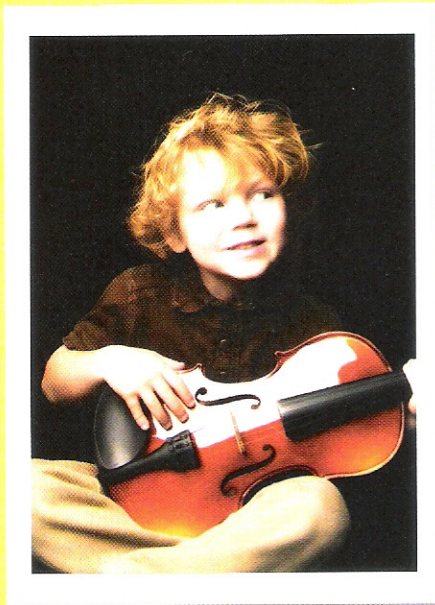


# Giving the gift of Music

On a very humid day at church camp I first heard, in person, the sounds of a trombone. It was not just any trombone but that played by a man named Billy Horton. I was transfixed on the sounds of that instrument and fell in love immediately with the notes emerging from the shiny instrument. I was 9 years old.

When asked years later to pick my instrument for the band, I without hesitation chose the trombone. I sat, the only girl, in first chair from middle school through high school and was to many a spectacle. I cared very little what others thought. I had fallen deeply in love with the big sound and despite my 4'11 frame could output any tune anywhere and as good as any boy.

Years later, in high school I had the opportunity to see again that choir leader and tell him that I had chosen the trombone, mainly because of having been inspired by him. He was shocked to have made such an impact on what at the time was an addition to our choral repertoire so many summers gone by. I



remember him asking me how, in such a small time frame, I could have been so taken. I could only say thank you, because I knew not the reasons, just that he had indeed made an impact on a musical journey and he had created a love for the sounds of big band in me. The love of music is a very important part of my world today, and as a result that of my own children.

Recently, I was given the wonderful opportunity to meet and hear Tofik play. He came to the studio to be photographed for our Focus cover and I was immediately taken with him. After listening to him tell me of the history of his own love affair with the violin, I remembered my old friend and inspiration, Billy. Children are inspired by and make impressions on who they might become by those around them. He remembered being taken to see the orchestra as a child. He could re-

member each of the players, and how in their own ways they made the wondrous sounds we call music. I invited him to see the "jewel" in my foyer. A box baby grand, I had found and cared for, now fully restored sitting proudly in my home. His eyes lit up once he saw her and he was drawn to the space to play and discover her age and origin.

My James Edward was playing upstairs. He heard Tofik playing and came running down the stairs. I could see the magic in his eyes as he watched him play. Pure inspiration. As we continued to talk, almost like a magnet, Tofik would stand and talk and then lunge towards the beautiful instrument and play some. Artists do these sorts of things. I was so pleased that I asked him to do something very much out of the norm. We took James Edward back to the studio and Tofik played his violin for him. At first James Edward was mesmerized by the notes emerging from his violin, and then in an instant a sheepish and dreamy grin began to fall upon his sweet 5 year old face. He fell deeply in love with the violin. Tofik offered for him to touch the beautiful instrument, an experience that I knew, in that moment, would be with James Edward throughout his life.

Later that evening and every evening since James Edward has asked "when can I take the violin?" It is my hope that one day, I will meet again the fine violinist from Russia, who was patient and kind enough to give this remarkable impression and inspiration to my own son. I hope that like myself, James Edward will in his own words be able to recall to Tofik what he felt that day and how he fell in love with the sounds of a violin.

Take care of you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alisa".

