

“When words fail, music speaks.” When I read this quote by Hans Christian Anderson it felt as if I unwrapped a gift from someone who had known me forever. As a former Suzuki violin student my vocabulary was limited, but my Twinkle Variations delighted my audiences. And during middle and high school it was a challenge to convince friends that hours of violin practice took precedence over socializing. Only after they heard me perform Glazunov and Mendelssohn concertos with local orchestras did they understand what I had been trying to say. I love communicating as a musician. Playing violin allows me to converse with my audience on a deeper level than words ever could, taking them on a unique and emotional journey.

My success as a musician is the result of both strong family support and many wonderful violin instructors, whose teaching styles were combined so effectively that for me, practicing every day and going to weekly lessons felt as natural as brushing my teeth. I accepted new musical challenges with enthusiasm, as my teachers wisely involved me in many creative decisions. I still remain close to these teachers, proudly demonstrating their influence each time I play. I can choose a piece of music written over 100 years ago, and with all the advice from teachers at my disposal, create a powerful and passionate performance. This is what music means to me, and this is why I love playing the violin.

I am currently in my second year as a sophomore at the Juilliard School. Every day I am inspired to become a better musician, whether it is from an orchestra rehearsal with guest conductor Alan Gilbert or from attending an open rehearsal of the Juilliard String Quartet. This is exactly the environment I’ve been waiting for, and it’s exciting to know I’ll be a part of it for the next two years.

On winning the Shar Grand Prize--I vividly remember preparing for this competition. Not only was it a test of my technical proficiency, it also showcased my musical stamina. I learned to change styles quickly, as I had to play Bach, then Svendsen, and finally Glazunov. Performing these pieces together gave me a glimpse of the professional concert artist’s world. I appreciated the difficulty of performing different repertoire each night on minimal practice time!

Winning the prize was very exciting—not only had I won a statewide competition; I also had confirmation that I was on the right track musically. All the hours I spent in preparation paid!

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Andrea Jarrett, 2009 Junior Division Grand Prize Winner, Shar Music Award

Note: This article was written in 2009. Ms. Jarrett is presently in her senior year at The Juilliard School. She studies with David Chan, Concertmaster of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. At the moment Ms. Jarrett is preparing for auditions to 2012 summer positions.