

Imperfect Cadence

“If you can accept losing, you can’t win.”

Mom

Just look at him bobbing back and forth, and being so adorable in that black suit and red bowtie. Good thing I brought my camera so I can show everyone at the Christmas party next week. Oh my goodness it flashed – hide it in the purse, hide it in the purse! Whoops, I dropped the programme... and now I dropped my purse! Yikes that was loud – look at Mrs. Bernstein, that way people will think it was her. Narrow your eyes... show more suspicion towards her... hm... nobody seems to care – phew! When is this concert over anyways? Classical music always put me to sleep. Speaking of sleep... stupid George is already there. *Wake up you fat lump!* What is he so grumpy for? Sending Nicky to orchestra was his idea, though I thought it was a good idea too. Mrs. Sholes told me that it helps kids become smarter... at stuff. Plus, Mrs. Chan’s kid is always in the papers for winning violin awards – it’s driving me up the wall! Chinese parents... I’ll bet she beats her children... don’t think I haven’t seen Kung Fu Panda! I’m going to rub it in her face when my little darling leads this orchestra to victory.

Second Violin, Third Row

Oh my God I can’t believe Mom forgot to turn off the flash. No wait... I’m not surprised at all. I’ll never forget how she made my cousin walk down the aisle again because she couldn’t get her camcorder working. This is so embarrassing... I’m the only one in a bowtie... I should have told my mom that “optional” meant “nobody will be wearing this”... Mimi must think I’m such a loser. I guess I am – she never even looks this way. Oh jeez she looked! Good thing I was swaying to the rhythm of this music. Did I look pro? I looked like I was concentrating right? Well, what does it matter anyways... second violin never gets the melody... thanks Berlioz. You know, I studied you in music history... you weren’t a child prodigy... you of all people should know what it’s like to be inferior... why don’t you give us second violins something interesting to play so we can be noticed for once? We have to work so hard

to get attention. I put my violin case right next to Mimi's today... that's my only consolation. Maybe she'll need some resin for her bow and I will be there to save the day. Ok wow – that was a new low, even for you Nick. Just keep playing and hope we win this stupid competition so I can have something in common to post on Mimi's Facebook wall. Not that she'll reply...

Concert Mistress

Shift on the C sharp, third finger, third position.... vibrato on the A, don't forget the natural F... and... of course everyone except me forgets the correct bowing. Great. There could be scouts out there from Juilliard for all I know and they'll think this orchestra's playing is indicative of my skill level. I should have played with Cambridge Youth instead of the Boston Intermediate Orchestra. This orchestra is filled with incompetent players that are just here because their parents think they will become smarter or something. The violas fake all the hard passages and they think I don't notice. I just looked over at the second violins and they, again, missed their entrance by an eighth rest. And what's with that weird bowtie kid – *you're even swaying off beat!* Why does he glance at me from time to time? Probably because he's so lost he needs direction from the only one here that knows what she is doing. It helps to have listened to *Symphonie Fantastique* ever since I was five – I know it like the back of my Vincenzo Cavani violin. I remember I once told the second clarinetist that the harmonic minor notes in her motif support line could have come out more. She was so happy that I criticized her, I have no idea why. Maybe she was impressed I could hear all the different parts in the orchestra. Let's hope this adjudicator can't hear all the parts of this ragtag orchestra... I really need this win for my music school applications.

Principal Violist

Ha! That stupid Mimi has no idea we're faking this whole passage. This is awesome. I just sit here at the front of the orchestra with the easiest parts and the programme still has an asterix beside my name saying "Principal". Actually, I take that back, the triangle is easier to play, but if the triangle

messes up, everyone can hear it. For me, if I come in early or late, nobody really notices. I can't believe people think they can get a music scholarship by working hard in this crappy orchestra. *Diminishing returns, people!* Last week I practiced a total of five minutes on my viola, and that was only because my Internet was down and my iPod Touch ran out of juice. And by practice, I mean strumming the strings like a guitar until my YouTube started working again. I don't understand why more people don't play the viola – there's absolutely no competition, so I *always* get to sit at the very front! I'm like the Intel of the orchestra industry. I hope we win this competition so I will be just as good as Mimi while only working a fraction of what she did. Oh sweet – 56-bar rest coming up – now I can just sit back and let the trumpets stroke their egos.

Principal Trumpeter

I am so damn good. I hit that high B like how Mimi Chan's mom must hit her – firm yet with a purpose. I'm like the tip of the spear, projecting myself loud and clear. Wow, I'm a poet too, and I never knew. It's no wonder Mr. Lewis gave me the solo in the *Un Bal* movement – I'm quite simply the all-round superstar. I shudder to think where this orchestra would be without me. Sure, everyone else says that I play too loudly, but I know the real meaning behind their words: they're jealous. That's why they won't chat with me during break times. That's why they spike my V8 with valve oil. When I encounter such insolent behaviour, I am reminded of Barack Obama's words, "I don't oppose all wars. What I'm opposed to is a dumb war." If there wasn't so much dumb in-fighting, we would be the top orchestra in the state! Our war is against Cambridge Youth, whose ranks are drawn from the descendents of Harvard Music School. I know my group is scared, but that is why I chose to join this orchestra. It doesn't matter if my parents couldn't afford the fees for CY – it's about being a leader to those that need it most. Alas, in the words of Julius Caesar, "it is easier to find men who will volunteer to die, than to find those who are willing to endure pain with patience." You're welcome BIO, for

though the rest of you are willing to die at the hands of Cambridge Youth, you have found in me one who dares to endure. *I* – I mean *we* – will prevail today!

Second Clarinetist

Sigh... they spelled my name wrong on the programme again... but I guess I don't blame them... if you don't have an asterix next to your name, you're just background noise. My instrument is like a silencer – even my strongest attempts at playing loudly become muted as it comes out the other end. Story of my life. The only time I was anything important was when we played Mafia on the bus coming here. But even then, I only won because nobody thought I could possibly be anything but a lowly civilian. Although there was that one time when Mimi noticed I could have supported the solo more; even though she was coming down on me I was so happy to be noticed. I wish I was more like her or the loud trumpet player. I mean, I know nobody likes them and all, but at least people know who they are. Even the awkward bowtie kid is known because his mom brought everyone cupcakes on his birthday and made us all play happy birthday for him. If we win this competition, I'll still just be the self-conscious meek girl in the background of the newspaper photo. Well... I suppose being in the background of something great is better than being in the foreground of something insignificant. I sure hope Mimi and the others lead us to win this thing.

Conductor

Ooh, good try second violins! Only missed by an eighth beat. Gosh, though that might have been my fault too for not signalling better. These kids try so hard – I sure hope they do well in this competition. They all want it so badly. It's been seven straight years and we still haven't won this competition... as my eighth year as conductor I hope that changes this year! I don't understand what it is... Mimi's a great concert mistress, Darryl loves the viola, Dawson plays the trumpet like we're going to war, and even poor Emily on the clarinet is yearning to be heard. Maybe some sort of band camp would pull everyone together. I'll bet the kids would think that's so cool. I believe the year-end party we had

at the bowling alley last year was a just a grand idea. It doesn't matter if only seven kids showed up – I'm sure the others would have if they could. I mean, even my own wife didn't show up that night. She's always busy at that book club of hers. I've never known a book club that met so late and required her to dress up so nicely – she sometimes gets home the next morning, that studious woman! Boy, am I lucky to be surrounded by such good, honest people. Alright – just finished the fourth movement – “March to the Scaffold”. One more movement and we'll let the adjudicators see the determination of this orchestra for themselves! Eighth time's the charm!

Head Adjudicator

I agree with that obese guy in the audience – this competition can be heard in my sleep. At least that's the impression I got from the board of directors at the last GM. Dr. Sanders pretty much stated that if his son's orchestra didn't win, heads were going to roll. So what's the point of me adjudicating? This entire Sawanik Festival is bankrolled by Harvard alum, and their kids play in none other than Cambridge Youth. How can I let any other orchestra win? I know that I should do something about this and that ultimately, the decision is mine... but something is holding me back. It's the same weakness that plagued me back in grade school when I didn't step in as bullies were stealing my best friend's money. It's the same weakness that emerged when I took a pay cut last year when we could have easily cut the bonuses of senior management. It's the same weakness that was now telling me I should just do what is expected of me, simply because I am me, and this me would never fight back. This orchestra has its merits – all the important parts of this tough piece came through. They definitely deserve to win, as they had deserved to win last year. Maybe today I will do the right thing. I bite my lips and look down at the adjudication papers in front of me. *Sigh*. Unfortunately, my decision was made before the first note was even played. Oh well, they're probably hoping to win, but expecting to lose.