

My earliest memories are of my mom singing and playing the piano for me; listening to her often made me wonder if I could someday play music myself. I have always been willing to try new things and carry them out, so I was excited to start both piano and violin lessons at age seven. Although I initially resisted practicing, I now greatly appreciate that my mom encouraged me, because playing music has been a creative outlet to relieve stress. It has also provided opportunities for me to play in school orchestras and perform in recitals and concerts with other students. I have been inspired by my music teachers, peers, and professional musicians that I have heard perform. Music has truly made a difference in my life.

My piano teacher Ms. Grace has inspired me by playing beautiful pieces for me, including Ravel's *Gaspard de la Nuit*, one of the most technical piano pieces of all time. During her monthly group labs where students play for each other, I am exposed to different repertoire and musical styles. The labs help prepare me for recitals and competitions, because I hear talented musicians perform, motivating me to work harder. Ms. Grace has encouraged me to listen to classical music and attend concerts, including a recent one by the International Piano Competition winner, Dominic Doutney. She has challenged and pushed me to play a wide variety of pieces, such as Rachmaninoff's *Prelude in c sharp minor*, Chopin's *Nocturne in c sharp minor*, and Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in C major*.

Music has helped me persevere through long, tedious passages, such as in my current Bach Fugue. This perseverance and patience have helped me in other areas of life, including in school and sports. Communication, and understanding what I need to change and improve upon in a piece to convey an emotion or image, has helped me in the classroom. I frequently seek out my teachers after class to review topics for greater understanding. The hard work and grit it takes to finish and memorize a piece has helped me in athletics. It has given me discipline to stay

longer in the gym and spend extra time on shooting reps in lacrosse and hitting in tennis. Music has ultimately taught me to not doubt myself and has developed my creative thinking and puzzle solving skills.

As a Navy kid who has lived overseas in Japan and Germany and had to adjust to new schools, I could always count on music to relieve stress and give joy. Playing music made it easier to overcome cultural and language barriers and make new friends. During my busy senior year with college applications, I have appreciated taking breaks to learn new pieces, especially calming melodies that focus me. Because music has filled my heart and opened my creativity, I hope to continue studying piano in college. I am truly grateful for the gift of music lessons and how it continues to enrich my life.

BIO: Christopher Sweeney is a senior at Georgetown Prep. He has been playing the piano and violin since he was seven years old. He plays lacrosse, tennis, and water polo. He lives in Washington DC with his parents and his younger brother, Carter, who also is a violinist. Christopher is in the National Honor Society and German Honor Society. He is a Navy kid who has lived in Japan, Germany, Washington State, California, and Washington DC. He is a motivated entrepreneur who started his own car detailing business and strives to be his best self in and out of the classroom.

