

THE BEGINNING
THE END
AND
EVERYTHING
IN BETWEEN



QUILLS & PIXELS 2016

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Quills & Pixels

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THE VIOLIN

By Y. Hope Osborn

Most legacies are unintentional. We don't usually wake up one day and decide to pass a living inheritance down to our children, grandchildren, nieces, and grandnephews. We say and do and desire, and these become living inheritances passed down like treasured family heirlooms. And the difficult thing is to realize what we say and do make a difference.

Something like this.

* * *

"Who is next?" the instructor asks.

I attempt to compose myself and say in a calm, determined voice, "I will go next."

As I take my violin from its shabby case, sentences begin tumbling from my mouth. My cue cards lie, ignored, at the bottom of the violin case. As I skillfully handle my violin, I manage to overcome my nervousness enough to detail the parts, positions, and playing of the violin. However, I leave out what I consider most important.

Y. Hope Osborn is in the Professional and Technical Writing Program at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. She has worked as a writing intern in UALR's Non-Traditional Student Program, giving students a voice and support through writing. She freelances part-time, writing, editing, and designing and plans on a career doing the same. Her highest goal in writing is that she would learn not just to be an adequate writer, but that she would be a *great* writer with whom people can trust to show them a subject in a new and engaging way.



I came prepared to play, yet I am not sure if I can muster the courage to actually do so. How will the class respond to my homespun ability? Anxious, I start to put the violin away, but my instructor's plea stops me.

"You are going to play something? Come on."

* * *

Forty-five years ago, my grandparents gave my mother a secondhand violin. Neither of my grandparents played an instrument, but they thought it important that their children experience music firsthand. My mother passively accepted the decision made for her to play, but after her first lesson, she was hooked. My mother was determined to get a new bow, so she sold Current stationery and note cards all summer door to door. A year later, she proudly bought a brand new bow to replace her old, poor quality one.

Life held more important experiences and activities, so gradually the violin lost its place in my mother's life. She entered high school with the same determination that got her a new violin bow. She excelled in every study and activity. She planned to attend college, but her plan changed when she met my father. Her new plan was to be a good wife and eventually a mother.

Her marriage led her down an avenue of experiences, but whatever she did and wherever she went, the violin went with her. Occasionally, for a while, she brought it out again to revive it with a melody.

Her marriage led her down an avenue of experiences, but whatever she did and wherever she went, the violin went with her. Occasionally, for a while, she brought it out again to revive it with a melody. But finally, she put it away for good.

One day I found my mother's violin, forgotten and set aside for so long. With it, I found the determination and musical

inclination of my mother reborn in me. I had always loved music, but suddenly I wanted to play—to be a part of the ebb and flow of living beauty.

On the Christmas before my 18th birthday, my mother gave me her violin and bow, and when she did, she passed my grandparents' desire, our family musical legacy, down another generation.

I grew to love the smooth feel of the carefully crafted wood and the experience of my fingers and the violin shuttling under, through, and across the warp of the notes on the page before me to weave what I came to see as beautiful tapestries of music.

Over the next couple of years, I put the violin down many times, either in frustration or for the repairs and refitting I had to have done. But with determination and effort, over time, I became a determined, homespun violinist.

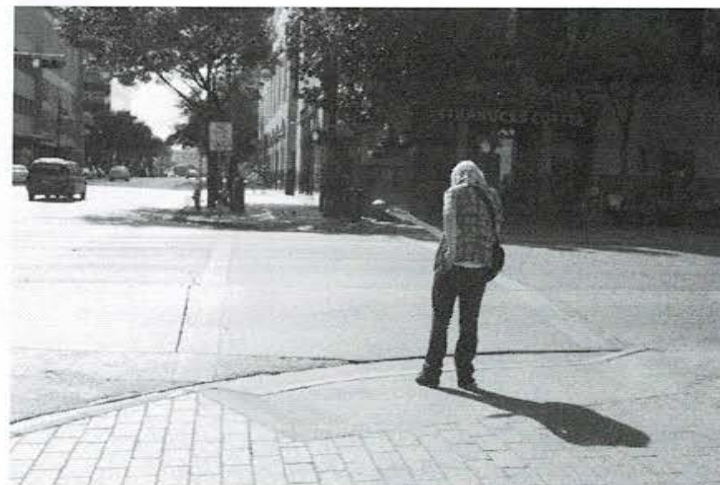
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me to weave what I came to see as beautiful tapestries of music.

* * *

Playing the violin wasn't the legacy I thought about as I stood before my speech class. I thought about the legacy of my mother in our shared determination. She worked hard to earn her bow. I worked hard to learn to play. I saw the legacy as well in my choosing to show my violin for "show and tell" in speech class.

Unknown to me at the time, my mother had also chosen to show that violin for speech class when she was in high school. When I told her about my "show and tell" experience, she responded with a story that surprised me.



Austin musician. Jennifer Godwin photo

My mother's first and only choice for "show and tell" was "her baby," her violin. She, too, was nervous and had not intended to play. She followed her plan to detail the parts, positions, and playing of the violin, and then, she began to put the violin away. Her instructor's plea had stopped her

"You are going to play something . . ."