play. That enrapturing sound—from the foreboding of the basses and the intensity of the brass to the ethereal ambience floating from the harp—struck awe in every fiber of my being. The very thought brings chills. That day convinced me that if any ensemble came the closest to actualizing the music, to lifting the ink off the page, it was the full orchestra, and sleep was the very last thing on my mind that night as my thoughts raced with all the possibilities of this unique ensemble.

The next morning, we crack open Tan Dun's Internet Symphony: Eroica. After the first run-through, the percussionists shuffle in the back to get acclimated, and the conductor takes the opportunity to explain how he chose the pieces on the concert program. He tells us the story of Shostakovich's defiance and struggle for expression in the height of a Stalinist regime and Tan Dun's experience living through the Cultural Revolution. The common theme bridging these works seemed one of persistence and unfaltering tradition. From that day on, this idea of tradition became my musical motto. In the words of Carol Wincenc, we musicians live "in service" to the music and thus in service to humankind. Playing with the All-National Orchestra has impressed on me that the practice of classical music is a legacy. It is a gift artists have risked their very lives to preserve for future generations. Today, I bear the torch of this legacy,

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devoted to sharing an ineffable art with the world. Every time I take the stage, I hope to impart on someone, somewhere, young or old, that same cathartic wonder I once felt myself.

Inspiring my artistic vision and showing the orchestra a place in my heart, my experience in this group marked a critical transformation in my identity. Today, music is even more my source of "most joy in life" and has yielded inspiration, if not application, in my every undertaking. At its most sublime, music can be poignantly reminiscent of the quantum world Einstein pioneered. It is a place free from the typical bounds of space and time, a realm where an hour of Mahler can show you life and death...and everything in between.

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